

Women, Food & Agriculture Network

Corporate Influence in India

by Pernell Plath

Here in the West we worry about corporate control of the agricultural sector, and though the problems are incredibly serious and very much real, the effect is often less poignant than in so-called "Third World" countries. I spent this past summer with farmers in southern India, trying to better understand corporate influence on their traditional seed saving and distribution networks. I found such multinational giants as Cargill and Monsanto, as well as national corporations barreling full-force into Indian agriculture with dramatic consequences.

Traditionally, Indian farmers have collected seed for their own use as well as trading with others. This system is under threat as seed becomes viewed merely as a commodity to be bought and sold.

Pervasive rural poverty sets the stage for exploitation by companies eager to establish a presence in the seed sector. In the northern districts of the state of Karnataka, corporations have moved with lightening force to recruit farmers into their seed cultivation regime. Surprisingly, the companies have even been able to cooperate with each other in sending a single representative to a given area. The company official will then canvass the region, extolling the merits of seed production, with the biggest attraction being

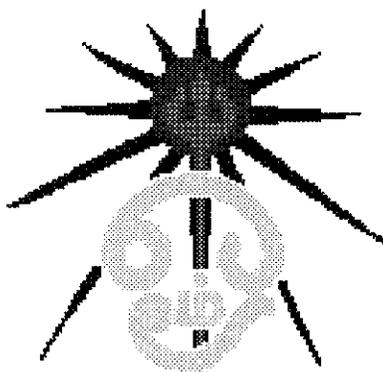
a scarce commodity to peasant farmers - cash. For the start-up expense of digging a bore well if none exists, a family can turn a section of their land to seed growing and seemingly turn a tidy profit.

Though on the surface this arrangement could appear to be mutually advantageous, as the full-story emerges, the agreement loses its luster. Details of the deals vary, but invariably the company representatives who originally recruited the farmers continues to visit them to offer "advice." Some farmers are obligated to follow the advice, others merely cajoled. In either case, the company rep has become the de-facto extension agent.

In my research, with one exception, the farmers had all been producing organically, or at least without the use of synthetic pesticides, prior to their entry into the corporate world. Immediate changes in production include heavy use of inorganic fertilizers and introduction of insecticides, generally purchased by the farmers on credit from the very companies for which the farmers are growing.

Tropical and semi-tropical soils react very strongly to synthetics. Within a short time, even as little as a decade, soil tilth diminishes dramatically in quality.

(Continued on page 7)



A symbol of meditation.

Mission

The *Women, Food, and Agriculture Network* links and amplifies women's voices on issues of food systems, sustainable communities and environmental integrity.



Calendar

January 7-8, 2000: Great Plains Vegetable Conference and Trade Show, St. Joseph, MO. Kathleen Delate, ISU, Organic Specialist, will be a keynote speaker. Contact University of Missouri Extension, 816-233-6192.

January 14-15, 2000: Practical Farmers of Iowa Winter Workshops and Annual Meeting, Gateway Conference Center in Ames. See story this page. Contact: Kate Hogg at 319/247-0223 or Rkhogg@aol.com.

January 24, 31, February 7,14,21,28, 2000: Organic Production for fruit and vegetables plus issues on local food production, Iowa Communications Network, 6-9 p.m. at locations around the state. For more information, contact Kathleen Delate at kdelate@iastate.edu.

January 29, 2000: 5th Annual Iowa Local Food System Conference. Plymouth Congregational Church, 4126 Ingersoll, Des Moines. A reception at the Friends Meeting House, 4211 Grand, Des Moines, the night before. (Snowdate: Feb. 5, 2000) Break into the millennium in local style! Plans are already under way for another wonderful winter gathering of the folks making it happen. Contact, Gary Guthrie at 515-382-3117.

February 5-6, 2000: Solar Power, Stories and Sisters, Practical Farmers of Iowa Women's Retreat, PrairieWoods, Cedar Rapids. See story this page.

February 15-19, 2000: Workshop on starting Community Supported Agriculture programs (CSAs). Also organic vegetable production and biodynamic methods. Sponsored by Field to Family. Ames. Contact Robert Karp, 515-232-5649.

