



State of Wisconsin
Jim Doyle, Governor

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Rod Nilsestuen, Secretary

Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council Meeting

10 am to 3 pm

Friday, July 17, 2009

Kraemer Public Library

910 Main Street

Plain, Wisconsin

DRAFT Notes

Present: Jerry McGeorge, Harriet Behar, Bob Wills, Bonnie Wideman, Rich Lange, Mike Schulist
Interagency team: Pat Murphy, Tony Bowers and Ray Ellenberger for Russ Raeder, Kevin Shelley, Irv Possin, Carla Wright, Jed Colquhoun, Don Jaworski.

Guests: Martha Rideout

Agenda review. Discussion regarding CIAS was requested by both Bob Wills and Jed Colquhoun and was added to the agenda.

Minutes approval. The Council didn't have any changes to the minutes, but since there were only 6 council members present, it was decided that approval of the minutes of the April 15th meeting would be delayed until the next meeting.

The council reviewed possible meeting dates in October for the next meeting, tentatively planned to be held jointly with the Minnesota Organic Task Force. We reviewed the potential dates around October 15 (middle two weeks of the month).

In the interim, Laura has learned that the Minnesota Task Force cannot meet with us in October, but would be interested in a meeting later in Winter. They have just turned over a high proportion of their membership and their fall meeting will be an organizational one. They apparently meet quarterly and will be interested in a joint meeting with the Wisconsin Council in Winter or Spring.

Presentation on UW Organic Dairy Veterinarian Survey.

UW Agroecology graduate student, Martha Rideout, presented her findings and recommendations for Veterinary training in organics. Her power point and report are attached. Her key findings and recommendations are that there is an interest and need for additional training for veterinarians to be able to adequately serve their organic clientele. Also, she recommends that, rather than having separate elective courses in organics, organic methods should be integrated into the veterinary curriculum alongside other types of treatments, so that all students get exposure to these practices and that they are viewed as part of a continuum of options, rather than a separate system of herd health management. Her presentation will be incorporated into these notes for those who weren't in attendance.

She shared that the UW Veterinary School is currently revising and updating their curriculum and her report will be one of the resources they take into consideration. Carla suggested that the OAC write a letter of support for Martha's to the Vet School. OAC members and Interagency advisors agreed that this should be done.

Committee reports

Agriculture generates \$51.5 billion for Wisconsin

Government affairs. No report.

Biennial report. Laura reported that she and Erin Silva met with Paul Mitchell and a graduate student who will be analyzing and summarizing statistics on organics for the biennial report. Erin is taking the lead on organizing the publication and will be working with Cris Carusi at CIAS to get it published in time for the 2010 Organic Conference.

Consumer Education. Laura reported that she and Margaret worked with other partners (MOSES, Outpost Natural Foods, Extension, DATCP) to develop a Specialty Crops block grant proposal to fund some consumer education materials. They applied for \$9900 and the proposal has been approved internally at DATCP and will be sent to USDA as part of a DATCP package. It has a good chance of success. Funding would become available in late fall.

Farmer education. The UW Organic Field Day is scheduled for August 26. Kevin reported on the trainings on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) organic initiative. Two trainings have been held for NRCS and Land Conservation staff, one has been held and another scheduled for prospective Technical Service Providers (TSPs) for them to learn about how to integrate organic plans into NRCS planning processes.

Harriet said that Molly Jahn called her to tell her about a new organic initiative that CALS will be undertaking going forward. She wants to partner with MOSES. (question: did she call Harriet as a representative of MOSES or as a co-chair of Organic Advisory Council).

Supply chain committee. No report.

National Issues. There was discussion about the potential of needing to weigh in on the food safety bill that's going through congress. It has the potential to have a negative impact on small scale farmers. Harriet will keep an eye on this issue and will keep the Council posted.

Agency Reports

NRCS. Pat gave the council an update on the EQIP program sign up and the Conservation Stewardship Program.

EQIP Update. NRCS Field Office staffs are currently writing contracts for applicants selected for FY-09 funding. The target date for completion is July 31. Wisconsin NRCS has asked for additional funding to cover a portion of the \$9 million in unfunded applications.

EQIP Organic Sign Up – NRCS held a sign up specifically for organic producers in response to a commitment by the Chief to address resource concerns which are unique to organic producers. Wisconsin received nearly \$2 million in applications. An initial allocation of \$1.2 million of EQIP funding that was provided for this initiative.

EQIP Hypoxia Initiative – An initiative targeted at reducing the delivery of non-point source pollution to the Gulf of Mexico will occur in FY-2010. Wisconsin NRCS is being asked to develop a list of priority watersheds based on the risk of delivery of nutrients to the Mississippi River. A set of practices that are most effective at reducing Nitrogen nutrient loading to surface water will be emphasized during the sign up.

Conservation Stewardship Program

The release of the “new” CSP program rule by USDA is eminent. Initial training for state level program leaders is scheduled for late July. The new CSP will be a state wide sign up and both cropland and nonindustrial private forest land will be eligible for CSP contracts. Program eligibility will be based on having already addressed one resource concern to a “stewardship” level of protection and agreeing to address at least one remaining priority resource concern.

