



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

Tuesday July 9, 2013

**Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
W2493 County road ES
East Troy, WI 53120**

FINAL Notes

Present Council members: Craig Dunnum, Jerry McGeorge, Harriet Behar, Steve Walker, Rebecca Goodman, Ken Seguine, Jennifer Casey, Bill Stoneman, Inga Witcher, Elena Byrne, Steve Pincus, Christine Mason was not able to attend.

Interagency tem members: Laura Paine, Erin Silva, Florin (guest of Erin), Duane Klein, Christine Lilek, Randy Zogbaum, Sally Keiffer, Kevin Shelley, Laurie Makos

Public attendees: Margaret Krome, Maggie Zoellner, David Andrews Michael Fields Executive Director, Joe Maurer, Jay Gilbertson

Meeting called to order 10:20 AM

Introductions and welcome to new council members and guests.

Minutes approval: Jerry McGeorge moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Craig Dunnam, minutes approved.

Future Meetings: October meeting on the 29th, January meeting to be set at the October meeting.

Harriet gave a brief overview of Council past activities and goals for new members and guests.

Interagency Reports:

WDNR – Sally Keiffer & Christine Lilek

Efforts are being made to build in resilience and adaptation to best farming practices with regard to climate change. Laura suggests an excellent presentation that could be made at a future meeting regarding projections in Wisconsin. Bill Stoneman suggests a future DNR report on EAB, Gypsy Moth and other ag pests in Wisconsin. Christine Lilek will provide report to Laura on biodigester using only 200 cows (attached at the end of the minutes) and the value added products created and new program for recycling ag plastics.

“Endangered Resources” bureau name changes but mission stays the same -The state program charged with caring for [Wisconsin's endangered resources](#), nongame animals and State Natural Areas is taking on a new name and organizational structure to better reflect and carry out its broad mission. As of July 1, the Bureau of Endangered Resources officially became the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation within the Department of Natural Resources.

Invasive Japanese hedgeparsley taking hold in southern Wisconsin. Has potential to spread to most regions of the state – A relatively new invasive plant species has started spreading widely in southern Wisconsin and has now been found as far north as Portage County, but state invasive species

Agriculture generates \$59 billion for Wisconsin

2811 Agriculture Drive • PO Box 8911 • Madison, WI 53708-8911 • 608-224-5012 • Wisconsin.gov

An equal opportunity employer

specialists say most populations are still small enough to be contained before they expand. [Japanese hedgeparsley](#) (*Torilis japonica*) is a member of the carrot family and is considered a winter annual (germinating in fall) or a biennial.

All Stewardship grants programs now reside in the Division of Land - Two Stewardship grant managers for the NCO (Nonprofit Conservation Organization) and LUG (Local Units of Government) programs moved from the Bureau of Community Financial Assistance in the Division of Customer and Employee Services to the Bureau of Facilities and Lands. With this "realignment," all DNR staff with statewide management responsibility for Stewardship expenditures will reside in the Land Division. With this change, Financial Assistance Specialists Pam Foster-Felt and Lavane Hessler have been reassigned to the Bureau of Facilities and Lands. <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/>

Helpful Links for Farmers:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/species.asp?catval=plants>

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/urbanforests/eabtoolbox.html>

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/ForestHealth/>

<http://gypsymoth.wi.gov/>

WI Technical College – Randy Zogbaum

Randy described a new Ag Business Program starting this fall at Madison Area Technical College. The goal is to offer new farmer trainings with a focus on improvement of business practices, financial indicators, marketing opportunities and financial analysis. The program is spreading to other parts of the state. Review of program distributed. Overall, the technical colleges can offer any sort of program that is associated with job training and there are jobs available at the end of the process. Madison College is able to offer courses similar to those in the new program on many topics related to farming if there is a qualified instructor on the topic and at least 10 people enrolled.

Randy distributed a handout with a summary of the program and shared that they are recruiting instructors for the program.

