
ORGANIC PRODUCTION AND MARKETING NEWSLETTER

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Florida Organic Farming Newsletter

Florida now has about 115 certified organic farmers, most of whom are certified by Florida Organic Growers and Consumers based in Gainesville, FL. Judging from what I see in Florida chain-store supermarkets and the quarterly two-page spread in The Packer, a trade newspaper for fruit and vegetable growers and distributors, California is the major producer of organic produce. However, the growth of local, national and international markets for organic produce and the pending development of national organic standards suggests that Florida growers have real opportunities to expand into these markets.

For the past three years, I and other statewide extension faculty, county agents and organic growers have organized organic farming/gardening and small farm workshops. What has been lacking, however, has been an accessible medium for those interested in organic farming in Florida to discuss issues, problems and priorities for organic farmers. Widespread use of the internet, email, and an organic farming listserve as suggested in this newsletter could provide this medium. This first on-line issue of the Florida Organic Farming Newsletter is a step towards encouraging discussion and participation in what has been described as the most rapidly growing sector of the produce industry.

Please send me your suggestions and contributions to improve this newsletter and try the organic listserve described below for quick respond and referrals for your questions.

What is the Organic Farming Listserve?

The Organic Farming Listserve is a way for Florida organic farmers and others interested in organic farming to communicate with each other, share information and send/receive announcements of general interest. Essentially it is an email list in which all messages to the listserve address are sent to everyone who has indicated they wish to be added to the list. Anyone can add/delete themselves to the list and any member of the list can post messages to the list for everyone else to read.

Hopefully, this listserve can improve statewide communication about organic farming questions, problems and resources. Give it a try!

How do I subscribe?

To subscribe to the listserve, you must have an email account and access to electronic mail.

- 1) Log in to your email account and invoke mail.
- 2) To subscribe to the Organic Farming Listserve mailing list, send an email message to: mailserv@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu
- 3) Type the following message as the message text: sub organic
- 4) Send the mail message.
- 5) You will receive an email confirmation of your subscription to the list like this:

The address: jfn@GNV.IFAS.UFL.EDU has been added to the organic mailing list by Jim Ferguson

- 6) To send a message to the listserve, the address is organic @gnv.ifas.ufl.edu
- 7) To remove your email address name from the organic listserve, send the following command:
"unsub organic" to mailserv@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu

Agricultural Marketing Service

Kathleen Merrigan was recently named administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service, the agency that will administer the Organic Standards Law and the Organic Standards Board. She was senior analyst at the Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture and was a top agricultural aide for Sen. Patrick Leahy (Democrat, Vermont) a major sponsor of the Organic Farming Law. The Agricultural Marketing Service has a staff of 3,500 and includes the Fruit and Vegetable Division, the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, marketing orders, the Pesticide Data Program, organic standards, market news and quality standards. - The Packer

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/>) is the primary USDA agency responsible for developing national organic standards. Information listed on their "What s New" site include an agenda for the June 8-10, 1999 National Organic Standards Board Meeting (recommendations for wild animals and honey; use of parasiticides in animal production; aquaculture standards; manure use and vegetable production; production practices; quarantine control standards; retailer standards).

Also included on this site:

Fruit and Vegetable Market News Users Guide

Farmers Market Directory and Information

Agenda for the July 21-23 National Organic Standards Board Meeting (in development 6/18)

National Organic Program Proposed Rule

Quality Assurance International

Quality Assurance International (QAI), an organic certifying agency, reported sales growth of 454% from 1994 to 1998, increasing its client base from 100 to over 500. Annual sales growth averaged 87%, according to Griff McLellan, founder and president of the San Diego-based company. QAI manages branch offices in Japan and Canada as well, with international business representing about 35% of the company's sales. The company also contracts with 40 independent inspectors worldwide, apparently not enough to keep up with demand.