The application process will utilize a standardized GIS based resource assessment tool to provide an initial eligibility assessment and to document the existing level of resource protection. Final details on eligibility, enhancements, ranking, and payment rates will be contained in the final rule.

Floodplain Easements

Wisconsin will initially receive \$19.7 million to accept floodplain easement offers through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. The 23 resulting easements will restore 4,040 acres to a natural floodplain condition. Some of the remaining 231 offers may be funded if additional funding is redirected to Wisconsin from other states that are not able to finalize their easements.

FY-2010 Federal Conservation Budget

The Presidents’ initial FY-10 budget proposal holds steady or increases funding for most conservation programs. EQIP, Grasslands Reserve, CSP and CRP all receive increased funding.

The need for accountability and demonstrated performance for federally funded programs continues to increase. The amount of time that NRCS staff must commit to oversight and quality assurance of contracts will reduce the staff time available to carry out technical assistance.

Conservation Activity Plans

Wisconsin has agreed to pilot Conservation Activity Plans for Transition to Organic Agriculture, Forest Management Plans and Agricultural Energy Management Plans. A CAP consists of a core plan that is developed utilizing the existing skills and technical processes of private sector professionals. A NRCS conservation planning resource assessment is added to the private sector process. Once the resource assessment and the plan have been completed a list of NRCS conservation practices must also be developed which will allow the client to implement their plan and potentially sign up for cost sharing. CAP developers must participate in a one-day training, complete a number of on line training courses and sign up as TSP using the NRCS TechReg process. 61 Conservation Activity Plans were requested during the recent EQIP signup.

Conservation Stewardship program discussion: Harriet made the comment that there has been a lot of discussion both at the national level through the Sustainable Ag Coalition and within the state through the State Technical Committee on the Conservation Stewardship Program. There are several practices that are now considered eligible that are questionable (e.g. continuous corn under a no-till system).

Sign up periods: There will probably be two signups—one in early fall for fiscal 2009 funds (expiring September 30, 2009), and another in winter after the start of the 2010 federal fiscal year (October 1, 2009-September 30, 2010). Update: the 2009 CSP sign up was announced in August to run through September 30th.

Department of Commerce. Irv Possin reported that the state is receiving \$55 million in Economic Stimulus funds. Most of it is for energy projects, and mostly for industry. It is being given out as loans

rather than grants. People are welcome to apply now through the Wisconsin Department of Commerce. Dairy processors would be eligible. Irv wasn't aware of much that would be available to farmers.

Separately, there is an employment tax credit that was passed as part of the new state budget that could be of value to organic processors and/or farms that employ staff (the rules have not been written yet). Dairy 2020, MVP loan program have been funded by the state for the 2010-2011 biennial budget. There is funding for dairy processors and dairy farmers through the Value Added Dairy Initiative. There is also funding for meat processing tax credits.

Farm Service Agency. Secretary Vilsack recently announced \$760 million more available in loan funding that will allow the state office to process a backlog of loan applications. It was also reported that Wisconsinite Doug Caruso resigned as national head of FSA.

Tony Bowers, an FSA loan officer for the western region talked about a lender webinar on organics that FSA recently held. About 65 people participated. Tony also attended an organic listening session set up by Cornucopia Institute for farmers to share their issues with Secretary Vilsack when he was in LaCrosse. In his comments to the group, Vilsack reinforced that USDA would be stepping up enforcement of the NOP rules.

Department of Natural Resources. Carla Wright reported that the DNR is also working with stimulus dollars. They are focusing on clean diesel. She also said that DNR and DATCP have signed an MOU to cooperate on expediting CAFO approvals. Gov. Doyle signed reauthorization of Green Tier. DNR is working with other agencies on Sustainability. They are starting initiatives with NRCS and DATCP and GrassWorks.

DATCP

Agricultural Resource Management Division Report

1) We are slowly moving forward on ATCP 29. There has been a lot of internal staff work this spring to prepare for the Advisory Committee and rule revision. Christine Mason is one of several Advisory Committee members who have been named, but the 1st meeting has not yet been scheduled. We will schedule the first meeting and move ahead later this summer and fall as staffing allows.

2) Revisions to the seed statute were included in the recently passed biennial budget bill (2009 Act 28); it did not include preemption. The revised statute requires the department to write rules. The ATCP Board will review and possibly approve the scope statement (for ATCP 20) at its August 12th meeting. If approved, the department will need to repeal and recreate ATCP 20 (the existing rule stays in effect until the new rule is officially adopted). It is possible that the seed law advisory committee will be reconvened to provide input on the rule-writing process; if so, it would be enlarged to include an organic representative and anyone else that needs to be included. If that advisory committee is not reconvened, there will be some alternative process to gather input from stakeholders. Whatever process is used, an organic representative will be invited to participate. We will keep you informed.