Farm Business Management

This set of courses will lead students down the path of developing a business plan for their farm business. Students then learn methods for using the plan to evaluate their farms financial viability and assist in decision making. Students can take each course sequentially or take individual courses depending on their experience and knowledge of operating a farm business. The first series of courses will take place in Plain, Wisconsin at the Green TTEC. For more information, visit this website: <http://madisoncollege.edu/farm-business-management>

Operating the Farm Business

Understanding the Farm Business

This course is intended for individuals who are new to farm management. A farm business is a complex set of enterprises that all need to be managed effectively to be successful and sustainable. This course will introduce students to the variety of resources, both public and private, to assist them on all aspects of their farm business, from crop and nutrient management planning to veterinary services to developing feed rations and much more. In addition, students will learn the value of sound business planning to the success of their farm business and begin the journey of developing a business plan. Finally, students will start to develop a business plan for their farm business. They will develop a mission statement, write goals (personal, family, farm, partnership, etc.), write a description of their farm business, list assets and needs, etc. There will also be an introduction to the financial components of a business plan.

Developing a Farm Business Plan

This course will teach students how to develop business plan for their farming operation. Students will be introduced to the components of good business plan including a narrative of their operation, the Balance Sheet, Accrual Income Statement, and the Statement of Cash Flow. Students will see how these tools are used to understand a farm businesses financial position through understanding the financial measures of Liquidity, Solvency, and Profitability. Finally, students will develop each of these records for their farm and have an introduction to using financial ratios to evaluate their financial position.

Using the Farm Business Plan

This course will build on prior courses by demonstrating how the student's business plan can be used for understanding, improving, and growing the farm business. Students will use their plan and financial records to evaluate their current financial position by calculating and using financial ratios. They will also see how their plan can be used to understand risk management, develop a marketing strategy, create short-term goals, and for long-term projections and growth strategies.

Evaluating your Farm Business

Farm Business Analysis & Decision Making

This course builds on the prior courses in business planning by looking at using year-to-year financial records for analysis of the farm business and to assist in decision making. Students will look at their previous year plan and prepare for the next year. They will update their plan and financial ratios and investigate how having maintaining year-to-year record keeping systems improves the decision making process and financial viability of your farm.

Farm Enterprise Analysis & Marketing

This course builds on the prior courses in business planning by looking at using year-to-year financial records for analysis of the farm business and to assist in decision-making. This course will demonstrate how to enterprise budgets and partial analysis to determine where your farm business is making or losing money. Students will use these tools to develop pricing and marketing strategies for their farm businesses. Requires at least one year of operation under a complete business plan.

Long-term Farm Budgeting & Management

This course builds on the prior farm business planning courses by looking at using year-to-year financial records for budgeting and monitoring a farm business's financial viability. This course requires at least one year of operation under a complete business plan. Students will learn a long-term budgeting system and how monitoring this system will help meet personal, family, and financial goals for their farms.

University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture and Extension [insert written reports here when received]

Erin Silva

Two agriculture field days for the remainder of year: a living mulch trial and mow down and mulching for vegetables. This year's agriculture report will feature themes to be highlighted to emphasis the importance of organic to the state. Erin suggested a geographic representation to show broad spread in the state, Laura suggested showing organic by legislative district.

Kevin Shelly

Julie Dawson is the new specialist starting soon.

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

Cate Rahmlow, Industry Sector Manager

Rural Broadband Accessibility Survey—still needs your input!

WEDC is supporting a statewide effort to measure internet/broadband accessibility needs for business; especially in rural areas. The Public Service Commission (PSC) is conducting the survey.

Agricultural producers are a targeted audience so any help the Organic Advisory Council can provide in getting the word out is appreciated. Please participate and encourage other small businesses to do the same.

The target response rate for the survey was 4% of businesses (5576 businesses) and 4% of residences (84,840 individuals). To date, they've had 1375 businesses and 6351 individuals responding, and while some counties have had a good response, many have not. Please remind those on your own distribution lists to fill out the survey via one of the following methods.

Business Broadband Survey online link: <http://www.wisconsindashboard.org/node/405>.

Phone survey or to request paper version: call Peter Jahn at the PSC - 608-267-2338

Thank you, again, for your assistance on this important initiative.

Crowdsourcing organic businesses.