PFI Meeting

"The New American Farm" will be John Ikerd's keynote address at the Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) Winter Workshops and Annual Meeting at the Gateway Conference Center in Ames. Please mark your calendar for Friday and Saturday, January 14-15, 2000, (and note that this meeting is scheduled one week later into January than in previous years).

The event also includes eighteen work-

shops to choose from and an Iowa Bounty Lunch featuring products from PFI member farms. There will be Friday night festivities for families as well, including live music and slides of sustainable agriculture projects across America. Child care available Saturday.

Contact Nan at nanb@iastate.edu or by phone at 515-294-8512.

Solar Power, Stories and Sisters

The annual Practical Farmers of Iowa Women's Retreat will be held February 5 and 6, 2000 at PrairieWoods, a Franciscan retreat center near Cedar Rapids.

The retreat will include a tour of straw bale hermitages and solar power technologies; a talk about agricultural applications; a lecture on Hildegard of Bingen, an herbalist; a book review; and personal reflections on life in agriculture.

PrairieWoods offers trails through prairie and forest, meditation centers, massage therapy, and cozy quarters. We are working with them on providing local food for the retreat, too.

Contact Kate Hogg at 319/247-0223 or Rkhogg@aol.com.

Please join us! You do not have to be a member of PFI to attend.

International Buy Nothing Day

The eighth annual Buy Nothing Day was held in the United States on Friday, November 26th. Buy Nothing Day is a day of cheerful and critical protest against Western overconsumption, the unequal worldwide distribution of well-being and wealth, and the influence of advertising on our daily lives.

According to the United Nation's Development Program's Human Development Reports, eighty-six percent of the purchases for personal consumption are made by twenty percent of the world's population.

The easiest way to become involved in the Buy Nothing Day is: Stay at home! Give yourself and your wallet a day of rest by not shopping.

For more detailed information take a look at website www.ddh.nl/nwd.

Women, Food and Agriculture Network

This newsletter is published by the **Women, Food and Agriculture Network**, a Tides Center Project with the help of the Stanley Foundation, Muscatine, Iowa, and Iowa State University Extension, Ames, Iowa. We welcome suggestions, stories, and news from your part of the world. Our emphasis is on women's lives, their relationships, communities and families.

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Reports and Books

Papers Challenge Biotechnology Myths

Food First has on-line the paper, *Ten Reasons Why Biotechnology Will Not Ensure Food Security, Protect the Environment, and Reduce Poverty in the Developing World*, by Miguel A. Altieri, University of California, Berkeley, and Peter Rosset, Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, Oakland, California.

Biotechnology companies often claim that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) — specifically genetically altered seeds — are essential scientific breakthroughs needed to feed the world, protect the environment, and reduce poverty in developing countries. This view rests on two critical assumptions, both of which are in question. The first is that hunger is due to a gap between food production and human population density or growth rate. The second is that genetic engineering is the only or best way to increase agricultural production and thus meet future food needs.

Food First challenges the notion of biotechnology as a magic bullet solution to agriculture's ills by clarifying misconceptions concerning these underlying assumptions. The full paper is on-line at: <http://www.foodfirst.org/resources/biotech/altieri-11-99.html>

For more information contact foodfirst@foodfirst.org.

Also, the New Zealand's Consumers for Education about Genetic Engineering have prepared a helpful listing of 13 myths of genetic engineering.

For more information contact: Consumers for Education about Genetic Engineering, tel: 03-489 4020 or 03-476 1345; email: brentmckenzie@clear.net.nz.

Hunger Myths

World Hunger: Twelve Myths, by Frances Moore Lappé, Joseph Collins, Peter Rosset, and Luis Esparza, 2nd Edition. 1998, 257 pages ISBN 0-8021-3591-9 \$13.00, Order a copy at <http://www.foodfirst.org>

The following book review is by Kimberly Wilson of GeneWatch:

In a compelling and superbly written book, *World Hunger: Twelve Myths* takes you past the starving children shown on TV, into the systems that contribute to and maintain their condition. Although *Twelve Myths* was first published in 1986, many of the same myths are still found in mainstream media, and in development, agricultural and economic dialogues. The new, revised second edition examines commonly held views such as "There's simply not enough food" or "The Green Revolution is the answer" which the authors then deconstruct.

