



Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council

Volume 2, Issue 2

May 2009

Our Mission

The Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council brings together public & private resources to promote Wisconsin's national leadership position in Organic Agriculture. By advising the Secretary of the WI DATCP & other organizations & agencies on critical organic issues, the council supports organic production, processing, and purchasing opportunities for Wisconsin farmers, processors, & consumers.

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Encourage Organic Farmers to Participate in Organic Census

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is, for the first time, conducting a wide-scale, in-depth Survey of organic farmers in response to increased organic production nationwide. We have worked closely with the WI office of NASS in getting the survey out to Wisconsin organic farmers.

The Organic Survey is a supplement to the 2007 Census of Agriculture and will gather information on organic farming from the 2008 crop year including production of field crops, vegetables, fruits, livestock and poultry, production practices, production expenses, marketing practices, and value-added production and processing. The survey will include not only farm operations that are currently engaged in organic production, but those making the transition to organic agriculture.

The survey results will provide timely & relevant information that organic producers can use to help make decisions for their own operation. Additionally, policymakers & industry stakeholders may use survey data to help develop programs that support the organic sector.

The Organic Survey was mailed out in early May with responses due June 17, 2009. Participation in this survey is important, which is why we are encouraging Advisory Council and Interagency Team members to help get the word out and encourage farmers to complete their surveys. Organic farmers who have received the survey can submit their data on-line at: <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/>

If you know an organic farmer who has not received the survey, contact Cindy Adamson at the WASS office at Cindy_Adamson@nass.usda.gov or 1-800-789-9277.

NRCS EQIP Organic Initiative deadline extended to June 12

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is offering cost-sharing and technical assistance for transitioning to organic production says Pat Murphy, NRCS representative to the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council. This is new funding provided in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Organic growers are offered many options within the program and can sign up for specific conservation practices on specific fields. Payments are limited to \$20,000 per year per farm or \$80,000 total during any 6-year period. Examples of organic practices that could be rewarded under the new EQIP program include conservation crop rotations, cover crops, grassed waterways, erosion control, and livestock practices such as stream crossings or pasture seeding.

There are also opportunities for conventional farmers wishing to transition to organic production or existing organic farmers wishing to transition additional acres. The new Organic Initiative can provide technical assistance in developing a plan for the three year transition period, as well as providing a per-acre cost-share payment during the transition period.

The application period has been extended to allow applications to be submitted through June 12, 2009. To enroll, applicants must sign up at their local USDA Service Center. For more info: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/organic/>



**Milking Parlor—
Dairy farmers made
up 46% of the farm-
ers applying for cost-
share dollars.**

**“We in the
organic farming
community
welcome the
language in the
new EQIP
guidelines that
recognizes the
conservation
value of organic
agriculture
practices.”**

Organic Cost Share Update

The organic certification cost share program is back. Wisconsin last had funds for this federal program in 2005. The 2008 Farm Bill reauthorized the program and provided additional funds.

The cost share program pays 75% of certification costs up to \$750 per farm or business.

The program is administered by DATCP. In January, over 1200 applications were mailed to certified organic farms and processors. The application period for 2008 reimburse-

ments ran through March 31st, 2009.

We received 571 applications from farmers. Average certification cost was \$1075. Average cost share payment was \$580.

We received 88 applications from processors and handlers. Average certification cost for businesses was \$2633; the average cost-share amount was \$692.

The popularity of the program is evidenced by a 100% increase in applications over

the 2005 program, for which we received 318 applications.

Average certification costs have increased as well. The average cost share check in 2005 was \$349.

We expect to send out applications for the 2009 certification cost share program in early summer. Application materials will be posted at www.datcp.state.wi.us (keyword: 'organic agriculture').

For more information, contact Laura Paine (608-224-5120 or laura.paine@wi.gov).

Council Submits Comments on EQIP & GMOs

The OAC was invited to submit comments to NRCS on the **EQIP Organic Initiative** program by Pat Murphy, NRCS representative to the Council.