Kickstarter is an example of a crowdsourcing website that has funded a variety of startup projects including films, games, and music to art, design, technology, and even organic food businesses. Crowdsourcing creates a platform for individuals or companies to design projects and solicit funding from the public. Project creators set a funding goal and deadline. If people like a project, they can pledge money to make it happen. Funding on Kickstarter is all-or-nothing — projects must reach their funding goals to receive any money. To date, 44% of projects posted have reached their funding goals. Since launching in 2009, more than 4.3 million people have pledged over \$674 million, funding more than 43,000 creative projects. Currently, the site lists 95 organic food projects that have been posted on Kickstarter. Funding requests range from a few thousand dollars to \$50,000 or more. About half the projects posted were funded or are still soliciting support.

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&term=Organic+food>

WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Agricultural Resource Management

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

Grazing

Brian Loeffelholz (ARM staff) and Laura Paine are working with the Southwest Wisconsin Grass and Stream Conservation Area Initiative (SWGSCA) to establish a "Grazing Broker" as a pilot to connect landowners with grassland acres to agricultural producers wanting/needing to lease grassland acres for grazing. Non-farming landowners control a significant percentage of grassland in the region, much of which is under CRP contracts that will expire over the next few years. The broker works to provide non-farming landowners with the resources, social connections, and experience to identify and negotiate with local livestock producers who could balance economic and conservation goals through grass-based production. This CRP ground is, in many cases, able to be certified organic unless they have had to use herbicides for weed control.

Over the past year the Grazing Team has worked to trial the Grazing Broker model by holding landowner and producer workshops, identified grassland available for grazing in the region, build a producer base, develop grazing profiles for lands available for grazing, and worked to establish

relationships between grassland owners and producers. The Grazing Team is in the process of looking for support from outside organizations and applying for grants to assist in funding a full time Grazing Broker position.

For additional information you may contact:

Brian Loeffelholz, DATCP
608-224-4632
Brian.Loeffelholz@WI.gov

Laura Paine
608-224-5120
Laura.paine@wi.gov

ATCP 50

The department is proposing some changes to the pasture requirements in the final draft of ATCP 50 regarding nutrient management (NM) in light of the number of public comments we received on this topic area. The changes are intended to provide additional flexibility and reduce costs associated with developing NM plans for well-managed pastures. The department plans on going to the DATCP Board on September 10th with the final draft for approval. If the Board approves the final draft it will next go to the legislature and Governor's office for approval with the potential of becoming effective in the summer of 2014.

For additional information you may contact:

Sara Walling, DATCP
608-224-4501
Sara.Walling@WI.gov

Pest Bulletin and Survey

The [pest bulletin](#) and [pest survey](#) each contain information gathered from the Plant Industry (PI) bureau that may be of interest to organic growers. If there is a group of organic growers that is interested in gathering information on a specific crop, insect or plant disease, staff from the PI bureau may be able to work with them to develop and collect information as part of a specific survey.

Pest Bulletin website: <http://datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/pb/index.jsp>

Pest Survey website: <http://pestsurvey.wi.gov>

For additional information you may contact:

Melody Walker, DATCP
608-224-4586
Melody.Walker@WI.gov

Driftwatch (driftwatch.org)

The theme of the work in DriftWatch this late spring/early summer can be summed up in a recent phone call with an organic produce grower from Norwalk. "I have a computer, but I'm too busy pulling weeds to use it," she said. "Could you do it for me?"

DriftWatch outreach continues to be broad and has been adjusted to encourage participation by those who don't use computers. Outreach to the organic community included postcards mailed in early June to 1,200 certified producers. "You don't need a computer to use DriftWatch" was a prominent part of the message. Nature's International Certification Services paid for postage. Organic producers who are not certified often ask if they can participate. They can. Outreach through the summer will be designed to encourage that group to sign up with Driftwatch. Outside the organic community, a major focus has

been directed at beekeepers and has included literature and in-person presentations to beekeepers clubs. As of June 25, 2013, 311 producers are registered on DriftWatch; 19 applicators are registered. Please note that applicators do not need to register to be able to use the program.