Their response to the assertion that there is not enough food in the world is their first, and perhaps most compelling. They write. "Abundance not scarcity, best describes the supply of food in the world today. Increases in production during the past thirty-five years have outstripped the world's unprecedented population growth by about 16 percent." Hunger in countries like India, Bangladesh and Brazil, cannot be attributed to scarcity alone. For example, Brazil exports over \$10 billion worth of food at the same time that millions of Brazilians cannot afford to eat.

Reliance on the free market to end hunger is another myth that forms one of the strongest chapters in the book. The authors point out that agricultural biotechnology, which they refer to as the "second" Green Revolution, similarly, "fails to alter the tightly concentrated distribution of economic power, especially access to land and purchasing power. If you don't have land on which to grow food or the money to buy it, you go hungry no matter how dramatically technology pushes up food production." Proponents of agricultural biotechnology often use the myth that they will feed the world to support the introduction of their technology to farming communities. For those interested in dispelling the myths of technology-based, proprietary solutions to hunger, this book is a must read.

GeneWatch is an electronic newsletter published by: Council for Responsible Genetics, Upland Road, Suite 3, Cambridge, MA 02140 tel: (617) 868-0870 fax: 617- 491-5344; crg@essential.org; <http://www.gene-watch.org>.

Alternative Nobel Prize Goes to Cuban Group Promoting the Organic Revolution

(The following is edited from a Food First news release dated October 7, 1999)

STOCKHOLM and OAKLAND: The Grupo de Agricultura Organica (GAO), the Cuban organic farming association, which has been at the forefront of the country's transition from industrial to organic agriculture, was named as winner of a major international prize—the Right Livelihood Award—commonly known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize.'

GAO brings together farmers, farm managers, field experts, researchers, and government officials to develop and promote organic farming methods. Its aim is to convince Cuban farmers and policy-makers that the country's previous high-input farming model was too import-dependent and environmentally damaging to be sustainable, and that the organic alternative has the potential to achieve equally good yields.

GAO is the first Cuban winner of the Right Livelihood Award. It shares the prize of approximately \$225,000 with three other groups.

The prizes will be presented at a ceremony in the Swedish Parliament on December 9, the day before the conventional Nobel Prizes. Founded in 1980, the Right Livelihood Award has honored more than 80 outstanding individuals and organizations for work contributing to a better future for the world.

Organic Consumers Association Action Alert

Organic Consumers Association has developed a food Agenda 2000. It includes:

- a global moratorium on all genetically engineered food and crops!
- stop factory farming and phase-out industrial agriculture!
- conversion of US agriculture to at least 30 percent organic by 2010!

To find out more, go to the website: www.organicconsumers.org.

For reports from the WTO meeting, Nov. 30-Dec. 2,
see the next issue of this newsletter.

An Eventful Year for GMOs

by Greta Anderson

In 1999, the tide began to turn against genetically modified organisms (GMOs). While the U.S. public has lagged behind other nations in its awareness of GMOs, resistance abroad finally created enough disruption to publicize some of their most controversial aspects and applications. Meanwhile, farmers under the financial stress of low commodity prices began to state their deference to growing "what the customer wants," rather than what the seed companies want to sell them (crop seeds engineered to resist their own brand of herbicide). There is still a long way to go, however, before our government ceases to be an international lobbyist for this untested, and largely undesired technology.

Consumer resistance to GMOs has been widely characterized as emotional*. This year's publication of a study showing the fatal impact of "Bt-corn" pollen upon monarch butterfly larvae did much to discredit this accusation. "Bt," or *Bacillus thuringiensis*, is a type of bacteria used by organic farmers to control pests on an spot basis. When Bt genes are blasted into corn DNA to control corn borers in monoculture crop fields, the effect is much more pervasive and persistent. The constant presence of the bacteria genes threatens to hasten the pests' adaptation. And, in this laboratory study, the pollen was shown poisonous to beneficial insects that go unharmed by organic farmers' sprinklings of Bt. The question scientists must now pursue is how this effect translates to actual corn field ecosystems.