There are also approximately 70 organic certification agencies in the U.S., according to other sources. - The Packer

Florida Organic Certifying Agencies

Organic Certifying Agents

The Florida Department of Agriculture licenses agencies (\$500.00/year) to act as Organic Certifying Agents after review by the Organic Food Advisory Council. This list is maintained by the Bureau of Compliance Monitoring (Contact Van Madden; (850)487-3863; As of 11/8/99 only two agencies were licensed, down from six in previous years.

The first step in becoming a certified organic grower is to contact one of the below listed agencies for information about certifying fees and certification standards, which usually are sold as a manual. While there may be some difference among the standards of different organic certifying agencies, these standards are generally the same. National Organic standards have been under discussion since the passage of the Organic Farming and Food Bill in 1990, but no definite date has been set for the completion of this process. If you're certified by one of the below agencies, you will probably also maintain certification when the national standards are approved.

Florida Organic and Consumers, Inc.

POB 12311

Gainesville, FL 32604

(352)377-6345

(FOG) has already certified approximately 115 growers in Florida and several in Mexico and Costa Rica.

Organic Crop Improvement Association

1405 South Detroit Street

Bellefontaine, Ohio 43311

(513) 592-4983

As of 11/8/99, OCIA said it had no listing of growers it had certified in Florida.

Florida Organic Advisory Council

The nine members of the above council are appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture. This group formulates and recommends to the Commissioner rules and policies governing organic food production. They also review and make recommendations on each application for organic certifying agents. The members and their terms are listed below. Contact them if you wish to discuss issues related to organic farming.

Membership Roster

504.21 F.S.

September, 1998

MEMBERS	REPRESENTING

<p>Mr. Richard A. Bear (Secretary) Route 3, Box 786 Havana, FL 32333 Phone: 850-539-4650, 850-539-1199 Fax: 850-539-0720 Term Expires: 10/01/01</p>	<p>Consumer County Gadsden</p>
<p>Mr. Gilbert F. Bowen 500 Firetower Road Haines City, FL 33844 Phone: 941-439-5617 Term Expires: 01/09/01</p>	<p>Handler/Broker County Polk</p>
<p>Mr. Ernie Caldwell PO Box 5609 Winter Haven, FL 33880 Phone: 941-324-4988 Fax: 941-675-6851 Term Expires: 01/09/01</p>	<p>Consumer County Hillsborough</p>
<p>Ms. Linda deStefano Donaldson 5001 Norriswood Drive Mulberry, FL 33860-9668 Phone: 941-646-5419 Fax: 941-646-1180 Term Expires: 10/01/01</p>	<p>Producer County Polk</p>
<p>Mr. Timothy D. Ford (Chairman) 5411 Saint Helena Road Lake Wales, FL 33853 Phone: 941-439-3232 Fax: 941-439-5465 Term Expires: 10/01/01</p>	<p>Producer County Polk</p>
<p>Ms. Mary Hartney Florida Fertilizer and Agrichemical PO Box 9326 Winter Haven, FL 33883-9326 Phone: 941-294-8626 Term Expires: 10/01/01</p>	<p>Florida Fertilizer and Agrichemical County Polk</p>
<p>Mr. Richard Martinez PO Box 261496 Tampa, FL 33685 Phone: 813-889-8218 Term Expires: 06/30/97</p>	<p>Retailer County Hillsborough</p>
<p>Mr. Marty Mesh (Vice Chairman) PO Box 12311 Gainesville, FL 32604 Phone: 352-377-6345 Fax: 352-377-8363 Term Expires: 10/01/01</p>	<p>Growers and Consumers County Alachua</p>

Ms. Barbara Startari
Albert s Organics
621 Snively Avenue
Winter Haven, FL 33880
Phone: 941-291-6262
Fax: 941-291-4901
Term Expires: 10/06/01

Producers and Consumers
County Polk

Transitional Organics

Mothers & Others for a Liveable Planet, a nonprofit organization, has teamed with Albert s Organics, Inc., Bridgeport, N. Y. to introduce a plan for Transitional Organics, a label specifically prohibited by the 1990 Organic Foods Production Act. Produce with the transitional organic label could come from farms which are not yet certified but which are in the 3-year transition process from conventional to organic production. Opponents of this move say it could create more confusion among consumers about organically grown food while supporters say transitional crops could be clearly labelled. Supporting information could also explain the difference between transitional, certified organic and conventionally grown crops, leaving the decision to the consumer.

