



State of Wisconsin
Governor Scott Walker

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Ben Brancel, Secretary

Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council

9:45 am to 3:00 pm

Monday January 7, 2013

WI Department of Agriculture

Board Room, Room 106

2811 Agriculture Drive, Madison

Notes

Present Council members: Craig Dunnum, Mike Schulist, Jerry McGeorge, Harriet Behar, Bill Stoneman, Steve Walker, Rebecca Goodman, Ken Seguine, Christine Mason, Altfrid Krusenbaum, Rich Lange, Jennifer Casey

Interagency tem members: Duane Klein, Kevin Shelley, Jeffery Voltz, Pat Murphy, Cate Rahmlow, Laura Paine, Erin Silva

Public attendees: Carla Wright, Organic Processing Institute; Bridget Holcomb, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute

Meeting called to order 10:05

Introductions We went around the room and introduced ourselves for the benefit of our new agency team member, Jeffrey Foltz from the DNR.

Minutes approval: Bill moved to approve the minutes, Craig seconded, motion carried.

Council reorganization discussion

Harriet reviewed positions currently open. The council approved by consensus the current system of co-chairs and a secretary position. Jerry McGeorge is stepping down as co-chair. Jennifer is willing to step into Jerry's co-chair role providing she's reelected to Council (her term ends this year and she will be re-applying to serve a second term). Ken is willing to be secretary. Ken, Jennifer, and Harriet will be voted on to take office in spring meeting. A motion was made to approve this plan. Jerry moved, Bill seconded, motion carried.

Council terms ending.

Terms ending this year include Rich Lange, farm member; Mike Schulist, business member; Jennifer Casey, consumer member; and Altfrid Krusenbaum, at large member. Laura shared a timeline for nominations, below, with candidates to be voted on at the Council's March 18 meeting.

Selected candidates will be approved at the April Ag Board Meeting. Duane commented that Secretary Brancel wants to see turn over in boards. This isn't a hard-and-fast rule, but it is recommended that members who have been on the Council for several terms consider identifying a new person to replace them. Laura explained the "at large" category provides flexibility in selecting candidates. If there is more than one good candidate for one of the seats, one of them can be brought on as an at-large member.

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Proposed timeline for Organic Advisory Council Nominations

Activity	Date/timeframe
Revise nomination materials	January 14
Develop press release and distribute	January 22
Post revised materials on DATCP website	January 22
Second press release	February 18
Advertise at Organic Farming Conference	February 21-23
Due date for receipt of nominations	March 8
Nomination committee meeting	Week of March 11
OAC review & approval of nomination recommendations	March 18
Review of nominations by Secretary Brancel	Week of March 18th
Final approval of nominations by Ag Board	April meeting

Harriet requested volunteers to serve on the nomination committee. Laura explained the structure of the committee. Rebecca, Christine, Bill, Steve, Jeffrey Voltz agree to serve. Laura shared the nomination materials used on previous years. There were no suggestions for changes, but any comments on the application for nominees can be made to Laura via email. Laura asked if the committee's consensus based ranking and selection process should be formalized. It was agreed to keep the current unstructured format.

Cate commented that an organic retailer, such as Outpost Natural Foods in Milwaukee, might be good to recruit and bring a valuable perspective. It was noted that Margaret Bert Mittlestadt, Communications Director for Outpost was on the Council several years ago. Ken agreed to make inquiries with some of the retailers he works with. Laura will circulate a poll among nomination committee members to determine a committee meeting time.

OAC input for National Organic Coalition (NOC) meeting with Tom Vilsack

As part of her role in the NOC, Harriet will be going to Washington, D.C. to participate in a meeting with Secretary Vilsack on January 8 at 10:30 am. She is interested in Council input on the issues they will be discussing with him.

The NOC is a group of about 12 organizations. Harriet will be representing MOSES when they meet with Secretary Vilsack tomorrow. Miles McEvoy and Mark Lipson from NOP will be there. NOC has been meeting with Kathleen Merrigan regularly since she was appointed as deputy secretary. She has been unable to do much for the group.