Europe, Japan oppose GMO Grain

The most significant practical victory for GMO opponents came as a result of widespread consumer activism in Europe and Japan. Late this spring, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) and other major grain wholesalers announced that they would require GMO and non GMO grain be separated. ADM made the move hoping to capture the premium market for non-GMO grain in those countries. Its chief competitor, Cargill, is committed to
4 GMO grain through a marketing alliance

with Monsanto, the ringleader of genetic engineering technology.

The devaluing of GMO grain was bad news for farmers who had already planted their seeds and were facing a year of dreadfully poor financial prospects. But it quickly began to raise some of the questions opponents have been asking all along. What about genetic drift from neighboring fields? And who really benefits from this ballyhooed technology and the enormous public investment in it? Up until now, Iowa's politicians have been falling over themselves to prophesy the golden role of genetic engineering in the economy, above and beyond its media-advertised potential of feeding the world and curing the world's diseases. In this vein, one of Vilsack's first moves as Iowa's Governor was to promote legislation funding a huge genetic research center at Iowa State University.

The Terminator Gene

When the subject is the Terminator, the premise of public investment is alarmingly bankrupt. This seed is engineered to produce an infertile plant, thwarting any opportunity for farmers to save seeds. It was developed jointly by the USDA and Delta Pine & Land, a company that was subsequently purchased by Monsanto. This seed was slated for markets in the Third World, where peasants routinely save seeds. An enormous public outcry, led by suitably outraged nonprofit groups, led Monsanto to halt the seed's commercialization. But Secretary Glickman has yet to divorce the USDA from further development of sterilization technology, much less use the agency's power to ban its private development.

Unfortunately, the sterilization "genie" is out of the bottle. All of the companies known as the "gene giants" have been developing similar technologies. The nonprofit RAFI (Rural Advancement Foundation International) calls these Terminator-style innovations "traitor technologies," as their purpose is to protect their profits from those who use them (and whose tax money, in many cases, has contributed to their development). Much of the research and devel-

opment is being conducted in stealth. Of local interest, RAFI reports that AstraZeneca recently claimed to have abandoned the development of sterilization technology as early as 1992. Yet RAFI discovered that ExSeed, an AstraZeneca joint venture with Iowa State University, won a new seed sterilization patent on 11 August 1997.

Public Hearings

Finally, the FDA has scheduled three "public hearings" to explain the agency's approval process for genetically engineered foods and take testimony from the public. The first of these hearings, in nearby Chicago, took place in mid-November. Two more hearings are scheduled for Washington DC (Nov. 30) and Oakland, CA (Dec. 13). It is widely agreed that the federal GMO approval process is much too lax; genes added to food products from non-food organisms like bacteria are treated more like innocuous "ingredients" than food additives or the completely new phenomenon that they are. Critics of the approval process often note that it was devised by two researchers previously employed by Monsanto.

While Glickman has stated that we cannot force GMO grain upon countries through the World Trade Organization, the U.S. is currently using WTO authority to exact large punitive tariffs on French imports, in retaliation for the country's rejection of our hormone-treated beef. Bovine growth hormones, used to increase production in both dairy and beef cattle, are genetically engineered, but do not involve trans-species transfer of genes as do GMO seeds. BGH has also been on the market longer. Still, Canada made an important move this year by denying approval of the growth hormone for dairy cattle, pointing to poor health of hormone-treated cows.

*The pattern of reportage that describes consumer resistance as "emotional" deserves a solid feminist rebuke, as the typical food purchaser is a woman and "emotional" is often a putdown.

(Greta Anderson is a member of WFAN. She lives in Iowa City and writes for a living.)

Garden Reflections

by Anne Robertson, Program Coordinator at OSACS Women's Center

Susan Noland, a board member and past president of OSACS Women's Center, Des Moines, explained to me how our garden got started. It was created as "something for our women to do who weren't interested in our sewing or quilting classes. It was something that we thought would enrich their lives. It didn't make The Des Moines Register's headline in 1993, but maybe it should have...." OSACS Women's Center, a grass roots organization serving low-income women, provides garden plots for women seeking self-sufficiency.

