



Women, Food, and Agriculture Network

Women Growing Together.



Winter 2009

A Quarterly Newsletter

Gather With Us at the 2010 Annual Conference Jan. 28-29

Still Time to Register! WFAN and IWINR partner to host sustainability-focused event in Storm Lake, IA

Treat yourself to a warm and informative two-day break in this long winter by attending the 2010 annual conference of WFAN and Iowa Women in Natural Resources (IWINR). This year's conference focuses on sustainability, and will include workshops on conservation outreach to women farmland owners, wind farming, and careers in natural resources.

WFAN executive director Leigh Adcock will provide an update and overview on WFAN's current projects during the Thursday evening dinner (featuring local foods), followed by a wine and chocolate reception sponsored by WFAN to give members of the two groups a chance to get to know each other. WFAN supporters are invited to stay after the reception to talk with board members and staff about how WFAN can better serve you in 2010.

Dr. Jean Eells will present a session about her work with WFAN's "Women Caring for the Land" project, a peer-to-peer meeting series focused on conservation for women farmland owners. Other conference speakers will include Liz Christiansen and Merry Rankin, directors of the University of Iowa and Iowa State University offices of sustainability, respectively. Dr. Melinda Coogan will discuss her findings of contaminants in the Raccoon River watershed.

Keynote speaker will be Julie Sievers, environmental specialist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Storm Lake field office, who will talk about efforts to protect and restore the Storm Lake watershed.

The conference will be held at the new King's Pointe Resort hotel and water park in Storm Lake, located in northwest Iowa.

The hotel is offering a \$50 room rate as long as the block of rooms lasts. Call 866-552-5960 and mention the IWINR/WFAN conference to reserve your room. Your room fee includes use of the indoor water park.

Other recreational opportunities will include workshops on cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, ice fishing and self defense.

This is the first year that WFAN has partnered with IWINR. "I attended last year's IWINR conference and realized our two organizations have many interests in common," said WFAN's Adcock. "I suggested we work together on the 2010 event, and the women of IWINR have been outstanding to work with."

Here are some links to help you plan your visit and attend the conference:

Conference brochure with registration form:
<http://www.iwinr.com/files/2010brochure.pdf>

King's Pointe Resort:

<http://www.kingspointeresort.com>

Storm Lake attractions (Chamber of Commerce):

<http://www.stormlakechamber.com/attractions/index.htm>

WFAN members are asked to use the IWINR registration form to register for the conference. The two groups are sharing costs for the event.

Registration fee is \$65 for both days, \$35 for one day. A late fee of \$10 will be charged after Jan. 20. The student fee is \$40 for both days, \$20 for one day. Fees include lunch both days and dinner on Thursday. Breakfast on Friday is on your own.

The conference will begin with registration at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, lunch at 11 a.m., and the welcome and keynote at noon. It will end Friday at 3 p.m.

A silent auction helps fund student scholarships to attend the conference; please bring an item to donate!

Information on Conference Speakers

Liz Christiansen is director of the University of Iowa Office of Sustainability. She has 20 years of experience working in recycling, waste reduction, green government, sustainability, outreach and education in both the private and public sectors. She previously served as deputy director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Dr. Melinda A. Coogan is an assistant professor of biology with Buena Vista University (BVU), Storm Lake, IA. She has recently published two emerging contaminant bioaccumulation papers in refereed journals within her field of aquatic toxicology. Since coming to BVU, she has become involved in nutrient toxicological and wetland bioremediation studies supported through education and research grants.

Dr. Jean Eells has 28 years of experience in environmental education, more than half of those with statewide organizations. Dr. Eells is a private consultant, operating E Resources Group in Webster City, IA, and is an elected soil and water commissioner. She focuses her work on conservation outreach to women farmland owners, and will talk about her work with WFAN's on-going "Women Caring for the Land" project.

Merry Rankin serves as director of sustainability at Iowa State University. She has 13 years of experience in the area of environmental management and sustainability. She is responsible for coordinating sustainability (greening) activities at Iowa State University and serving as a central resource related to sustainability collaboration and information.



Executive Director's Update

It hasn't been my best winter, actually. I broke a bone in my right foot back on December 6, and have two weeks to go before I can walk or drive. The surgeon installed a rack and four screws, so on top of the two screws I already had in that foot, I may need to leave it on the conveyor belt next time I go through airport security.