Outline of NOC Current Topics

Meeting framework:

How do we work together to meet USDA's Goal of Increasing Number of Organic Farms by 25 percent by 2015? How do we do that, while also maintaining the integrity of organic standards, another mutual goal we share with USDA?

1. Need USDA's Help In Assessing Trend Lines for Organic Production in the U.S.-
 - a. Organic Production Survey, as a follow-on survey to Agricultural Census currently underway.
 - b. In 2008, NASS conducted an Organic Production Survey as a follow on to the 2007 Census of Agriculture.
 - c. NOC is requesting that another Organic Production Survey be conducted in 2013 as a follow on to the 2012 Ag Census now underway, in order to understand trends in organic production in the U.S. and help measure progress toward the USDA goal of growth in organic farms in the U.S.
2. 2) Farmers Losing Access to Basic Tools Needed to Do their Job- Seeds
 - a. Dwindling availability of seeds that are locally adapted and appropriate for organic cropping systems
 - b. Consumers are demanding more locally produced foods, but it requires seeds that are locally adapted.
 - c. Need for locally adapted cultivars is concern for conventional farmers as well. Fewer seeds available to meet growing list of needs. Without the right seeds, production will be subpar, and farmers will need to use more inputs to compensate for not have seeds that are locally adapted to their soils and climate.
 - d. Congress has recognized this problem, and asked USDA to address the issue by making "conventional plant and animal breeding" and "public cultivar development" a priority for funding with AFRI program.
3. Expanding Access to Organic Foods to Lower-Income Americans
 - a. Many states prohibit WIC recipients from using their WIC vouchers to buy certain organic foods. There is an assumption that organic foods are more expensive than conventional.
 - b. But National Cooperative Grocers Association has proposed a pilot whereby natural food cooperatives will defray the additional cost of organic foods in order to be able in order to better serve the low-income women and children in their communities, and give them greater access to high quality food.
 - c. Studies have shown significant reduction in pesticide residues in children who shift to an organic diet, as well as other health benefits.
 - d. Pilot program would involve 3 natural food cooperatives, but we need USDA (FNS) support, collaboration and help in working with the 3 affected State WIC agencies.
4. Contamination of Organic and Conventional Crops by Unregulated GE Crops
 - a. USDA has acknowledged the problem of genetic contamination of organic, conventional and identity-preserved crops caused by gene flow.
 - b. U.S. exports being reject as a result of contamination. U.S. processors are being forced to source organic grains from South America, because of inability to find uncontaminated sources domestically.
 - c. Failure to address problem has result in losses of organic jobs and markets for the U.S. organic sector.
 - d. Credible mechanisms must be established to prevent further contamination and economic harm to U.S. organic sector, and erosion of consumer confidence in organic label.
 - e. Crop Insurance mechanism could be very costly to taxpayers and non-GE farmers. Failure to address on-going contamination only exacerbates those costs.

Discussion was held regarding the organic certification cost share program and whether we should send a message to USDA to encourage continued funding. This topic was not on the NOC's list of priorities, but Harriet thought it would probably come up as an issue. We are falling far short of the goal the administration set for a 25% increase in organic farming by 2015. Harriet explained that there are

two cost share programs. The few states that were part of the original pilot have secure funding. The rest of the states, including Wisconsin, do not. Harriet shared how Congress could make the pilot program national. She also stated that the Chairman of House Ag committee is not in favor of the program.

Altfred expressed the view that perhaps too much energy is invested in securing the cost share program when other areas might be a more judicious use of funds. The cost for certification is a less of a barrier to increasing organic production than other issues. Harriet explained that the original purpose of cost share was to cover the increased cost of inspection after adoption of national standards.

Carla commented that USDA-state meat processing equivalency is important for expansion of organic processing, allowing meat sales over state lines. At issue is an agreement between Fed and State that would allow state-inspected meat sales over state lines. The USDA must approve the WI inspection process. Wisconsin has applied for equivalency, but has not yet been approved.

Jerry commented that a goal should be to maintain or increase the proportion of farm bill funds that go toward supporting organic programs. It should be equivalent to the proportion of agriculture that is organic.