"Conventional" wisdom holds that organic crops can demand up to 20% higher prices than conventionally grown food in the best markets and that organic farmers deserve this premium because of higher labor costs and implied better stewardship of the land than "conventional growers". Interesting how words like "conventional" and "organic" have been stretched to refer to these situations. Maybe we need new terms "non-organic" and "organic" or some variation thereof that does not imply carbon-containing compounds. Anyway, although transitional crops may involve the same production and labor costs as certified organic crops, the farmer can still sell transitional produce at prices competitive with conventionally produced produce but probably not at the ideal 20% organic produce premium. Furthermore, the USDA in-process-forever revision of national organic standards may also include provision for such transitional status.

Florida Bonded Dealers

See the Florida Dept. of Agriculture web site (www.fl-ag.com) for a list of bonded dealers and agricultural products except citrus, tobacco, tropical foliage and sugar cane. During 1997-98, the Department issued more than 3,700 licenses for those buying, receiving, soliciting, handling or negotiation agricultural products from or for Florida producers. This site also contains information on a wide range of topics from hay directories to farmers markets.

Fresh-Cut Organic Produce

Demand for fresh-cut organic fruits and vegetables may increase along with the predicted increase in organic sales generally, according to the Fresh-cut Produce Association. Product consistency and availability will be the key to growth in foreign and domestic markets. Suppliers can also benefit by having a diversified product line to offer to buyers.

Ready Pac Produce, Irwindale, California, has introduced four organic salad mixes: Country Garden (iceberg lettuce, red cabbage and endive); Harvest Crisp (iceberg lettuce and romaine leaves); Aspen (frisee and baby re lettuce); Romaine Hearts. These organic salad blends are triple-washed, dried and sealed, then certified organic.

Fresh-cut citrus may also soon enter this market. Florida researchers have developed an method to remove citrus peel by infusing water into citrus peel from the inside, making it easier remove the peel once its water-logged. Automating the peeling process would lower preparation costs for fresh-cut citrus and attract processors. Such products would have a 10 to 14 day shelf life - The Packer

Fresh Ideas

The Fresh Ideas Group, Boulder Colo., a marketing and public relations firm that focuses on natural products, sponsored a briefing on organics industry news during the Natural Products Expo West show in March, 1999 in Anaheim, California. The "Top Ten Threats to Organic Integrity" were discussed, including : 1) the "anemic level of research" on organics, especially nutrition; 2) "consumer vertigo" caued by the hodgepodge of organic labels; 3) "foot dragging "in Washington on the development of organic standards; 4) "price gouging" by some retailers; 5)

"misleading packaging hype", including claims that organic produce is pesticide free whereas it may not be possible to guarantee that soil is 100% free of pesticides because of past use.

Food safety was also discussed as an essential element in the future of organics. Dan Puzo, Sonoma County wineries Association said that while the organic industry can market food safety as a strong selling point, the industry must also "adhere to exacting sanitation standards well beyond what the government requires and sometimes ...do the testing that the government cannot afford." - *The Packer*

Phytochemicals in Fruits and Vegetables

Phytochemicals are naturally occurring chemicals found predominantly in foods of plant origin. According to information provided by Cyndi Thomson, a nutritionist with the Arizona Cancer Center, Tucson, evidence has shown that those who consume a diet rich in fruits and vegetables - and thus phytochemicals - have a lower incidence of certain types of cancer and/or coronary artery disease.