For additional information you may contact:

Anne Marie Ames, DATCP
608-224-4504
AnneMarie.Ames@WI.gov

Harriet commented that producers feel applicators are not going to look at the list. This is a catch-22—the applicators won't look at the list if it isn't populated and producers won't put their information up if they don't feel that it will be used. Bill Stoneman suggested that offering a webinar that earned applicators Continuing Education Units (CEUs) might encourage applicators to use the site.

Agricultural Development Division

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

- **Grazing Broker project:** I am working closely with ARM on the Grazing Broker project, described above.
- **Soil Health Workshop:** On June 26, we partnered with Organic Valley's Mark Kopecky to organize a soil health training for about 30 agency staff from NRCS, Land Conservation Departments, Extension, and Resource Conservation and Development organizations. The focus was on managing grazing to maximize soil health and was hosted by the Mahalko organic dairy near Gilman, WI. The workshop series is funded by a SARE Professional Development grant program.
- **Update on DAD grant programs:**
 - **Dairy 30x20:** Another round of funding for the Dairy 30X20 will be available after July 1. A call for applications will be forthcoming within the next few months. Grants are for \$2500 to \$5000 and can be used for hiring expertise to assist with business planning, transition planning, farm transfers, engineering, design, layout of new barns, parlors or other farm structures, or herd health, nutrition, milk production, managed grazing planning, or transition to organic production.
 - http://datcp.wi.gov/Farms/Dairy_Farming/Grow_Wisconsin_Dairy_Grant/index.aspx
 - The **Buy Local grant** program was reinstated into the state budget by the Legislature. DAD staff are working on developing a timeline for the Call for Proposals.
 - The **Grazing Grant program** and Agricultural Development and Diversification grant program were eliminated from the budget.

Laura also encouraged council members to take a copy of a recently completed report on the chemistry of pasture raised milk. Her group also produced a video on the project that can be viewed on YouTube (<http://youtu.be/WLR1FdtsoIw>). She also shared information on a national dairy science study looking at herd health on pasture-based, conventional, and organic dairy farms (<http://milkquality.wisc.edu/>). She also shared a national study on small scale local meat processing that was recently published: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err150.aspx>.

Farm Service Agency - Laurie Makos

- FSA offices are currently involved in documenting crop losses due to excessive moisture, with damages reaching as much as 30% by county.
- County committee elections are coming up for farmers who serve on local committees that work with county staff like Laurie to determine activities.

- There is a July 15 deadline to report crops to local FSA offices.
- Wisconsin is second in the nation for utilization of the new microloan program.

Crop and Agricultural Damage or Loss Reporting

FSA is currently assessing and reporting to USDA weather related damages and losses to crops, livestock, buildings, and infrastructure related to agriculture. In cooperation with local, State, and other Federal Agency personnel, FSA employees are working to gather information and complete reports that can result in eligibility for Federal Disaster Aid and Assistance for the farmers in their service areas.

County Committee Nominations

County committee members are a critical component of the operations of FSA. They help deliver FSA farm programs at the local level. Farmers who serve on county committees help with the decisions necessary to administer the programs in their counties. They work to ensure FSA agricultural programs serve the needs of local producers. FSA county committees operate within official regulations designed to carry out federal laws. The COC nomination period runs through August 1, 2013.

DCP Deadline Approaching

The sign-up period for the 2013 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) continues through August 2nd. This program provides crop related payments to farmers.

CRP Sign-Up Ended June 14th

Enrollment for the 2014 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) ended on June 14th. CRP protects the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation, while providing significant economic and environmental benefits to rural communities across the State. Producers that are accepted in the program can receive cost-share assistance to plant long-term, resource-conserving covers and receive an annual rental payment for the length of the contract which is 10-15 years. Applicants were given multiple opportunities to increase their chances to bid competitively in the sign up process. The National Office is now reviewing and processing the proposed applications for enrollment.

Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Sign-Up Ongoing

All producers with eligible land have the opportunity to enroll acres into continuous CRP practices. The practices available during continuous sign-up generally provide high environmental benefits to large areas when compared to the acreage on which the practice is implemented. Continuous sign-up practices include: riparian buffers; filter strips; grassed waterways; shelter belts; field windbreaks; shallow water areas for wildlife; wetland restoration; farmable wetlands; farmable wetland buffer, pollinator habitat, highly erodible land with an erodibility index that is 20 or higher, and living snow fences. CRP is a voluntary program that offers annual rental payments for 10-15 years and cost-share assistance to establish long-term resource-conserving covers on eligible land. Continuous CRP allows land devoted to certain conservation practices to be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers for continuous sign-up are not subject to competitive bidding.