Christine commented that investment in organic seed needs to be made if organic farming is to grow. Steve explains MOSA has allowed local certification of farmer's processors such as a feed mill and paperwork reduction is an area they are addressing as well.

- Of the topics to be presented to Secretary Vilsack, the Council is especially supportive of the seeds issue and the GE contamination issue.

Update on Council priorities (farm bill, GMO, food safety law)

Updates on where these topics are, potential new topics: Keeping organic acres in the face of high conventional prices, providing input to the NOSB on NOP standards

Food Safety Modernization Act

Food safety modernization regulations just released (Friday, January 4). Harriet commented about new inspection regulations that will significantly impact fresh vegetable production. Organic Valley has built new shared packing and washing facility that will help their Amish members meet the standard.

Laura suggests that a committee should be formed to submit WOAC comments on the Food Safety Modernization Act regulations. Jennifer, Harriet, Erin, Carla Wright agreed to serve. Jennifer volunteered to be subcommittee chair. The goal will be to have the first conference call on week of Jan 21. We can review and modify to fit our interests. The deadline for comments is around May 1. The subcommittee will develop a draft statement for the Council's March 18 meeting. Jerry suggested that farmers not on the council should be included on subcommittee. After approval, it will be submitted to FDA. Jerry will talk to David Bruce to see if he's interested in participating or one of their farmers. Update: Katie Peterman at Organic Valley has agreed to work with us on this effort. One idea is that we might use the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's white paper as a foundation for our comments.

Farm Bill

Congress passed an extension of the 2008 Farm Bill shortly after the New Year. Many programs were zeroed out in the budget. NRCS EQIP and a few other programs were previously authorized and will not be affected by the Farm Bill extension of nine months. The extension puts off any activity or

discussion on a new farm bill, probably until March by Harriet's estimate. Harriet will keep the Council apprised of Congressional activity on the farm bill.

GMOs

GMO development continues despite the issues raised by the AC 21 committee. Dicamba and 2,4-D tolerant crops are expected to come out in the next year or two. The federal committee on GMOs came up with a recommendation for compensation for GMO contamination. Their recommendation was to develop a crop insurance program to insure organic crops against losses. Premiums could be lowered if organic farmers go to their neighbors and ask them to modify their production practices to remove opportunity for contamination.

Rebecca felt there was going to be a backlash. Harriet explained that some members of this committee were very unfriendly. Missy with Organic Valley signed the agreement with comments regarding disappointment with agreement. The bright side is that there is a recognition of damage, although it is unclear what will happen next. The most logical approach, in her mind, is to have patent holders to pay into the compensation fund, not tax payers.

The next step would be for Secretary Vilsack to take the recommendations and propose legislation or regulations to address them. Harriet is not sure what the timeline is for this process. The federal committee's report can be found at the following website:

http://www.usda.gov/documents/ac21_report-enhancing-coexistence.pdf

Harriet brought up a Minnesota spray drift situation that has been in the courts there. The MN Supreme Court ruled that if the certified organic farmer didn't apply the spray his or herself, and it is below 5% of the EPA allowed contamination level, it can be sold as a certified organic product. The issue centers on interpretation of application vs. drift of pesticides and meeting organic certification standards. The Farmers Legal Action committee has filed a brief with the US Supreme Court because they've exhausted all legal recourse within the state. NOP plans to file friendly brief if Supreme Court takes up case.

Laura pointed out that Wisconsin has a law that makes drift of any kind illegal. Minnesota does not have such a law, so they were attempting to argue that drift is trespassing and that argument was struck down. Duane commented this could be an issue in Wisconsin if ground water was contaminated or feed that was drifted on was coming into state.

Keeping organic acreage in the face of high conventional prices.

As a result of our discussion on expiring CRP acreage eligibility for organic certification, Altfred filed a Freedom of Information request to obtain a list of CRP acreage coming out of contract in his county. It was a difficult process getting results, including a \$195 fee. He received a CD-ROM with about 91 names and addresses on it. He then sent letters to the owners on the list asking if there was interest in renting their land to an organic farmer. As of the date of the meeting, he had just sent out the letter and did not have any responses.