But the days are getting longer now, and the sun is shining bravely today. I am looking forward to our 2010 annual conference coming up Jan. 28-29 at King's Pointe Resort in Storm Lake, IA. The IWInR women are a great bunch, and we have jointly lined up a refreshing, informative program. Plus--indoor water park!

And a wine and chocolate reception! You don't want to miss it.

The WFAN board is meeting soon to plan for 2010. Our 2009 work plan gave us a solid framework from which to operate, and we will refine it for the coming year.

The big change on the horizon for 2010 is that we are finally going to apply for our own 501c3 status. This will aid us in receiving foundation funding, and put the responsibility of governing on our able and willing board where it belongs. We have been a project of the Tides Center almost since our inception 12 years ago, and it is high time we fledge and step out of that nest.

Meanwhile, we continue to receive support from funders and other agencies for our outreach to women farmland owners on conservation – the project we are calling “Women Caring

for the Land.” Another set of meetings is being planned in southeast Iowa for later in the winter, facilitated by Laura Krouse and Jean Eells. An announcement will be circulated when details are final.

We will also be looking for women farmers to work with young beginning farmers this growing season. We have enough funding so far to offer stipends to three farmer-intern pairs. Farmers will get eight weeks of willing labor and the opportunity to pass on their knowledge and experiences to the next generation; interns will get invaluable training working on a farm to help them move forward in their careers.

Enjoy the winter issue of your newsletter, and the rest and reflection that come with this austere and beautiful season.



This newsletter is a quarterly publication of **Women, Food, and Agriculture Network**, a Tides Center Project. We welcome suggestions, stories, and news from your part of the world. Our emphasis is on women's lives, their relationships, communities and families as they related to sustainable agriculture and food systems. We welcome first-person articles, research summaries, book or video reviews, original poetry and art, and letters to the editor.

The newsletter is published each March, June, September and December; submission deadline is the 10th of the month. Email submissions to leigh@wfan.org, or mail to WFAN, PO Box 611, Ames, IA 50010.

WFAN website: www.wfan.org

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UPCOMING EVENTS

January 28 - 29

2010 WFAN/IWInR Annual Conference, Storm Lake, IA. Visit www.iwinr.org to register. See front page for more information.

January 28

DIY Biodiesel Webinar: Keeping It Safe, Keeping It Legal. Free online seminar sponsored by ATTRA. Visit <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/303791635> to register.

January 30

Getting Started in Organic Farming Conference, New Haven, CT. Go to http://www.ctnofa.org/events/Getting%20Started/2010_getting_started_conference_page.html for information.

February 5 - 6

Missouri Organic Conference, Columbia, MO. Go to <http://www.missouriorganic.org/Events/MOAnnualConference/tabid/1073/Default.aspx>.

February 5 - 11

North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Convention, Lancaster, PA. For information, go to <http://www.nafdma.com/Pennsylvania>.

February 5 - 7

Midwest School for Beginning Apple Growers, Madison, WI. Sponsored by the University of Wisconsin. Visit <http://www.cias.wisc.edu/midwest-school-for-beginning-apple-growers>.

February 13 - 14

Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association Annual Conference, Granville, OH. Keynote speakers Joel Salatin and Ann Cooper. Go go <http://www.oeffa.org/conference2010.php> to register.

February 19 - 20

5th Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference, St. Paul, MN. Sponsored by Minnesota Food Association. Visit <http://www.mnfoodassociation.org/news.aspx> for information.

February 25 - 27

MOSES Organic Farming Conference, La Crosse, WI. To register, visit <http://bookstore.mosesorganic.org>.

Female Fare

Young Women Farmers for Change: Three Fresh Ideas to Stir Up Our Food System

by Lisa Kivirist

Fresh ingredients go a long way in adding flavor to any dish. The same culinary theory holds outside of the kitchen, as evidenced at the 13th annual Community Food Security Coalition Conference in Des Moines, IA, this past October. More than 500 activists from around the country gathered to connect, collaborate and challenge each other on ways to transform and improve our food system, including representation from young women dedicated to a farming career in sustainable agriculture.

This increasing blending and crossover between new women farmers with a passion for raising both cabbage and change cultivates a hefty serving of inspiration. These female farmers grow more than food for our table; they rethink the status quo approach to our food system and provide keen insights into what needs to change.