This is a list of some of the key phytochemicals found in produce under study, their food sources and their potential roles in health. - *The Packer*

Beta-carotene

Found in: green and yellow fruits and vegetables

Possible benefits: reduced risk of cataracts, coronary artery disease, and lung and breast cancers; enhances immunity for the elderly

Capsaicin

Found in: chili peppers

Possible benefits: reduced risk for colon, gastric and rectal cancers; inhibits tumor growth

Catechin

Found in: green and black tea, berries

Possible benefits: antioxidant; increased immune function; decreased cholesterol production

Cynarin

Found in: artichokes

Possible benefits: Lowers cholesterol levels

Ellagic acid

Found in: wine, grapes, currants, pecans, raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, seeds

Possible benefits: reduces cancer risk; inhibits carcinogen binding to DNA; reduces LDL cholesterol while increasing HDL cholesterol

Indoles

Found in: cabbage, broccoli brussels sprouts, spinach, cauliflower, watercress, turnip, kohlrabi, kale, rutabaga,

horseradish, mustard greens

Possible benefits: reduced risk of hormone-related cancers; may "inactivate" estrogen; inhibits growth of transformed cells

Isothiocyanates

Found in: cabbage, cauliflower

Possible benefits: reduced risk of tobacco-induced tumors

Lignins

Found in: high-fiber foods (especially seeds)

Possible benefits: reduced risk of colon cancer; reduced blood glucose and cholesterol

Lycopene carotenoid

Found in: tomatoes and tomato products, grapefruit, guava, apricots, watermelons

Possible benefits: antioxidant; reduces risk of prostate cancer; may reduce risk of cardiovascular disease

Monoterpene limonene

Found in: citrus peel and membrane, mint, caraway, thyme, coriander

Possible benefits: antioxidant; reduced risk of skin and breast cancer; reduced cholesterol production; reduced premenstrual symptoms

Phenolic acid

Found in: cruciferous vegetables, eggplant, peppers, tomatoes, celery, parsley, soy, licorice root, flaxseed, citrus, whole grains, berries

Possible benefits: fights cancer through of nitrosamine formation

Polyacetylene

Found in: parsley, carrots, celery

Possible benefits: fights tobacco-induced tumors

Organosulfur compounds

Found in: garlic, onions, leeks, watercress, cruciferous vegetables

Possible benefits: reduced risk of gastric, colon and lung cancers, inhibited tumor promotion; reduced cholesterol; lower blood pressure

Quercetin

Found in: pear and apple skins, peppers, kohlrabi, tomato leaves, onions, wine, grape juice

Possible benefits: antioxidant, decreased platelet aggregation

Sulforaphane

Found in: broccoli sprouts, broccoli, radish, horseradish, mustard greens

Possible benefits: Inhibit tobacco-related carcinogens from binding DNA

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

The following is an article written by Alan and Ruth Keitt, two of the organizers of PlowShares, a successful CSA in Gainesville, Florida.

We first heard about Community Supported Agriculture at a celebration of the 80th birthday of Father Thomas Berry. Tom Berry is a prophet, an environmental philosopher and cultural historian whose writings (*The Voice of the Earth*, *The Universe Story* and others) remind us that the earth, as our primary provider and educator, is also our primary responsibility. We were intrigued with the concept of CSA because it seemed to address so many of our concerns. And yet we could not find a single one operating in our area of north Florida. We visited Genesis Farm in northern New Jersey, founded by Tom Berry's student, Sister Miriam Therese McGillis, a Dominican nun and educator. There we saw a thriving CSA and were immediately hooked.

During the next two years we visited more CSAs in Connecticut and Wisconsin to find out how they got started. We also talked several times with the late Robyn Van En, founder of the first CSA in this country and godmother of the CSA movement, who, along with Sister Miriam gave us advice and encouragement. We began to spread the idea locally by giving talks (with a sign-up sheet at each one): at a University series on sustainability, the Sierra Club, the Kanapaha Botanical Garden Festival and our church. It was from those attendees who showed an interest that we formed a core group and began to search for a location and, most importantly a farmer. It took another year of meeting, searching, forming and reforming until we had a name (Plowshares) and a stable committed core group of 7 individuals.