Further discussion was held regarding access to land to rent or buy for organic farmers. Land values have increased dramatically in response to high grain prices and rents have skyrocketed. Jerry reported that Organic Valley has created position to work with well-funded groups with an interest in increasing organic acreage. Harriet commented that land owners should give long-term leases and reduction in rental fee for organic methods and improvement of soil.

There was a suggestion that the Council develop a press release, discussing the issues of land availability and what infrastructure is needed to deal with it. MOSES has a LandLink website, which

allows landowners to post land for rent and farmers seeking land to post ads. This may be part of a possible solution. Christine wondered how to convince young people that organic is a viable way to farm, does it make sense economically?

Cate suggested publicizing the effort with more mainstream organization newsletters, perhaps natural resource organization. Other partners such as River Alliance, Nature Conservancy, Land Trusts and Sierra Club were identified as places that might communicate these issues to their members. Altfred offered to draft press release and article directing interested people to LandLink and Harriet's 800 number, and DATCP online organic farmer directory. It was suggested that we monitor hits on LandLink website to partially evaluate results of any release. Kevin volunteered to review the press release.

Christine identified another need for more grain and feed storage capacity for organic farmers. It might be possible to create farmer cooperatives to support shared mills for organic grain.

Cate shared that Rural Development just announced their retail opportunity competitive grants. Maybe one of these grants could support a feasibility study on establishing capacity for buying and selling organic grain. Cate is willing to facilitate a discussion with Rural Development to see if a grant for this is a possibility. Craig, Christine, and Rich agreed to be on a committee to look into this. Carla was interested as well.

Planning for booth at the Organic Farming Conference.

DATCP has provided a \$2000 sponsorship for the Conference and will have its usual booth. This year, the department is highlighting the Driftwatch program among other things. DATCP has hired Melissa Fassbender to be the coordinator of the program and she will attend the conference along with Laura. The booth will have the Driftwatch display and computers so that attendees can sign up on-site. We will have part of the booth for the OAC, and will have nomination forms, etc.

Laura will email out a schedule for Council members to sign up to staff the booth.

Agency reports from NRCS, FSA, UW CALS and UW Extension, WEDC, DATCP, WI Technical Colleges, DNR

DATCP report

Agricultural Development Division

Laura Paine, DAD: 608-224-5120/Laura.paine@wi.gov

Summary of 2012 Organic Certification Cost Share program

Table 1. Historic data on applications	Number of Applicants	Average Payment Amount	Total Cost Share Payments
2003	319	\$335	\$107,296
2004	371	\$439	\$123,165
2005	317	\$349	\$110,663
2006, 2007	No funding		
2008	654	\$595	\$392,153
2009	555	\$601	\$333,672
2010	685	\$589	\$403,456
2011	622	\$835.15	\$519,464.85
2012	674	\$821.71	\$553,829.80

Table 2. Farm application summary	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of applications paid	571	498	584	545	574
Average certification cost	\$1075.37	\$1116.19	\$1039.32	\$1151.36	\$1687.77
Average reimbursement amount	\$574.11	\$588.88	\$571.92	\$795.61	\$822.70
Total reimbursement amount	\$327,814.73	\$297,341.99	\$334,000.80	\$433,606.34	\$472,029.86

Table 3. Processor/handler summary	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of applications paid	87	56	101	77	99
Average certification cost	\$2633.05	\$2495.56	\$2584.10	\$2435.50	\$2477.27
Average reimbursement amount	\$692.24	\$723.11	\$687.68	\$699.78	\$685.73
Total reimbursement amount	\$60,917.34	\$40,493.93	\$69,455.63	\$53,882.95	\$74,540.70

Division of Agricultural Development Current Programs

Producers First is now accepting applications

What does Producers First offer?