"As one of the fastest growing groups of new farmers, women can be the change makers that transform our agricultural system into one that provides organic, healthy and fair food to us all," explains Faye Jones, Executive Director of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), a Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) member organization that sponsored two women farmers to attend this

conference. Wisconsin women farmers Jai Kellum of King's Hill Farm and Erin Schneider of Hilltop Community Farm attended the CFSC Conference on behalf of MOSES. "It is important to keep the voice of farmers represented in the national discussion on food and agricultural policy and priorities," sums up Jones.

Here are three tips for policy-makers from Kellum and Schneider to improve our agriculture and food system:

Work on a Farm

"I think every person involved with creating food policy should work on a farm for a week," suggests Jai Kellum, co-manager with her husband, Joel, of King's Hill Farm, a certified organic farm outside Mineral Point in southwest Wisconsin. A dedicated and knowledgeable organic grower, Kellum runs a diversified farm operation including a CSA (community supported agriculture) and selling at the Green City Market in Chicago. "A reality check



Erin Schneider was one of two young women farmers who represented MOSES at the Community Food Security Coalition Conference last October in Des Moines, IA.

in the amount of labor and hard work that goes into local, sustainable agriculture would go a long way in understanding the full cycle of what goes into bringing healthy food to everyone's table."

Honor Manual Labor

"Related to understanding the amount of labor that goes into farming, we need to rethink and redraft our perspective on manual labor," further explains Kellum. "As a society we need a change in mindset to view manual labor as something positive, a respected career choice. Younger people today have no experience with physical work, which unfortunately results in a low work ethic. It is an extreme, ongoing challenge for us to find dedicated and capable farm staff."

Increase Cross-Pollination

"Just as a farm needs an abundant, diverse ecosystem on the land, we also need such a cross-pollination perspective when it comes to formulating farm and agricultural policy," adds Erin Schneider. She and her partner are in the start-up phase of a new CSA west of Madison in Sauk County, featuring a variety of hardy perennial fruits such as kiwi and currants. "By bringing a variety of voices to venues such as this CFSC conference, particularly those of the growers themselves, we can collaborate and draw from each other in a way that will strengthen the end result."

Lisa Kivirist leads the Rural Women's Project, a venture of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) supporting women farmers and food-based entrepreneurs. She is co-author of ECOpreneurship and Rural Renaissance and runs Inn Serendipity B&B and Farm in Wisconsin with her family.

Fund Proposed for Female Farmers in USDA Bias Case

In what may be the beginning of a multibillion-dollar congressional effort to settle discrimination suits against the Agriculture Department, two key House members introduced legislation in December to establish a \$4.6 billion compensation fund for female farmers who have been denied loans since 1981. House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., and Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif., said their bill is long overdue.

"Years of discrimination and unnecessary hardship for these women, and all minorities, cannot be allowed to continue," DeLauro said. "It is time to do right by those that have been discriminated against in our past and present, to live up to our founding principles, and to legislate an end to this unfortunate and regrettable era."

Joining DeLauro at a news conference were farmers from Montana, California, Florida and New York who were among thousands of black, Hispanic, Native American and female farmers who were part of four discrimination cases filed by each class against USDA a decade ago, charging that

they were denied farm-operating and emergency loans that the agency routinely made to white male farmers.

The Clinton administration settled the black farmers' case, *Pigford v. Glickman*, resulting in eventual payments of more than \$1 billion to farmers. The Hispanic, Native American and women's cases are still pending. Agriculture Secretary Vilsack has said he will make civil rights a priority; however USDA and the Justice Department have not settled any cases since Obama became president.

DeLauro said the need for a \$4.6 billion restitution fund was based on USDA Census of Agriculture data showing that there are approximately 300,000 women farm operators across the United States, more than 17 percent of the family farmer population. The report estimates that 43,000 women farmers have been discriminatorily denied more than \$4.6 billion in farm loans and loan servicing from USDA over the years. DeLauro said USDA data shows that women farmers were subject to discrimination in every state. For information on the women's case, visit www.womenfarmers.com.

An Interview with Food Sleuth Melinda Hemmelgarn

Melinda Hemmelgarn is a dietician, writer and speaker, Kellogg Fellow and healthy foods advocate whose weekly "Food Sleuth" column can be found at <http://food-sleuth.blogspot.com>. She graciously agreed to be interviewed by email for WFAN News.

WFAN: Can you tell us about the path that brought you to your work in food systems?