Our garden at OSACS represents a wide range of cultures - Southeast Asian: Laotian, Vietnamese, Chinese; Hispanic: Mexican, Cuban, El Salvadorian; African: Sudanese, Somalian, Ethiopian; and various American cultures: African American, Midwestern, Southern, rural and urban. Teva Dawson, Des Moines' Community Gardening Coordinator calls us the "UN Garden."

We relish our diversity especially at potluck lunches. Some of us like hot, hot peppers, collard greens, okra and tomatoes and some not. But we all love the magic and peace of gardening. It transcends our language, cultural and ethnic differences and unites us, as we make this corner lot in the heart of Des Moines a special place.

About five years ago our gardeners gathered for the dedication of our Peace Pole. It stands mighty and tall in this decaying neighborhood. On beautiful late summer days we can see Iowa goldfinches feed on our perennial sunflowers and bees and butterflies hover around the nasturtium and zinnias and know that we have made a difference.

Our styles of gardening vary just like our personalities. I like to get dirty and don't consider I've worked hard unless my face is red and my nails full of dirt. But I've learned from my gardening friends that I can still pull weeds and

not ruin my silk pantsuit if I take time to notice and care for my garden every day. One of my favorite activities is to scout new arrivals in the garden with Miss Johnnie. Her enthusiasm for gardening is contagious and she's always game to taste something whether it's an almost ripe raspberry or a Thai pepper. I look at our success in our garden and know it's a team effort of women.

At OSACS whenever we take visitors on a tour of our facility we save the garden for last because we know it's the crowning touch. Recently, we conducted back-to-back tours for local businesses supporting United Way and everyone commented about the garden. We receive funds from a variety of sources. One is Des Moines' Founder's Day Garden Club. The ladies arrived at OSACS on a tour bus and were welcomed by staff and our circle of gardeners. Lien, Tram, Nga and Van proudly showed their plots and gave our guests culinary treats of homemade egg rolls and fried rice.

Community gardening is nothing new. It's so simple, sharing land with folks who want to garden together. But somehow it must have been forgotten or exchanged for the American dream of the house with the white picket fence and the deluxe supermarket at the shopping center. Not having grown up in Iowa, I hadn't even thought about what it was like in Des Moines 50 or 60 years ago until a carpenter working on the property behind OSACS said to me as he pointed at our garden, "Oh, yeah, these used to be all over Des Moines, you know they were victory gardens during World War

II." I thought that's what we're doing now, but our victory is celebrating our diversity and coming together as women and growing together.

PrairieLand Herbs

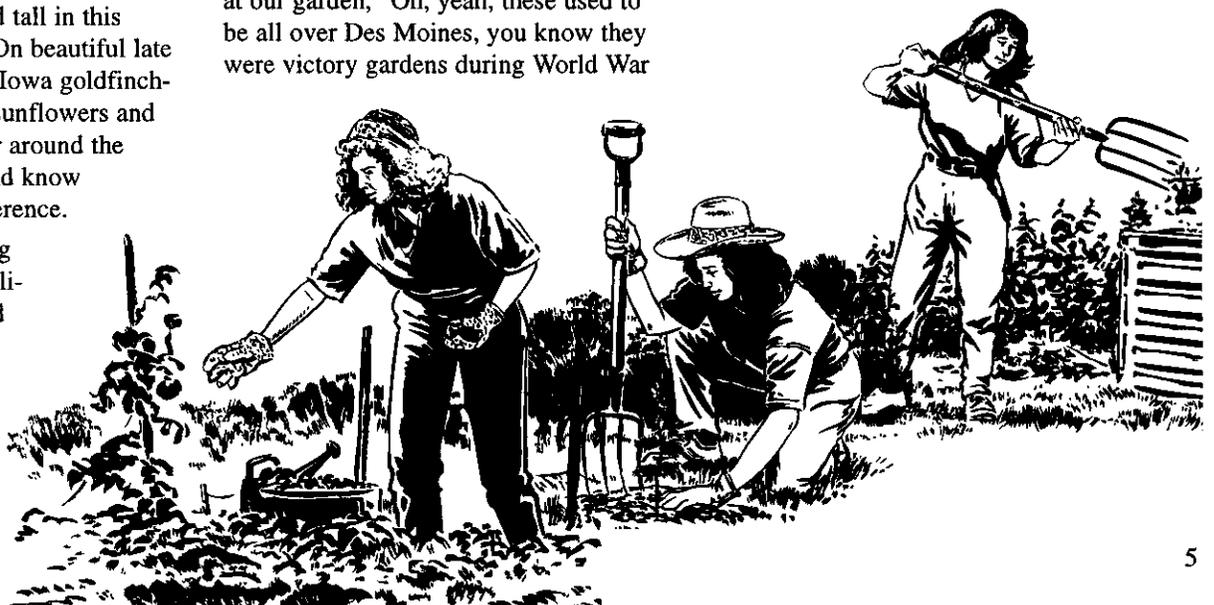
PrairieLand Herbs is an on-farm business located on S Avenue in Woodward, Iowa. You take the Woodward exit off Hwy. 141. PrairieLand Herbs is on the first gravel road to the west of the exit.