Producers First provides one-on-one technical assistance for Wisconsin food producers from a consultant of their choosing. Any Wisconsin farmer or producer may apply for Producers First. Producers for local markets are encouraged to apply. Website:

http://datcp.wi.gov/Business/Buy_Local_Buy_Wisconsin/Producers_First/index.aspx

What kind of assistance is available?

- Examples of technical assistance provided by Producers First include but are not limited to: accounting and financial organization, business planning, food safety, grant writing assistance, legal services, market development, packaging and label development, whole farm planning, etc.
- Producers First will pay up to \$3,000 to a consultant for providing this assistance.
- A matching payment of at least 10% is required from producers.

How can I apply for Producers First?

We strongly encourage you to fill out the brief [Producers First Web Questionnaire](#) at least one month prior to the full application deadline. If your questionnaire shows you meet the eligibility requirements, we will invite you to submit a three-page full application. We accept questionnaires at all times, and we accept full applications for review according to the following deadlines:

- September 30, 2012
- December 31, 2012
- March 31, 2013

For questions about Producers First, please contact Keefe Keeley by email, at datcp_producersfirst@wisconsin.gov, or by phone, at 608-224-5095.

Buy Local Buy Wisconsin Workshops

Intermediate QuickBooks

Held Tuesday, January 15, 2013 –Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, 2811 Agriculture Drive, Madison or Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, Green Bay.

Post-Harvest handling and On-Farm Food Safety

This workshop featured training by farmer and author Atina Diffley on the newly revised “Wholesale Success: a Farmer’s Guide to Selling, Post-Harvest Handling and Packing Produce.” Held the week of January 21.

Fearless Farm Finances

In our first webinar-only workshop series join Paul Dietmann of Badgerland Financial and Craig Chase of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach cover farm finances, pricing and enterprise budgets. Upon registration, you will be sent an invite link to join in the webinar. Sessions will be from 10:00 – 11:30 am. Cost for each webinar is \$10.00.

- Thursday, February 28th: Show me the money! Topics include Balance Sheets, Income Statements and Statements of Cash Flow.
- Thursday, March 7th: How much for one egg? Enterprise Budget Analysis including discussion on production changes, product mix and pricing.
- Thursday, March 14th: Where to invest your money first? How do I present my idea to a lender? Investment Analysis, Partial Budgeting and other tools will be presented.

Videos of past workshops will be available soon in the [Webinar Archives](#). If you have any questions or would like to be informed when the archives become available, please contact Callie LaPoint at callie.lapoint@wisconsin.gov or (608)224-5112.

National Organic Program Organic Literacy Initiative

The Organic Literacy Initiative is designed to help connect current and prospective organic farmers, ranchers, and processors with appropriate USDA resources. This package of training and outreach materials explains what the organic label means and how certification works. Through this effort, USDA staff around the U.S. will be better equipped to help farmers, ranchers, and processors understand organic certification and access relevant USDA services. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop> (look under NOP Newsroom Updates, right side)

Agricultural Resource Management

Duane Klein, ARM: 608-224-4520, Duane.Klein@Wisconsin.gov

Driftwatch

We have hired Melissa Fassbender as our Driftwatch program marketing specialist to promote the Driftwatch program and recruit sensitive crop producers to sign up for the program. We are hoping to see a large increase in the number of people signing up for the program. If you have questions about the program, feel free to contact her at melissa.fassbender@wi.gov or 608-224-4504.

We will be promoting the program at various conferences around the state this winter, including the Organic Farming Conference, where computers will be available for farmers to sign up onsite. Field signs will also be available. Please remember to promote the YouTube video about the Driftwatch program:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKLmmEvfOTc&feature=plcp>

Discussion was held with Duane about pesticide rule enforcement. Harriet mentioned that she had heard that if you can smell a pesticide on your property, that constitutes drift and that parking your truck downwind from a drift event can facilitate the investigation—a wipe sample can be taken from the surface of the vehicle. Duane said that they also take samples of clothing, plants, soil, etc.

Mike Schulist asked if the rules regulate fertigation, an issue in the Central Sands area. Duane said no, fertilizer application is not regulated the way pesticides are.