The Council's comments were focused primarily on ensuring fairness among states in terms of availability of the program and between organic and conventional farmers with regard to payment limitations.

The Council commented on the need for cross training of both agency staff and educators

in the organic community. See article on Pg.1 and workshop announcement on Pg. 4 for more information.

The OAC also submitted comments to USDA **Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service** (APHIS) on their proposed rule changes governing genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The agency proposed relaxation of several rules that had been in place for several years.

The Council's comments were that the original rules provided needed oversight of the GM industry and that the changes would increase the risk of contamination of organic crops with prohibited GM crops. They recommended that the modifications not be adopted.

The full text of both letters are available from Laura Paine at 608-224-5120 or laura.paine@wi.gov



**Organic Vegetables
(photo by Tricia Bross)**

Wisconsin Specialty Crop Block Grants

DATCP Marketing Bureau Director Lora Klenke announced the 2009 Specialty Crops grant program. This program funds projects to enhance the competitiveness of US grown specialty crops, including organic crops. The USDA has outlined interest in organic projects by specifically targeting "investing in specialty crop research, including organic research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes." Projects focusing on sustainability and on increasing child and adult knowledge and consumption of specialty crops will also be considered. The OAC Consumer Education Committee hopes to obtain funding for developing educational materials for organic farmers to provide to their customers.

Specialty Crops Grant funds will be distributed through a competitive review process. Applications must show how the project could potentially impact and produce measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry or the public. The application deadline is June 30th.

Organic Advisory Council (OAC) Membership for 2009-2010

The Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council is a 12-member Standing committee appointed by the DATCP board.

Three seats on the Council are reserved for farmers and three for organic businesses. There is one seat each for a non-profit, a consumer, and a certification representative. Three members are selected at-large.

Members serve three year, rotating terms. Chris Malek, Jerry McGeorge, Bonnie Wideman, and David Engel all agreed to serve a second term and were reappointed by the DATCP board.

Organic Farmers

Tricia Bross (term ends 4/30/2011)
Luna Circle Farm
Rio, WI

Chris Malek (term ends 4/30/2012)
Malek Family Stewardship Farm
Stevens Point, WI

Rich Lange (term ends 4/30/2010)
Lange Farms
Platteville, WI

Organic Business Representatives

Mike Schulist (term ends 4/30/2010)
Wisconsin Organic Marketing Alliance
Cooperative
Custer, WI

Jerry McGeorge (term ends 4/30/2012)
Organic Valley
La Farge, WI

Robert Wills (term ends 4/30/2011)
Cedar Grove Cheese
Plain, WI

Non-Profit Representative

Harriet Behar (term ends 4/30/2011)
MOSES/Sweet Earth Farm
Gays Mills, WI 54631

Consumer Representative

Margaret Bert-Mittelstadt (term ends 4/30/2010)
Outpost Natural Foods Cooperative
Milwaukee, WI

Certification Representative

Bonnie Wideman (term ends 4/30/2012)
Midwest Organic Services Association
Viroqua, WI

At-Large Members

David Engel (term ends 4/30/2012)
Rising Sun Jersey Farm
Soldiers Grove, WI

Christine Mason (term ends 4/30/2011)
Standard Process, Inc.
Palmyra, WI



Jim Munsch (term ends 4/30/2010)
Deer Run Farm
Coon Valley, WI

Interagency Team

Along with the Council, an Interagency Team representing state and federal agencies was appointed.

In addition to DATCP, agencies participating in Council activities include the USDA Farm Service Agency & Natural Resources Conservation Service, the WI DNR & Department of Commerce, as well as the University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture & Extension Service & the WI Technical College System.