Crop Certification

After spring planting is completed producers should certify their 2013 acreage with FSA. Filing an accurate acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planting acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits for a variety of programs and potentially establish eligibility for any future programs. Failed acreage must be reported before disposition of the crop and prevented planting must be reported no later than 15 days after the final planting date for the crop in the county. Acreage reports are required for many Farm Service Agency programs. For crops enrolled in programs other than NAP (Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program), acreage reports are to be certified by no later than July 15th.

Sodbusting

Farmers should be aware that if they use highly erodible land for crop production without proper conservation measures, they risk losing eligibility to participate in Farm Service Agency programs. Before producers clear, plow or otherwise prepare areas not presently under crop production for planting, they are required to file an AD-1026, indicating the area to be brought into production. If the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) indicates that the area is highly erodible land, the producer will be required to develop and implement a conservation plan on the affected acreage before bringing the land into production.

Direct and Guaranteed Loans

The Farm Service Agency is committed to providing family farmers with loans to meet their farm credit needs. FSA loan programs have provisions that allow for assistance targeted directly to beginning farmers, youth, and socially disadvantaged individuals. If you are having trouble getting the credit you need for your farm, or regularly borrow from FSA, direct and guaranteed loans are currently available.

Guaranteed loans are underwritten by FSA and made through commercial lenders. Guaranteed loans have a maximum limit of \$1,302,000. Interest rates for guaranteed loans vary but are typical for rates charged to other borrowers in the area.

Direct loans are funded entirely through FSA loan appropriations and applications are accepted in the county offices directly from the farmers. Direct loans have a maximum limit of \$300,000. Interest rates for direct loans for farm ownership (usually real estate) are 3.25% for loans approved or closed in July 2013 (rate will generally lock at the lower of approval or closing). Interest rates for direct loans for farm operating (usually personal property or annual operating) are 1.25% for loans approved or closed in July 2012 (rate will generally lock at lower of approval or closing).

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) developed the Microloan (ML) program to better serve the unique financial operating needs of beginning, niche and small family farm operations. This type of direct loan program is designed to help farmers with credit needs of \$35,000 or less. The loan features a streamlined application process built to fit the needs of new and smaller producers. This loan program will also be useful to specialty crop producers and operators of community supported agriculture (CSA). As financing needs increase, applicants can apply for a regular operating loan up to the maximum amount of \$300,000 or obtain financing from a commercial lender under FSA's Guaranteed Loan Program.

Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program (FSFL) allows producers of eligible commodities to obtain low-interest financing to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. The maximum principal amount of a loan through FSFL is \$500,000. Participants are required to provide a down payment of 15 percent, with CCC providing a loan for the remaining 85 percent of the net cost of the eligible storage facility and permanent drying and handling equipment. Loan terms of seven, 10 or 12 years are available depending on the amount of the loan. For FSFL's approved in June, the following interest rates are locked in for the life of the loan; for a 7-year loan, 1.25%; for a 10-year loan, 1.75% and for a 12-year loan, 2.0%.

Natural Resource Conservation Service

Pat Murphy

Signups in 2012 and FY 2013 to date

***includes all initiatives and special funding**

| Program | | FY12 | FY13 |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| EQIP Environmental Quality Incentives Program | FA (\$) | \$26 million | \$29 million* |
| # Contracts | | 1523 | |
| Acres | | 154,502 | |
| CSP Conservation Stewardship Program | FA (\$) | \$3,057,308 | TBA |
| New Contracts | | 476 | 428 applications |
| Acres | | 162,138 | |
| WRP Wetlands Reserve Program | FA (\$) | \$7.5 million | \$3.2 million |
| # Easements | | 24 | 30 apps rec'd |
| Acres | | 1950 | |
| WHIP Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program | FA (\$) | \$23,989 | \$32,500 |
| # Contracts | | 2 | |
| FRPP Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program | FA (\$) | \$850,500 | \$859,244 |
| # Easements | | 7 | |
| Acres | | 1494 | |

Farm Bill Programs

- The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is open for application. The ranking date for 2013 funding was extended to June 14.
- The Wetlands Reserve Program applications received by May 17 will be ranked June 18 for FY2013 funding consideration.
- Applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program for FY2013 have been ranked, with contracts approved for over \$23 million.