MH: It was really by accident. I went to college wanting to be a textile designer – an artist. But I had two roadblocks. One, I wasn't that great of an artist. Two, I was placed in the college of home economics (not art), in the textile and apparel management department. The college had a policy that all students take a class in each of the home economic disciplines as long as you were enrolled under their umbrella.

ONE class in nutrition and I was sold. I found the subject fascinating, and I still do. It's exciting to learn how the food we eat can prevent and treat disease. Today we're even learning how nutrients (and environmental pollutants like pesticides) can turn genes on and off.

I decided to become a dietitian. My first job was at the VA hospital in Columbia, MO. There I witnessed the ravages of poverty and war on health and disease. The veterans were some of my greatest teachers. I went back to school to pursue a master's degree in food science and human nutrition, hoping for a job with University Extension.

I was hired as a State Nutrition Specialist at the U. of Missouri, where I answered questions ranging from food preservation to cholesterol and heart disease. I developed a nutrition communications center in Extension. There I focused on radio, video, TV and print, and started writing my weekly "Food Sleuth" newspaper column for the *Columbia Daily Tribune*.

In 2004 I was truly fortunate to receive a two-year Kellogg Food and Society Policy Fellowship. Our class focused on childhood obesity, and each one of the Fellows brought a unique approach to the table. I focused on the effects of media on children's food choices and teaching the critical thinking skills necessary to help youth analyze media messages. The Fellowship introduced me to garden-based education, regional food systems, women in agriculture, and so much more. I'm still learning, especially from farmers.

WFAN: How does your family life impact what you do?

MH: My children are grown now, but throughout their childhood, I had the privilege

of flexible working hours so I could be involved in their lives and volunteer at their schools. I'm grateful that my husband of 28 years has always encouraged and supported my work. He also eats just about anything without complaint. His father was an organic gardener and truck farmer so he totally embraces sustainable organic agriculture.

My parents are deceased, but they modeled a strong work ethic, honesty and compassion. My father worked hard in a factory under pretty harsh conditions, so I have a soft place in my heart for laborers.

My mother once complained to my grandmother about the price of bananas. My grandmother told my mother to think of them like medicine. I will never forget that lesson.

WFAN: How do you balance work and family?

MH: Did someone say I balanced work and family?

It's a struggle, because I love both. Since I work from my home now, my office is literally one door away from my bedroom. I rely on my husband to remind me when he's feeling neglected.

WFAN: What are some changes you'd like to see in the US food/farming system?

MH: If I had a magic wand, I would use it to create greater transparency, accountability, and strong support for organic farming. I would like to see:

1. Significant rewards for land stewardship, soil and water protection, biodiversity and organic certification.
2. Food and farming decisions based on the protection of children's health and their environment.
3. Fair wages, access to "good" food and basic healthcare for all.
4. An organic garden at every school, with season extension and hired staff to grow, harvest, cook and teach about the miracles of food, health and ecology. Plus planned community gardens and edible landscaping in public spaces.
5. Smaller regional farms, processing facilities and cooperatives of family farmers. (no CAFOs).
6. Policies that require institutions to purchase a set percentage of organic and regional food.



Melinda the Beet Queen

7. Labels on GMO foods and seeds, and strict containment of GMO crops until we adequately test for environmental safety and unintended consequences to public health.

8. No sub-therapeutic use of antibiotics in livestock.

9. Enforcement of anti-trust laws. I'm concerned about the consolidation of our food system. Similarly, the consolidation of media and the resulting loss of small, independent newspapers, and shrinking numbers of good investigative journalists erodes our democracy. Media are our watchdogs. Food and democracy are tightly linked.

10. Campaign finance reform.

WFAN: What are some ways we as individuals can help create positive change in this area?

MH: Stand up and speak out even when, and especially when, it's uncomfortable. Think of the children's story, "The Emperor's New Clothes"! I recently came upon a wonderful artist, Robert Shetterly, and his website featuring "Americans Who Tell the Truth." It's a tribute to brave men and women who spoke out for the truth and changed the world. See www.americanswhotellthetruth.org.

Ask for what you want, and model the behavior you wish to see.

Practice compassion and empathy. I heard a wonderful interview with Karen Armstrong who spoke about a "charter for compassion." See www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=112968197

I like the idea of looking at the world as one, and caring about children all over the world as our own.

SURE Disaster Help Sign-Up Open Now

Producers who have suffered crop production losses due to natural disasters may now sign up for the USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments program (SURE) this month (January 2010). Sign-up began Jan. 4; a deadline has not yet been announced.