Complete lists of Organic Advisory Council and Interagency Team members are available at: <http://www.organic.wisc.edu/>

Member Profile: Bob Wills, Cedar Grove Cheese

Our summer meeting will be hosted by Bob Wills, owner of Cedar Grove Cheese and a business representative on the OAC. Bob has been an active member of the Council since its inception in 2006.

The Council's July 17th meeting will include a tour of Bob's Cedar Grove Cheese Factory. Cedar Grove is a family-owned business in the original building dating back to the 1870s.

Bob is a Master Cheesemaker who makes organic, conventional and grass-fed cheeses and has a passion for mentoring new cheesemakers and working with farmers to develop new products.

He routinely brings home several awards from the annual American Cheese Society Competition.

After the OAC business meeting on July 17th at the Plain Public Library, the group will tour the Cedar Grove cheese plant just outside Plain.

The plant is environmentally friendly—in 1994, Bob installed a 'living machine', a greenhouse water filtration system that purifies waste water from the plant. In addition, it grows fruits and vegetables and generates potting soil and compost..



05/27/2009

Christine Mason
Secretary OAC
Government and Legal Affairs
(Chair)

Harriet Behar
Co-Chair OAC

Jerry McGeorge
Co-Chair OAC

Tricia Bross
Farmer Representative

Rich Lange
Farmer Representative

Chris Malek
Farmer Representative

Mike Schultz
Business Representative

Robert Wills
Business Representative

Margaret Bert-Mittelstadt
Consumer Representative

Bonnie Wideman
Certification Representative

David Engel
At Large Representative

Jim Munsch
At Large Representative

DATCP Coordinator
Laura Paine
Division of Agricultural
Development

Website:
www.organic.wisc.edu/



OAC Committee Activities

Government Relations and Legal Affairs Committee

This committee is tasked with coordinating Council recommendations to DATCP and other agencies on rules and policies affecting organic agriculture, as well as developing recommendations to the National Organic Program and other USDA Agencies. It is also responsible for maintaining communications with the Secretary of Agriculture and the DATCP Board.

Biennial Report Committee

This committee develops and publishes a report on the status of organic agriculture in Wisconsin, meeting the objectives set out by the Organic Task Force Report to develop and track measurable goals for growth of the Organic Sector in Wisconsin. The committee is currently preparing the 2009 report which will be published at the end of the year. The 2007 report is located at:

<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/economics/organic-agriculture-in-wisconsin-2007-status-report/>

Consumer Education Committee

To maintain the 20% growth rate in the organic sector, this committee is charged with developing educational materials for consumers. Another issue to be addressed is protecting the integrity of the organic seal by educating on products being labeled or sold as organic that are not certified organic, or inappropriate procedures are being followed that may decertify the product.

Farmer Education Committee

This committee works to enhance the capacity of Universities and Colleges to provide training in organic agriculture and processing, enhance communication and networking capacity among organic farmers and with transitioning farmers. It provides education for transitioning and established organic farmers.

National Organic Issues committee

This committee addresses NOP topics & other national issues that impact organic farms, such as the farm bill. This group is responsible for communicating with other state Organic Advisory Councils.

Supply Chain Infrastructure Committee

This committee addresses marketing, market development, and processing capacity development. They are working on developing a organic farmer and business directory, among other projects.

Upcoming events and activities:

- **Next Organic Advisory Council meeting is July 17 in Plain, WI. Hosted by OAC member Bob Wills, it will include a tour of Cedar Grove Cheese factory. The public is welcome to attend. For more information, contact Laura Paine at 608-224-5120.**
- **UW Organic Field Day. The third annual Organic Field Day will be held at the UW Arlington Research Station on August 26, 2009.**
- **Organic Training Workshops for professionals. Intro to organic systems: June 30 in SW Wisconsin; July 15 Seymour, WI. Writing organic conservation activity plans: June 17 Platteville; August 6 Wausau. Writing organic transition plans: September 22, location TBD. For more information, contact Kevin Erb (920-391-4652) or Val Adamski (920-498-5568).**