UW Extension/CALS reports

University of Wisconsin- CALS Update

Submitted by: Erin Silva

- 1) Several new courses will be taught this spring with an emphasis on organic agriculture and agricultural sustainability. These include: Plant Pathology 375, Organic and Urban Agriculture; Hort 375, Assessing Agricultural Sustainability Through Experiential Learning, and Hort 375 Assessing Agricultural Sustainability Through Experiential Learning.
- 2) A summer experience/internship with an emphasis on organic agriculture/sustainable Ag will be developed for 2013. This will include one afternoon per week of in-the-field learning and field trips, as well as internship placement in a sustainable Ag environment.
- 3) Several new grants were awarded from the Ceres Trust by UW and partners, including an organic grazing grant with DATCP and Organic Valley and an organic no-till/giant ragweed grant.
- 4) Several Midwest-based production conferences will have an organic component. These include: the Wisconsin Crop Management Conference (Alliant Energy Center, Jan 15-17, Organic No-Till); Wisconsin Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Conference (Wisconsin Dells, Jan 20-22, organic management incorporated into all sessions as well as a presentation by Martin Diffley); and S. WI Vegetable Conference (Alliant Energy Center, Feb I, organic management incorporated into all sessions). UW will also be presenting workshops at the MOSES organic farming conference and through the Michaels Fields Ag Institute workshop series.

University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension

Submitted by Kevin B. Shelley, UWEX Nutrient and Pest Management Program 608-575-4746

1. New hires:

Heidi Johnson, PhD. as Dane County Crops and Soils Educator (has been in Jefferson County)

Matt Glewen, as General Manager of Wisconsin Farm Technology Days (has been in Calumet County)

Brian Luck will join us later in 2013 to do work in Machinery Systems as a new campus-based Extension Specialist in Biological Systems Engineering.

2. The 2013 Wisconsin Agricultural Economic Outlook Forum will be held January 23rd at 1 pm to 4:30 pm at the Pyle Center, UW Madison campus (702 Langdon St.). A report from the forum is available at: <http://www.cals.wisc.edu/agoutlook/>

3. Annie's project sessions will be held Wednesdays, January 23--February 27, 2013 10am-3pm AgStar Financial Services office, 540 Baldwin Plaza Drive, Baldwin, WI 54002, coordinated by Dunn County Extension (katie.wantoch@ces.uwex.edu), 715-232-1636 <http://dunn.uwex.edu>.

UWEX Annie's Project is a program for beginning farm women or farm women considering a direct marketing enterprise. It is a multi-session program to provide risk management education to farm women. It also can provide networking opportunities to farm women who may experience feelings of isolation. The project's mission is to empower farm women to be better business partners through networks and by managing and organizing critical information.

4. Farm Bill and UW Ag and Natural Resources Extension – From John Shutske, Associate Dean and Program Director, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension & Outreach, UW-Madison CALS

“The one-year extension of the Farm Bill kicks the can down the road a bit with somewhat neutral implications for Extension -- with a major exception. Four major programs managed by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) were NOT provided with ongoing funding....They are: (1) Organic Ag Research & Extension Initiative; (2) Specialty Crops Research Initiative; (3) Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development; and (4) Biomass R&D. Several of these will impact our programs here in Wisconsin and in the North Central Region.

There are several of us traveling to Washington, DC in late February to meet with our US Representatives and Senators (and/or their staff) as part of the Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET) program. Our delegation will include Deans Klemme and VandenBosch along with four Wisconsin citizens/business people. ANRE will be well-represented. I am optimistic that our elected state and federal officials will continue to see UWEX, CALS, and the UW in a positive light and that everyone's effort to communicate the importance and impacts of our programs will pay dividends.”

WI DNR-Jeffrey Voltz

Jeffrey is looking for advice on which of the many DNR programs the WOAC would like him to report on. Harriet suggested that organic farmers are interested in biodiversity, how to incorporate ecosystems and agriculture. Laura mentioned that Carla Wright had suggested DNR land managers should consider encouraging use of non GMO seed on DNR land. Jeffrey will look into situation and report back with further information on the options. Jeffrey listed off a number of potential issues that might be of interest to the Council. As a budget analyst, Jeffrey can keep us posted on what's going on with the state budget.

