

# ORGANIC PRODUCTION AND MARKETING NEWSLETTER

May 2002



Editor: J. J. Ferguson  
Extension Horticulturist  
Horticultural Sciences Department  
University of Florida  
PO Box 110690  
Gainesville, FL 32611-0690  
[JJFN@MAIL.IFAS.UFL.EDU](mailto:JJFN@MAIL.IFAS.UFL.EDU)

## [Newsletter Index](#)

[USDA Release List of Accredited Organic Certifying Agencies](#)

[Common Ground](#)

[Organic Avocados](#)

[Healthy-Grown](#)

[GORP](#)

[Biotech Survey](#)

**USDA Release List of Accredited Organic Certifying Agencies** (The Packer May 6, 2002)

The USDA released a list of twenty-eight domestic agencies, ten state agencies, and four overseas agents accredited to certify organic growers. This list is the first round in the USDA's plan to list all qualified organic production and handling operations certified to use the USDA seal by Oct. 21, 2002.

The following entities have been accredited, but must complete a successful site audit, or meet other specified conditions within 120 days:

### [28 Private Domestic Accredited Certifying Agents:](#)

California Certified Organic Farmers  
California Organic Farmers Association  
Fertilizer & Seed Certification Svcs (South Carolina)  
Georgia Crop Improvement Association  
Global Organic Alliance (Ohio)  
Guaranteed Organic Certification Agency (California)  
Hawaii Organic Farmers Association  
Indiana Certified Organic  
Integrity Certified International (Nebraska)  
International Certification Services, Inc (North Dakota)  
Maharishi Vedic Organic Agriculture Institute (Iowa)  
Marin County (California)  
Midwest Organic Services Association (Wisconsin)

Minnesota Crop Improvement Association  
Monterey County Certified Organic (California)  
NOFAC Massachusetts [Northeast Organic Farming Association]  
NOFAC New Jersey  
NOFAC New York Limited Liability Corp  
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association  
Organic Certifiers (California)  
Organic Crop Improvement Association (Nebraska)  
Organic Forum International (Minnesota)  
Oregon Tilth  
Pennsylvania Certified Organic  
Quality Assurance International (California)  
Quality Certification Services (Florida)  
Scientific Certification Systems (California)  
Stellar Certification Services (New York)

#### 10 State Accredited Certifying Agents:

Idaho Department of Agriculture  
Iowa Department of Agriculture  
Maryland Department of Agriculture  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
New Hampshire Department of Agriculture  
New Mexico Organic Commodity Commission  
Texas Department of Agriculture  
Utah Department of Agriculture  
Virginia Department of Agriculture  
Washington State Department of Agriculture

#### 4 Foreign Accredited Certifying Agents:

BCSCOkeo Garantie Gmbh (Germany)  
BioLatina (Peru)  
Canadian Organic Certification Cooperative, Ltd  
ECOCERT (France and Germany)

**Common Ground** (View the Spring 2002 issue of Common Ground, the newsletter of the Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program at <http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/sare/Common/02spring.pdf>.)

Note the list of research and education grants awarded, including the following projects in Florida:

#### Research and Education Grants

Enhancing the Economic and environmental Competitiveness of Small Farms through Agroforestry, Shibu Jose, Univ. Of Florida, \$189,600.

A Systems Approach for Improved Integration of Green Manure in Commercial Vegetable Production systems, Johan Scholberg, Univ. Florida, \$171,840.

#### Graduate Student Grants

Developing a System to Produce Organic Plug Transplants for Organic Strawberry Production, D. J. Cantliffe/Ashwin V. Paranipe, Univ. Florida, \$9,500. *Dan Cantliffe is the chair of the Horticultural Sciences Department, Univ. Fl. Gainesville.*

Chemical Ecology of *Microtheca ochroloma*. Mickie Swisher/Kristen Bowens, Univ. Florida, \$3,057. *The yellow-margined leaf beetle, Microtheca ochroloma, is a small beetle that infests turnip and mustard, especially at field margins.*

### Producer Grants

Ultraviolet Light Absorbing Films and Nets for Insect and Disease Control in an Organic Greenhouse, Jim Gibbons, Fl. \$8,010

### Sustainable Community Innovation Grants

Test Marketing of New Label in Southwest Florida for USA Grown/Living Wage Produce. Richard J. Nogaj (harvest for Humanity, Inc.,) Fl. \$5,200.

### Grant Deadlines

Deadlines for each of these areas are listed on page 7. I would call your attention to the Producer Grant Projects due Jan. 24. If you have a project in mind or an idea you would like to test, speak with your county agent or someone at your local research center to develop a project.

### Organic Avocados (The Packer, March 2002)

Less than 5% of California's avocados are organically grown but companies like Eco-Farm, Temecula and Cavalo Growers, Santa Ana, California, think the market is growing. However organic avocados may not be as popular as tomatoes or leaf lettuce that can be eaten whole without being peeled like avocados. Packing house procedures, involving washing and waxing fruit, also have to be adjusted when running organic versus conventional fruit. Another California firm, Fresh Directions International, ships organic avocados out of Mexico but stressed the inelastic demand for organic fruit and the need to manage supply so that markets are not glutted, negatively affecting price.