Soil Health Initiative

The Soil Health Initiative is partnership effort to focus attention on improving soil health through sound field conservation practices. Soil Health Field Day events: Aug. 1 classroom locations in Juneau, Shawano, Spooner, Richland Center, and Marshfield. Field training dates and locations Aug 6-20.

Landscape Initiatives

- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
- Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative Announced
- National Water Quality Initiative

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.

Lower Fox Phosphorus Reduction Priority Watersheds. Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, a special signup for farmers in the Lower Fox in the Green Bay area will focus on reducing phosphorus entering Lake Michigan. Applications must be received by July 1, 2013 for funding consideration this year.Read more on GLRI

USDA has announced that the Driftless Area of Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois has been approved as a new national NRCS Landscape Conservation Initiative. This Initiative (DALCI) will target erosion control and wildlife habitat, including stream habitat, and is funded through EQIP for \$1.5 million in FY13 in Wisconsin.

On June 6, NRCS announced the new initiative and first signup results at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve in LaFarge, WI, in conjunction with the Driftless Area Initiative Annual Meeting. For more information, contact Renae Anderson at NRCS, renae.anderson@wi.usda.gov

Three watersheds in Wisconsin have been selected for the National Water Quality Initiative. They are:

- Pigeon Lake-Pigeon River in Waupaca County
- Horse Lake-Horse Creek in Polk County
- Big Green Lake in Green County

This is the second year of this effort to focus on impaired watersheds to demonstrate improvements water quality by reducing soil erosion and implementing water quality practices.

Other Notes

- Wisconsin received \$1.4 million in Emergency Watershed Protection Program funds for 2012 storm damage in Douglas County.
- Nutrient Management Standard – Public Input was taken during the July 18 State Technical Committee.

Priority Issues

Farm Bill Report

Harriet Behar and Margaret Krome

Farm Bill Fatigue

By Harriet Behar

If you are having “Farm Bill Fatigue”, that is understandable. For the second time in two years, the U.S. House of Representatives has failed to pass their version of a Farm Bill. In 2012, the House leadership did not bring the bipartisan House Agriculture Committee’s farm bill to the floor for a vote by the full House and in 2013; the full House rejected the House agriculture committee’s bill and amendments by a vote of 234 to 195. Approximately ¼ of the Republicans in the House voted against the bill, joining most of the Democrats. What appears to have driven this defeat is the cuts to the “food stamp” program of \$20 billion over 10 years, as well as adding new requirements such as drug testing and either having a job or being in job training to be able to access this supplemental nutrition program. The Democrats could not go along with these cuts and the Republicans did not think these cuts were deep enough. The House Agriculture Committee bill fell short of the Senate’s final version of the farm bill, when looking at programs that promote a strong and growing organic agricultural movement in the United States. Amendments to the House agriculture bill that would have provided funding to retain the organic price reports and the organic agriculture census as well as funding to aid the National Organic Program to improve their data collection and dissemination was not allowed on the floor, because there were no spending cuts to other organic programs offered to fund these two programs. Even with the co-sponsorship of Wisconsin’s own republican representative Reid Ribble, this hurdle could not be jumped. There was no funding in the House bill for organic certification cost share, although it did fund the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) at a slightly higher rate than the Senate bill. Provisions that provided a fair playing field for organic farmers seeking crop insurance or participation in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) were not even heard on the House floor.

On the other hand, the Senate's bipartisan final Farm Bill included many reforms to farm programs, including the removal of direct payments. It included crop insurance for crop and livestock producers as well as cutting the food stamp program, but at a smaller level than the more conservative members of the House wanted to see. It also retained many of the programs that have been beneficial and effective for organic and sustainable farmers over the past 5 years.