NRCS—Pat Murphy

EQIP sign up ends Jan 18. There is a new rate scheme for cost sharing rates in our region. There is an organic initiative within that sign up. The minimum threshold that was set nationally has been removed. NRCS hopes to have their contracting done by March 30th.

Pat Leavenworth has retired. Jimmy Bramblett has been appointed as the state conservationist. He came from the national office as a head of regional conservationists. His stature and connections at the national level will help Wisconsin. Pat will find out if Jimmy can come to our next meeting.

Harriet asked why WI has only one sign up period, whereas other states have more than one sign up period. Pat responded that Wisconsin generally has such a good response the first time that all of our allocation is used up. Other states have additional sign ups because they don't use up all their funding.

Program Funding and Signups in 2012 and FY 2013 to date

Program		FY12	FY13
EQIP Environmental Quality Incentives Program	FA (\$)	\$26 million	\$29 million*
	# Contracts	1542	
	Acres	154,700	
CSP Conservation Stewardship Program	FA (\$)	\$3,060,432	TBA
	New Contracts	477	
	Acres	162,394	
WRP Wetlands Reserve Program	FA (\$)	\$8.2 million	No new FY13 enrollment
	# Easements		
	Acres		
WHIP Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program	FA (\$)	\$23,989	
	# Contracts	2	
FRPP Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program	FA (\$)	\$665,000	
	# Easements		
	Acres		

*includes all initiatives and special funding

Farm Bill and FY2013 Budget and Programs

At this time, neither a new Farm Bill nor the 2013 budget have passed Congress. NRCS is operating under a continuing resolution, perhaps through March 2013. Pending additional legislation or national direction, we expect to proceed with conservation program application and ranking for FY13. **Sign-up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program for 2012 is underway, closing on Jan. 18, 2013.**

USDA Opens Hispanic and Women Farmer Claims Process

Anyone who believes they were improperly denied USDA farm loan benefits between 1981 and 2000 because they are Hispanic or female, may be eligible to apply for compensation. Claims MUST be filed by March 25, 2013 to be considered for cash payment or loan forgiveness. Potential claimants should contact the Farmer and Rancher Call Center 1-888-508-4429, or Website:

www.farmerclaims.gov

Wisconsin FSA, NRCS and RD hosted two public meetings on the Hispanic Women Farmer Claims Process on Nov. 29 in Madison and Dec. 6, 2012 in Eau Claire.

Cover Crops in Drought-

Through EQIP, NRCS made available up to \$400,000 to establish cover crops, such as rye, oats, millet, or other cover crops that protect against erosion and

**affected
Counties**

may provide forage for livestock. Over 20,000 acres were established in cover crops this fall as a result of the special sign-up.

**Landscape
Initiatives**

NRCS is targeting conservation assistance to critical resources through a number of landscape scale initiatives. In Wisconsin, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative are allowing NRCS and partners to focus staff and financial assistance on water quality issues in selected watersheds. Over \$3 million in financial assistance was obligated in the lower Fox River Watershed as part of special Phosphorus Reduction Pilot Project. Wisconsin and neighboring states also proposed a national Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative (DALCI) for erosion control and wildlife habitat that was funded as a Wisconsin initiative in FY12 for \$1.2 million.

**Soil Health
Initiative**

The Soil Health Initiative is partnership effort to focus attention on improving soil health through sound field conservation practices. An interagency team has been organized to provide training to conservation professionals and to begin laying the groundwork for a collaborative Soil Health Initiative in Wisconsin.

**New Wisconsin
NRCS State
Conservationist**

The new State Conservationist for Wisconsin will be Jimmy Bramblett. Mr. Bramblett currently serves as Chief of Staff for Regional Conservationists at National Headquarters in Washington, DC. In this role, Jimmy is responsible for providing support to the Regional Conservationists to manage all aspects of the agency's state, area, and field offices, including programs, technology, accountability, and administration. Bramblett replaces Pat Leavenworth, who retired Oct. 30 after 18 years as Wisconsin State Conservationist. Colleen Oestreich will continue to serve as Acting State Conservationist until January 21 when the new STC arrives. We are all looking forward to welcoming Jimmy to Wisconsin and are delighted with the high level experience and broad expertise that he brings with him.