Agricultural Development Division Report

- Specialty Crops Block Grant:
 - We've applied for and have a very good chance of receiving a grant for \$9,900 to develop educational materials for consumers on organic certification.
- Organic Farmer Directory Project.

- I have a student working on formatting the directory this summer. She should have a draft completed within a couple of weeks.
- The directory will be patterned after the Minnesota one with listings by crop, by county, and by last name.
- Organic Registry Project.
 - We have had the opportunity to work with the Ag Resource Development Division and our IT folks to begin development of a voluntary registry to be used to identify and locate organic farms (and vineyards) to reduce the potential for spray drift problems.
 - We are setting up a system by which organic farmers can input data on their farm locations, numbers of acres, etc. into an on-line, searchable database that will be housed on the DATCP website.
 - We will develop publicity materials that will be sent out by ARM to pesticide applicators as well as through my program to organic farmers.
- Certification cost-share update
 - Summary of cost-share program in Wisconsin:

Year	Total Amount	# of Recipients	Average Payment	Payment Dates
2003	\$106,019.99	317	\$334.39	7/03 - 2/04
2004	\$119,099.42	357	\$333.61	5/04 - 2/05
2005	\$147,025.18	427	\$344.32	11/04 – 12/05
2008	\$427,605.28	668	\$640.13	February-May 2009
 - We initially received \$570,000 for 2008 and 2009. With 10% taken out for administration, we had available \$256,500 for reimbursements per year.
 - We applied for and have just received an additional \$330,000 to cover a projected shortfall for 2009 reimbursements.
 - We sent out the 2009 application forms the week of July 13th to 1398 farmers and handlers. The cut off date will be October 15, 2009.
- We worked with Organic Valley to nominate Dr. Wendy Fulwider for the National Organic Standards Board. We sent a letter of support from Secretary Nilsestuen.

Producers First grant program

Teresa Cuperus shared information about this new program. They've identified one of the stumbling blocks to building a local food system is availability of technical assistance to producers to help them ramp up to supply local grocers and restaurants. The process of setting up this program was not typical. Their federal funders requested that they identify specific issues and projects prior to providing funding, so they did a call for proposals last June prior to actually having any funds available. They received 10 applications. They submitted their proposals, each of which had identified one to two consultants that they'd like to work with. These consultants will form the core of their consulting team to start with. They now have the funding in place. They have \$50,000 in Federal State Market Improvement Program funds and a little more from the state Buy Local program for a total of \$60,000. This will go toward paying the consultants to work with the clientele who had initially applied. Funding is restricted to market improvement, new market entry, and new market development. This program can't be used on production system issues.

Producers First will be doing another request for applications in October. They hope the projects will get started in January. They are looking at the projects running for about a year. This program is patterned

after DATCP's Dairy Business Innovation Center, which has a team of consultants for marketers to work with. It will be different in that the producer identifies the consultant(s) instead of having one provided for them and there is a set dollar limit of consulting that will be paid for.

University of Wisconsin

Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems update: Jed Colquhoun reported that he, Randy Jackson, and Jack Kloppenburg have completed their research on the Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and are working on finalizing a report. They will be meeting with Dean Jahn the week after Farm Technology Days. It was unanimous that the College of Agriculture should move forward with phase two which would involve developing some specific recommendations for developing a sustainable agriculture initiative at CALS. Jed has been asked to lead the next phase. Jack and Randy have been asked to stay involved with the project. They will be setting up an advisory committee of stakeholders to guide Phase two, which should begin sometime around September 1 and last for six months or less.

Question from Carla: Will the WISA project be coordinated with the sustainability bachelors degree? Yes, part of the emphasis will be internal coordination.

Jed also reported that Dean Jahn has secured a federal earmark of \$400,000 per year to support phase two and to encourage participation. They are hoping to design the process to be a bottom up rather than top down approach with a heavy emphasis on stakeholder and clientele input.

Jed also reported that Dr. Jahn will be appointing a director of organic agriculture at UW. This position will be looking at whole supply chain—broader than Erin's role, which focuses on production topics. The position will try to reach out to underserved, overlooked disciplines and to reduce duplication among departments. The position will be below an associate dean position in the hierarchy, similar to the faculty directors for the Nutrient and Pest Management faculty director.

GO Big Read initiative of the new UW Chancellor Bidy Martin. This is a reading project at UW initiated by the Chancellor. All first year students are given the book, and faculty are encouraged to incorporate it into their curricula. Faculty who use the book in their courses will get free copies. The program also encourages faculty, staff, students, alumni to participate. In Defense of Food is the book. Michael Pollin will be here for Food For Thought as well as for a bigger presentation at the Kohl Center.

Organics and the WIC program

Jerry passed around some handouts on this issue, but due to time limitations, the discussion was deferred to the next meeting.

Public Comments There were no public comments

Cedar Grove Tour. After lunch, the group traveled to Cedar Grove Cheese Factory where Bob Wills gave us a tour of the factory and his unique living machine water treatment system.

The meeting adjourned at 3 pm.