SURE provides crop disaster assistance payments to eligible producers on farms that have incurred crop production or crop quality losses. To be eligible for SURE, producers must have suffered at least a 10 percent production loss on a crop of economic significance. In addition, producers must meet the risk management purchase requirement by either obtaining a policy or plan of insurance, under the Federal Crop Insurance Act or NAP coverage, for all economically significant crops. *Losses from 2008 may be eligible. Producers considered socially disadvantaged, a beginning farmer or rancher, or a limited resource farmer may be eligible for SURE without a policy or plan of insurance or NAP coverage.*

The affected farm must be located in a county that was declared a primary disaster county or contiguous county by the Agriculture Secretary under a Secretarial Disaster Designation. Regardless of a Secretarial Disaster Designation, individual producers may also be eligible for SURE if the actual production on the farm is less than 50 percent of the normal production on the farm due to a natural disaster. For SURE, a farm is defined as all crops in which a producer had an interest nationwide.

To schedule an appointment to sign-up for SURE or more information on the new program, please contact your local FSA county office or visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

Mini-Guides to Federal Farm Disaster Assistance

Farmers' Legal Action Group, Inc. (FLAG) has posted on its website a trove of new risk management and disaster publications for family farmers and farm advocates. These mini-guides to federal programs were prepared for a series of risk management trainings conducted this summer and fall, funded by the USDA's Risk Management Agency. The new publica-

tions, which are accessible without charge in the Publications section of FLAG's website, can be found at <http://www.flaginc.org/topics/news/index.php#20091117a>, and include these topics:

- Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)
- Adjusted Gross Revenue and Adjusted Gross Revenue-Lite insurance
- Documenting Disaster Losses
- Emergency Conservation Program
- New Disaster Programs Created by the 2008 Farm Bill
- Group Risk Crop Insurance
- Individual Crop Insurance
- Livestock Indemnity Program
- Livestock Risk Protection Insurance
- Pasture, Rangeland, Forage Insurance Program
- What Help Is Available For What Types of Disaster Losses?



Report: GMO Crops Increase Pesticide Use

Despite industry claims to the contrary, the adoption of genetically engineered crops has led to dramatic increase in pesticide use over 13 years, according to a new report.

The report, released by the Organic Center, the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Center for Food Safety, put the increase at 318 million pounds, even taking into account the 64 million pound reduction in insecticides for GE corn and cotton. The report was written by Organic Center chief scientist Charles Benbrook.

Farmers, who have planted ever more acres with GE crops, are also battling a rising tide of herbicide-resistant superweeds, which is leading to rising pesticide applications, new seed development, and higher costs.

The full report can be read here: http://www.organic-center.org/science.pest.php?action=view&report_id=159

Study Finds Growing Competitiveness for Community Food Enterprises

Wallace Center at Winrock International and the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) announce the release of *Community Food Enterprise: Local Success in a Global Marketplace*, a groundbreaking study of 24 locally owned food businesses.

These community food enterprises (CFEs) appear poised for sustainable growth and competitiveness both locally and globally. A companion website at www.communityfoodenterprise.org offers additional findings and analysis.

"Our case studies show how community food enterprises have transformed factors that once stymied their performance and profitability – smaller scale, modest ambition, limited local ownership, and high social standards – into powerful competitive advantages vis-à-vis multinational food businesses," says Michael Shuman, Research and Public Policy Director for BALLE and lead author of the study. "We have identified several critical ways CFEs provide invaluable tools for economic development and anti-poverty efforts worldwide."

The study draws on detailed analyses of 12 U.S. and 12 international CFEs, which include food-related producers, processors, grocers, restaurants, training programs and other businesses.

Farm-to-School Gets Boost from USDA

Local foods for school lunches recently got a big boost, with USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan's announcement of "Farm-To-School Tactical Teams." These ag versions of SWAT teams will tour America's school cafeterias, looking for ways to help administrators buy more locally grown food – and states will be given \$50 million to use to purchase local foods. For comparison, that \$50 million dedicated to farm-to-school foods is as much as the USDA devoted in 2009 to encourage organics.

You can read more about this initiative at <http://obamafoodorama.blogspot.com>, and more about the USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" program at KnowYourFarmer@usda.gov.