WEDC—Cate Rahmlow

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation is working on a project with the Public Service Commission to survey business users of high speed internet in Wisconsin. She will share survey so that we can encourage participation. Broad band internet access is especially important for farms and rural businesses. The Public Service Commission (PSC) is conducting the survey between February and April, 2013. Agricultural producers are a targeted audience; any help the Organic Advisory Council can provide in getting the word out is appreciated. Cate will forward the survey to Laura Paine for distribution to the group and beyond. Please participate and encourage other small businesses to do the same.

The Milwaukee 7 Food and Beverage Council (www.FABMilwaukee.com) has a website which organic producers can register on if interested.

WEDC is launching a new branding effort, "In Wisconsin" www.inwisconsin.com. Organic Valley is one of the first companies they're working with. Cate showed the OV video that they made and posted on their website. They will be used for encouraging Wisconsin site selection at business conferences, both national and international. Cate stated that the difference between this program and Something Special is that this not focused on products but on manufacturing, logistics, and distribution. Target market for this program: attracting relocating, expanding businesses, distribution, investment to Wisconsin.

Update on the status of DATCP grant programs (from Bridget Holcomb, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute).

The Agricultural Development and Diversification, Buy Local, Grazing, and Farm to School grant programs are all proposed to be removed from the state budget.

Bridget described how Department Secretaries were instructed to take the average of the last two budgets and use that as their budget figure. For the DATCP budget, Discovery Farms, Dairy 30X20, and Livestock Premises ID were asked for additional funding, in spite of this instruction.

Bridget stated that in spite of the fact that the executive and legislative branches are all one party, there is usually a lot of negotiating and lots of changes are likely to be made. Legislators are typically more responsive to constituent input than is the Executive branch and OAC members as individual citizens are able to express their views to their representatives.

When the Governor's budget comes out in February, the Joint Finance Committee will hold budget hearings around the state. It would be a good idea for supporters of these programs to attend these hearings. It is a long day, and each participant only gets three minutes, but this is an important place to get your views on the table.

It is a biennial budget and internal department budget discussions start in February of the previous year. That is, the current budget being discussed was beginning to be discussed in February, 2012. The next time the OAC would have an opportunity to talk to the Ag Secretary as he is developing his budget would be in February of 2014.

Is it best to go to the Joint Finance Committee or to your representative?

As a member of the group you represent on Organic Advisory Council, you can go to a Joint Finance member. The OAC itself is affiliated with DATCP and it is thus not appropriate for members to describe themselves as representing OAC, but they can talk to legislators as representatives of their organizations, e.g. Mike can represent the Wisconsin Organic Marketing Alliance and Steve can represent MOSA and other certifiers. As an individual, you can go to your representative and ask them to pass your views on to Finance Committee members.

Discussion was held on suggestions for individual input to the joint finance committee to preserve funding of grant programs or as a minimum allow language to remain so that they can be funded when funds available.

Timeline for State Budget Development:

Budget development February-August prior year

Governor's budget released in January or February

Joint Finance deliberations in March

May-June- Senate, Assembly passage

Michael Fields action alert list serve—LAURA WILL PASS COUNCIL MEMBER EMAILS TO BRIDGET.

Jerry suggested that, at our January meeting next year, we should request a meeting with Ben to talk about budget issues of importance to organics.

Old business

Overview of organic prices (Mike Schulist and others). Mike stated that supplies of organic grain and feed are still very tight. There is some grain coming in from overseas. He has seen prices of more than \$400/ton for conventional hay. Some organic farmers can't find organic hay to buy. Some are thinking about going conventional because conventional hay is more available, but not much.

Adjourn

Ken moved to adjourn seconded by Rebecca. Meeting adjourned at 3:10 pm.