Here are the top five PrairieLand Herbs products, in order:

- 1) Lauren's coffee
- 2) lip balm
- 3) the herbal soaps from Redfield
- 4) herbal dip mixes
- 5) the goat milk soaps from Perry

PrairieLand Herbs is run by Maggie Howe and Donna Julseth, telephone 515-438-2363.

In their shop, they have also shown woolens from Gail Hutchison, who is also now selling in a boutique in Adel, Iowa and the Atherton House in Woodward as a result of the owners seeing them at PraireLand Herbs. Good networking!!



Governor's Task Force on the Farm Emergency

On September 23, 1999 men and women representing farm and rural Iowa were called together by Governor Tom Vilsack to begin work on the current stressed farm economy. People representing farms, banks, mental health, extension, and farm organizations met in the state capitol to look for solutions. The task force is chaired by Secretary of Agriculture Patty Judge and Dr. Neil Harl.

The mission of the task force is "to provide advice and specifics on short and long-range responses to the agricultural situation in Iowa as it relates to the farm program. Specifically, how does Iowa benefit from the farm program and what changes should be made?"

The task force has been divided into three groups,

- 1) Assistance to those under stress,
- 2) Review policy options - short-term price and income issues and
- 3) Review policy options - long-term structure issues.

These three groupings meet on a committee basis. The goal is to have a set of recommendations to hand to the governor by December 20th.

Denise O'Brien is representing Women, Food and Agriculture Network on the task force and is working on the long-term structure committee.

Local Food Task Force Launches Recommendations

On Monday, September 20, Secretary of Agriculture, Patty Judge, received the Local Food Task Force's recommendations just prior to being served a scrumptious lunch at the Bistro 43 in Des Moines.

Gathered for this presentation were the many local food leaders who had put in long meeting hours, the media, and other local food partners. The Task Force members include: Mike Bevins, State Horticulturist, Iowa Department of Agriculture; Larry Cleverley, Grower; Scott Cooley, University of Northern Iowa; Kamyar Enshayan, University of Northern Iowa; Mary Swalla-Holmes, ISU Extension; Gary Huber, Field to

Family Community Food Project; Carol Hunt, Johnson County Local Food project; Larry Jacobsen, Allen Hospital of Cedar Falls; Mike Kiernan, Iowa Department of Agriculture; Patti McKee, Iowa Network for Community Agriculture; Jan Libbey, Iowa Network for Community Agriculture; Naomi Maahs, Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers; Denise O'Brien, Women, Food, and Agriculture; Rich Pirog, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture; Anne Thorp, Produce Broker; Neil Hamilton, Drake University Law School.

The task force's recommendations include (paraphrased):

1. Appoint a full-time, statewide local food systems coordinator to help implement these recommendations.
2. Formalize the Local Food Task Force.
3. Research and collect information on how Iowa foods are produced, processed, distributed, and consumed.
4. Build public awareness and understanding of local food systems and the implications on Iowa's economy, communities, and environment.
5. Provide "hands-on" training and technical assistance that strengthens local food production.
6. Allocate resources to improve the infrastructure for local food systems.
7. Create incentives and opportunities for linkages among Iowa producers, processors, distributors, and consumers.
8. Establish an Iowa Food Policy Council that includes representation from the Local Food Task Force.