Ruth and I met our farmer, Rose Koenig, a local organic grower, at a workshop sponsored by the Horticultural Sciences Department, University of Florida. Rosie's Organic Farm had been in the business of raising vegetables on 7 acres for wholesale and for local farmer's markets for three years. She was interested in cutting back on wholesaling and concentrating on local markets so she was interested in what we had to say. After a brief courtship we formed a partnership and began to plan for our first growing season.

Our core group adopted the following operating principle from the beginning. The primary job of the farmer is to farm. The primary job of the core group is to support the farmer; this includes recruiting members, publicity, handling finances, and organizing volunteers and events at the farm. In reality, while the responsibilities are clear, farmer and members help each other out getting it all done. Although we do not require members to work at the farm, Ruth and I help Rose with farm work weekly along with several other regular volunteers. Our growing season runs from September to late June, with our first pickup in early November. While Genesis Farm and many other CSAs use intensive organic

raised bed production, the sandy soils and particular pests of northern Florida make more traditional row cropping using drip irrigation more practical here. We have 70 memberships (\$400/membership/year) representing 88 families for the coming season and have set 100 as the optimal number of memberships. Last year we grew 35 different crops. Our distribution system uses two local farmers' markets as pickup sites. The influx of our members on pickup days generates additional sales for the other local vendors at these markets. We had our first intern, a returning Peace Corps worker, for 3 months last spring. We publish about 5 newsletters each year with farm information and educational materials on food.

Wendell Berry has written in an essay entitled *Solving for Pattern*, that a good solution solves more than one problem without creating new ones. CSAs address many of the problems that I listed above and thus meet Berry's test. First it seeks out and supports local farmers. By paying for the harvest in advance it reduces both the financial risk and risk of a bad harvest which are shared by the community. The food dollars are kept in the local economy. Next it provides consumers with fresh organic vegetables which are unsurpassed as the basis for a healthy diet. Another of Wendell Berry's criteria for a good solution is human scale - most CSA's have between 30 and 200 members which allows reasonable participation in food decisions by all members; yet they are large enough to avoid the waste in an individual garden. Environmental health - careful organic production as practiced by our farmer is a sustainable land use which maintains soil fertility. It avoids all potentially toxic chemicals and their run off which is particularly important in the porous subsoil of western Alachua County. It also reduces pollution by eliminating wasteful transportation and packaging. Finally this bond between a farmer and a grateful community heals a split (a synonym for making whole). It provides a spiritual dimension to the choice of our food and educates us to the whole of the complex process by which our food passes from field to table.

We are aware of the great diversity in needs and motivations of both farmers and consumers in the diverse enterprise called CSA. Plowshares has encountered many of the same problems that I hear from others on this path, However our experience has led us to an essential ingredient for a CSA, not often mentioned on the list servers dialogues, or media articles. That is - caring -, the mutual respect and open dialogue between the farmer and the core group. Failure to nurture this bond makes the whole endeavor ripe for burnout. We really work at it and it takes time to develop. Finding the right core group or the right farmer is as difficult as finding a mate. But I believe there is a natural affinity out there waiting to be joined. So, even if he/she already has a spouse, the farmer needs a wife, and everyone needs a farmer.

Codex Alimentarius (International Food Code)

Back when the Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans first began selling their produce at camel caravan stands, governing authorities, then as always, began to codify rules to protect consumers from dishonest practices in the sale of food. During the Middle Ages, European countries passed laws on the quality and safety of sausages, cheese, beer and wine.

Not to be outdone, in 1961 the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO) established the Codex Alimentarius (code for food as it travels through the digestive tract) to create international food standards. Initial food standards on sanitary and phytosanitary measures in international food trade have already been developed as part of the Codex and have become benchmark standards.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission meets every two years and include representatives from all over the world. General standards and recommendations have for food hygiene, labeling, additives, contaminants, pesticide residues, methods of analysis and sampling, dietary uses and nutrition, residues of veterinary drugs in foods and food import/export inspection and certification systems. Commodity Committees develop standards for specific classes of foods ranging from fats and oils, fresh fruits and vegetables and soups and broths to natural mineral waters.