Righteous Porkchop:

Finding a Life and Good Food Beyond Factory Farms

by Nicolette Hahn Niman
336 pages; Collins Living, 2009

Reviewed by Nancy McKlveen, Des Moines, IA

Nicolette Hahn Niman’s book is a fascinating account of America’s factory farming world and its alternative – sustainable, family-farm based animal production. As an attorney working for Waterkeeper Alliance, Ms. Niman tells of her travels to North Carolina and several Midwest states to educate herself on hog farming. Her travels are documented in the book. Her horror at industrialized hog farming is palpable. She describes one farm with 75 “windowless metal warehouses,” each holding 1,000 hogs on slatted cement floors. She is appalled at the unnatural manner in which the hogs are raised, demonstrating

Women Farmers

The sun is rising, a new day begins with a walk on the dew-filled grass
Opening the barn door she hears the farm come alive, baaing, bleating, meowing, mooing, barking
Listening to the milkers give off a steady swish as the cows are milked, she smells the rain as it slowly falls

Laughing, living, breathing
Crying, sighing, grieving
Caring, loving, healing
A heart of gold that never grows old

A baby is born and she smiles as the newborn suckles
It walks on gangly legs, then gaining strength it runs, climbs, jumps and plays
In the next pen her favorite goat takes one last breath and then there is no more
She cries, but life goes on

Laughing, living, breathing
Crying, sighing, grieving
Caring, loving, healing
A heart of gold that never grows old

Walking the sheep to a new pasture, She smells the fresh mown hay
Watching nature pass by
She hears the birds as they cry, following them as they float in the sky
Driving tractor, baling hay, cultivating the garden
Wiping sweat from her brow, knowing the harvest is being put up for the long winter ahead

Laughing, living, breathing
Crying, sighing, grieving
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The hands of the woman who held the newborn goat are soft, gentle, warm and dirty from pulling weeds and picking peas
She gathers in the produce, canning, baking, cleaning
Collecting eggs by the dozen as the chickens scatter looking for bugs to eat
Selling produce by the pound, telling her life’s work all around

disrespect for animals, people, and the land. The Waterkeeper Alliance eventually brought suit against hog farmers in North Carolina for the water pollution caused by factory farm effluent.

Another part of the book looks at traditional farms where animals are allowed to graze outdoors, mate with each other, raise their young on their own milk, and spend their lives the way we’d all like to see our food animals live. It is noteworthy that the tone of the book changes when Ms. Niman meets and becomes friends with Paul and Phyllis Willis, Iowa family farmers. She describes being deeply touched by their kind treatment of their animals. The book also weaves an intimate story of Ms. Niman’s personal life from young city attorney working for Bobby Kennedy to her introduction to a California cattle rancher whom she later marries.

She completes her book with chapters on locating sustainably and humanely raised food. She recommends seeking out individual farmers who produce eggs, vegetables and meat, whether on location or at local farmers’ markets. *Righteous Porkchop* expresses Ms. Niman’s concern for the animals we eat and clearly shows the reader alternatives to factory farming.

A Poem by Robin Whitney

Laughing, living, breathing
Crying, sighing, grieving
Caring, loving, healing
A heart of gold that never grows old

Ah, the smell of a newly plowed field
She finds earthworms and knows her soil, warmed by the sun, is rich in nutrients
One on one with the land, willing to take a stand
Working side by side with her loved one
Watching her children romp and play, growing every day

Laughing, living, breathing
Crying, sighing, grieving
Caring, loving, healing
A heart of gold that never grows old

Knitting, crocheting, sewing, making garments for her family
Paying bills, tracking prices, pushing the pencil
Figure the budget, Go to town, get a part
Fix that machine so it starts

Laughing, living, breathing
Crying, sighing, grieving
Caring, loving, healing
A heart of gold that never grows old

The sun is setting, day is almost done
The milkers have stopped swishing, the barn is growing quiet
She heads to the house after this long day, hand in hand with her partner, the dogs running circles around them as they walk under the bright summer moon
Sleep tight, the new day will come all too soon

Laughing, living, breathing
Crying, sighing, grieving
Caring, loving, healing
A heart of gold that never grows old

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For permission to make copies of or to reprint this poem, please contact Robin @ rwhitney64@yahoo.com.

From Commodity to Community, Conference Highlights Food Politics and Projects in the Heartland

by Angie Tagtow, MS, RD, LD

Last October, Des Moines was host to a plethora of food-related conferences and events. Attracting attendees from all over the world, the 10-day marathon represented diverse perspectives on solutions to building resilient and sustainable food systems from a local to a global level. The itinerary began with a strategic planning retreat with the [National Farm to School Network](#), followed by the 13th Annual Conference of the [Community Food Security Coalition](#). The week rounded out with the [Iowa Hunger Summit](#) and the [World Food Prize](#).