So, where do we go from here? The House leadership could tack the Senate's version of the farm bill onto another bill, and see if it could pass that way. Or, the House agriculture committee could work on modifying their bill to gain more votes and reintroduce it. These two scenarios are unlikely, but in this Congress, it seems anything can happen. The most likely, and problematic scenario, is an extension of the previous farm bill, which we are under right now. However, the Senate leadership has stated they will not do another extension. Under this current 1 year extension, many of the visionary programs from the 2008 farm bill were not included. These "orphaned programs" promoted organic agriculture, opportunities for beginning and nontraditional farmers, reforms to farm programs that provide huge subsidies to large farmers, or those who do not farm at all, and enhanced the economic development of rural areas. These include the Farmers Market Promotion Program, the Value Added Producers Grants, Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program, Organic Certification Cost Share, Organic Data Collection (price reports), EQIP, CSP, and more.

Another option currently being discussed is the separation of the farm programs and the nutrition programs (80% of the spending in the typical farm bill). These two items have been passed together in a farm bill for many cycles, bringing together the interests of the populous urban districts with the more sparsely populated rural districts. There is concern that if nutrition is split off from the farm programs, this would perhaps eventually threaten the existence of the USDA. If the nutrition programs were moved to a different agency such as Health and Human Services, and the NRCS moved to the Dept. of the Interior, the remaining areas would be parceled out to other agencies, further marginalizing agriculture. These past two years have shown the rapidly decreasing clout of rural America within Congress. The once powerful agricultural lobby no longer has the strength, it seems, to successfully advocate for the needs of agriculture in the U.S. (Originally written for the July 2013 issue of the MOSES Organic Broadcaster)

Steve Pincus expressed the opinion that programs should be separated. Organic is thriving and does not need support from government, ag needs to stand alone and make its own case for support. Much of support goes to processors, not farmers. Steve suggested that the Council should take a position.

Margaret shared that the issue of splitting bill is contentious and she does not believe the split bill introduced in the House will go anywhere.

The Council decided that they do not have a consensus on the issue and will not take a position or advocate for either the House or the Senate bill.

Food Safety Modernization Act

Laura requested approval from Council of the draft recommendation letters that a committee of the Council developed. Then she will submit them for approval from DATCP.

Ken motioned to approve letters as written, seconded by Bill Stoneman. Approved by council.

Margaret observed that the deadline for comments was extended to mid-September. She was pleased that the Council is submitting comments and is happy to work with any other organization wanting to submit comments. Elena said that Iowa's Organic Council will want to see our comments. Our draft letters will be sent to both MN and IA.

As of July 24, the letters have been approved by DATCP Secretary Brancel and will be submitted to the Food and Drug Administration before the end of the month of July. Secretary Brancel will also be submitting the comments to NASDA (the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture) for that group to use in making comments. And, he has passed them along to the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, who are also interested in submitting comments.

GMOs

Harriet shared that the bill in the US Senate to approve states rights regarding GMO labeling did not pass. The Connecticut law for GMO labeling requires approval by 4 other state, one of which must border CT. There is much opposition to GMO labeling. The Grocery Manufacturers Association have been instrumental in influencing Congress not to pass bills such as the recent Senate bill.

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI)

David Andrews, Executive Director

David Andrews gave a presentation on the Institute's goals. The purpose of MFAI is to educate farmer and consumer on understanding US food system, especially sustainable agricultural systems. They are a non-profit with a focus on organic agriculture. A European couple founded the organization. They are particularly interested in biodynamics and concerned about larger farms and the loss of tradition community. David introduced several key staff for the three areas in which they work:

- Research: Currently the research director position is open. Erin Silva is temporarily helping until a new director is hired.
- Education: Sandy Andrews is Education Director. She gave a brief explanation of MFAI's education programs.
- Policy: Margaret Krome, the policy director, explained their policy program.

Altfred Krusenbaum

Due to rain, we postponed the tour of Altfred's organic, grass-based dairy farm. He provided an excellent slide show of his grass-fed dairy and beef operation. After the meeting adjournment (and the rain stopped), some council members traveled to tour his nearby farm.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 pm.

Biodigester fact sheet following