The Codex Committee on Food Hygiene recently held a meeting in Washington D.C. to establish guidelines for agricultural best management practices for production, harvesting and packing of fresh fruits and vegetables. Standards are also being developed for pre-cut, raw vegetable products, currently a big seller in supermarkets in the U.S.

At a late June meeting in Rome, the Codex adopted new or revised Codex standards, guidelines and related texts including Guidelines on the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically-Produced Foods. These guidelines included regulations already in force in several countries and standards applied by producer organizations. FAO/WHO estimates of 1997 organic food markets in the European Community reached US\$4.5 billion and in the United States, US\$4.2 billion, with an anticipated annual growth rate between 20 and 25%.

Other topics included maximum residue limits for Bovine Somatotropine (BST) - the cow hormone, food additives, quality and safety of foods derived from biotechnology and interaction the Codex Commission with ngos. Check out the Codex Alimentarius home page by typing "Codex Alimentarius" as a search topic.

Florida Agricultural Museum

The Florida Agricultural Museum, a non-profit corporation led by a board of thirty-five trustees in cooperation with the Florida Department of Agriculture, has established a new 300 acre site in north Flagler county near the intersection of Highway 1 and Interstate 95, 17 miles south of St. Augustine. The chairman of the Board of Trustees is Robin Laurialt, a University of Florida graduate (Ph.D., History) and a Putnam county citrus grower. The Director of the museum is Bruce Piatek.

The museum will house and display artifacts collected from Florida, including 19th century farm machinery, forestry tools, wagons, will house a reference library and archives, and maintain herds of cracker cattle and horses. Outdoor exhibits will include 1) The First Farmers, Native Timucuans, pre-European cultures, 2) Spanish Colonial Agriculture, early 18th century, 3) Plantations and Early Pioneers, 18th and 19th century, 4) Agricultural Towns at the turn of the century 4) turn of the century Agricultural Towns 5) Agri-business in the 1940's.

Become part of this exciting, outdoor, educational project by making a tax-deductible contribution to become a "farmhand" member, receive the museum s almanac newsletter, invitations to museum events and discounted admission to special events. Most importantly, you will be building great museum that will tell the story of Florida Agriculture.

For more information contact The Florida Agriculture Museum; 1850 Princess Place Road; Palm Coast, Florida 32137; (904) 446-7630 (email.famuseum@pcf1.net).

Mark Your Calendar

January 8, 2000. **Suwannee Valley Field and Greenhouse Grower's Short Course and Trade Show.** 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Suwannee County Coliseum, Live Oak, FL. Contact Person: Bob Hochmuth, Multi-County Extension Agent, Suwannee Valley Research and Education Center, 7580 County Road 136, Live Oak, FL 32060-7434, Phone: (904) 362-1725 or Suncom: 821-3050, Fax: (904) 362-3067. This short course will provide information on vegetable crops and other horticultural crops (herbs, fruits, cut flowers, and other specialty crops). Field and greenhouse culture and highlighted at this meeting. Plasticulture technologies covered include: plastic mulch culture, drip irrigation, row covers, environmental controls in a greenhouse, and hydroponics. The day long event includes an industry trade show and a tour of research and demonstration projects at the Suwannee Valley Research and Education Center. This is an excellent program for small farmers seeking information about alternative crops and production technologies including hydroponics.

January 21- 23, 2000. **Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SAWG)** - the Jekyll Island, Georgia Convention Center.

March 8-15, 2000. **Independent Organic Inspectors Association Meeting**, Annual Meeting, Florida Organic Growers and Consumers - Future Farmers of America (FFA) Leadership Training Center near Haines City.

April 1, 2000. **Small Farm Conference and Trade Show** - Volusia County Fair Grounds, Deland, Fl - Discussions and demonstrations on beekeeping, organic certification, cut foliage and flowers, plant tissue culture labs, fruit crops for small farms, small scale timber lots, electric and solar fencing, rabbit production and marketing, tropical fish farming, livestock marketing, pasture management and trade shows.