More than 600 food system leaders from across North America attended the Community Food Security Conference, the nation's primary food systems networking and educational event. Pre-conference events included day-long field trips to farms, processing facilities and retail outlets that support sustainable food production while boosting local economic development. More than 180 participants attended a food policy council workshop, facilitated by Mark Winne, to acquire tools and resources for launching and maintaining local, regional and state food policy councils.

In addition to engaging plenaries, more than 50 innovative workshops were held on such topics as linking local foods to economic development, farm to institution, community food processing, urban agriculture and gardening, women ecopreneurs, urban and rural food desserts, faith-based approaches to building local food systems, food system assessments, social justice, and working with policy makers to advance food system policies. The diverse array of stimulating discussions left one enlight-

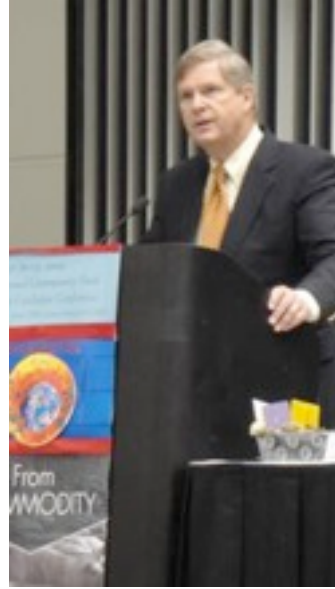
ened, energized and hungry for action.

The Community Food Security Coalition presented the first annual Food Sovereignty Prize to [La Via Campesina](#) in honor of their work in promoting food sovereignty by raising public awareness and working in communities throughout the world. Honorable mentions were awarded to [Community Alliance for Global Justice](#) (United States), [International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology](#) (Kenya), and the [Toronto Food Policy Council](#) (Canada).

A conference highlight was the Iowa "Garden of Eatin'" reception which was held adjacent to the new 13-acre Pappajohn Sculpture Garden in the Western Gateway Park in downtown Des Moines. Conference-goers toured the outdoor art exhibit before enjoying appetizers and beverages sourced from local farms and wineries.

The following evening attracted more than 350 people to a reception and lecture featuring Dr. Hans Herren. Dr. Herren is the President of the [Millennium Institute](#), a World Food Prize Laureate, and co-editor of the new report "Agriculture at a Crossroads," published by the [International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development](#). Dr. Herren provided an overview of the conceptual framework of this landmark work, specifically focusing on how sustainable food production systems are required to conserve our natural resources while meeting the food and nutrition needs of growing populations. A panel of experts expanded the dialogue with strategies and policies needed to advance sustainable food system initiatives on a global level.

Rounding out the conference was a keynote by US Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. Secretary Vilsack addressed upcoming the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization and the need for improved nutrition



"Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food." USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack addresses the audience at the Community Food Security Coalition Conference in Des Moines.

through school meals; using food to grow local economies, build communities and relationships; and the launch of USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" campaign. He closed by addressing the challenges faced by the dairy industry and the (controversial) role of genetically modified crops.

As conference attendees said their good-byes and exchanged business cards, there was a sense of hope that even in the epicenter of industrial agriculture, Iowa showcased innovative initiatives that are advancing food security, resiliency and sustainability – and if it can happen here, it can happen anywhere.

The 14th Annual Community Food Security Coalition Conference will be held in New Orleans in October or late September. For more information, go to www.foodsecurity.org.

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"What Will the World Eat?" Reception and Lecture featuring Dr. Hans Herren. Lecture moderator Angie Tagtow, Dr. Hans Herren, Dena Hoff, Food Sovereignty Award Recipient; Dr. Francis Thicke, organic dairy farmer from Iowa; Alexandra Spielloch, Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy; and Dr. Mary Hendrickson, University of Missouri.

RESOURCES

Community Food Security Coalition Conference Workshop Materials:

<http://communityfoodconference.org/13/workshop-materials/>

National Farm to School Network:

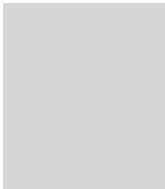
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/>

"Agriculture at a Crossroads" by the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development:

<http://www.agassessment.org/>

USDA "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" Campaign:

<http://www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer>



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