*Organic avocados are grown in Florida, primarily in the Homestead area by Dirnberger Farms, Inc., Pikarco, and Paradise Farms, among others. (J. Ferguson).*

### "Healthy-Grown.." Potatoes (The Packer, Nov.5, 2001 and the Protected Harvest Web Site)

Twenty-five percent of Wisconsin's potato growers producing about 7% of Wisconsin's potato crop in Oct., 2001. participate in the "Healthy Grown" program, producing mostly red and white potatoes targeted for professional women 25-55 living in larger cities or college towns on the US East Coast. Estimates are that retail prices for Healthy Grown Potatoes will probably be about 10% higher for a 10-pound bag.

Produce is certified by an agency called Protected Harvest, whose standards include restricting 11 targeted pesticides and restricting other pesticides. The Program is a collaborative, bio-intensive IPM effort (large-scale, reduced pesticide agriculture) that includes the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA), the University of Wisconsin, and the World Wildlife fund, whose logo will appear on the label. WPVGA consists of 175 grower members and funds from \$300 to \$350,000/year on research.

Protected Harvest is not an organic program, which includes about 1% of US food production, but rather focuses on the 10 to 20% of the best grower and their lands to achieve a significant impact on protecting the environment and provide an economic return to a significant number of farmers. Scientific Certification Systems, Oakland California, completes audits of participating growers. Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) is a neutral, third-party testing and certification organization evaluating a wide variety of food safety and environmental claims. For further information, go to their web site at <http://www.scs1.com/index.shtml>. The Protected Harvest website is <http://www.protectedharvest.org/index1.htm> or do a search for Protected Harvest.

*Although "Protected Harvest" certification and standards apparently allow the use of some synthetic pesticides and are not the same as USDA organic farming certification and standards, this "Protected Harvest" concept may appeal more to conventional growers than the more stringent organic farming standards. Market niches and publicity may also be less for "Protected Harvest" produce than for USDA certified organic produce. Protected Harvest is currently reviewing plans to certify Florida tomatoes and other products. I plan to follow up on this concept for Florida fruit and vegetable crops and will keep you updated. (J. Ferguson)*

**"GORP...A Genetically Engineered Fish...a revised novel by John Irving - The World According to GORP...no, only Good Organic Retail Practices) (The Packer Nov. 5, 2001)**

Speaking at the Oct. 29, 2001 Produce Marketing Association convention on "The New Organic Standards: Challenges for Retail," Phil Margolis, organic foods distributor and officer of the Organic Trade Association (OTA), said that retailers need to think "GORP," short for Good Organic Retail Practices. This would include:

- 1) Don't co-mingle organic and nonorganic produce
- 2) Prevent organic produce from coming into contact with prohibited substances, such as fungicides, fumigants, and preservatives.
- 3) Don't use or reuse containers that compromise organic integrity
- 4) Pay attention to organic control points (places in the marketing chain where organic integrity can be lost, like separating organic from nonorganic produce to avoiding drip contamination)
- 5) Organic produce signage

Another speaker commented that most warehouses are not ready to handle organic produce under the new federal rules that will go into effect Oct. 21, 2001. Retailers will have to deal with warehouse practices, storage, separation of produce, cleanliness, separate facilities for preparation and proper safeguards for handling, cleaning, sanitation and display. Cashiers will also need training so they won't mix organic and nonorganic produce (presumably when they bag purchases?). In another article in the same issue of The Packer, entitled "Cashiers Can Help Allay Public's Biotechnology Fears," the director of the Washington-based Council for Biotechnology Information said that retailers need to educate produce managers and cashiers about biotechnology so they can answer consumer questions.

Speakers said that regulators will be looking to see if retailers have processes in place rather than minor infractions but violations could result in fines of up to \$10,000 per violation.

The Organic Trade Association has a 300-page manual covering good organic retail practices, available to OTA members for \$100 and nonmembers at a higher price and seminars on this topic. For the OTA website go to <http://www.ota.com>.

*(I plan to obtain a copy of this manual for reference purposes and possible extension programs. J. Ferguson)*

## Biotech Survey

Consumer expectations about biotechnology	
Consumer Expectation	(%)
Improved quality, taste, variety	30
Reduced chemicals, pesticides	20
Enhanced safety	10
Reduced price	8
Improved crop yields	8
Other	10
Don't Know	23

A survey entitled "U.S. Consumer Attitudes Toward Food Biotechnology" by the International Food Information Council, Washington D. C. Sept., 2001

David Schmidt, associated with the Council sponsoring the above survey said "...74% of respondents said they had read or heard about biotechnology, yet only 1% said they would like to see labels with information on genetically altered products placed on food items." Tim Hammonds, president of the Food Marketing Institute, said that European retailers may have a different attitude towards gmos because small farms are more common in Europe than in the US. Europe does not have a broad governing body like the Food and Drug Administration. In another development, the British Parliament is considering a proposal requiring all GMO products to be labeled by 2003.



[FastCounter by bCentral](#)

This page is maintained by [Susie Futch](#) and was last updated on May 6, 2002.