The positive reception of these recommendations capped off a unique process that gathered a broad group to consider how the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, together with the various groups represented, can further the local food movement in Iowa. The recommendations lay the groundwork for more work ahead. Some of that work may well involve WFAN.

Look over the recommendations. There are plans underway to include discussion of the recommendations in the Local Food System Conference scheduled for Jan. 29, 2000 in Des Moines. Bring your thoughts to the discussion! We need to hear from you.

For a complete report, see website: www.state.ia.us/agriculture.

Apples to Apples: A Look at Local Food Systems

AMES, IOWA—Once a top apple-producing state, Iowa now provides a fraction of the fresh apples eaten by Iowans annually. More information about changes in Iowa's apple industry, and potential for local sales today, is now available in a report on the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture's website: <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu>.

Authored by Education program coordinator Rich Pirog and intern John Tyndall, the paper is a vehicle for exploring the potential for local food systems to augment Iowa farm income. Market studies show a growing interest in food systems, where local farmers sell their products to nearby consumers. The authors estimate that about 15 percent of the 1.3 million bushels of fresh apples consumed by Iowans each year are Iowa-grown.

While a typical Iowa-grown apple is sold within one day to two months of picking, apples grown in Washington can be kept for eight months or longer in controlled atmosphere storage before sale, allowing nearly year-round availability in the nation's grocery stores.

Some Iowans may not know that the Delicious variety was discovered as a chance seedling by Madison County farmer Jesse Hiatt, nor that Iowa was once a top apple-producing state, producing a peak 9.5 million bushels in 1911. The Iowa apple industry was devastated in 1940, however, by the infamous Armistice Day freeze which killed many apple trees. Today, Iowa ranks 31st among the 36 states that grow apples commercially. Washington state ranks first in U.S. apple production, growing more than half of the nation's fresh apples.

Graphics depicting the pathways taken by Iowa- and Washington-grown apples are included with the paper, as well as suggestions for increasing the potential for local food systems in Iowa, using apples as an example. Printed copies of the paper are also available by contacting the Leopold Center, 209 Curtiss Hall, ISU, Ames, IA 50011-1050; phone 515-294-3711; e-mail leocenter@iastate.edu. Or contact Rich Pirog, 515-294-3711.

Women Gather for Fall Meeting

Women from around the state gathered at the 4-H Camp near Madrid for the fall meeting of the Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN).

Friday afternoon was spent on the newsletter and a work plan for the next six months. Grant proposal writing to find funding to support the newsletter, provide operating expenses, and to launch new initiatives will fill a major part of WFAN's next few months. A major new initiative will be connecting with women landowners on issues of sustainable agriculture.

We also planned for the spring meeting, April 8-9, 2000. It will feature Marti Crouch who will discuss Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO). Marti Crouch is Professor of Biology at Indiana University. In 1990 she changed the focus of her professional activities as she became convinced that genetic engineering was not in the best interest of society.

An afternoon walk through the forest with Danielle and Heather as nature guides resulted in a lively discussion of the use of fire in forest and prairie management.

In the evening, two women from Mexico presented a program on their work with domestic violence in an indigenous community in the state of Puebla. Beatriz Martinez Corona talked of the process used to engage women and men around the issue of domestic violence. Beatriz and Blanca Salcido Ramos also work on projects facilitating microenterprise among indigenous.

The meal for the evening was a potluck that included smoked salmon from Alaska, baked chicken, fresh greens and cider. Breakfast the next day was also a cooperative affair.

On Saturday there was discussion around the upcoming World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle. Greta Anderson and Denise O'Brien will be participating in the NGO parallel event. Kathleen McQuillen from the American Friends Service Committee in Des Moines came to the Saturday morning meeting to talk about how WFAN and AFSC can work together on economic justice and immigrant issues in Iowa.

Women left the meeting once again committed to the work of Women, Food and Agriculture Network - linking and amplifying the voices of women.

Small Farms More Productive than Large Farms

...but Threatened by Trade Agreements

(The following is edited from a newsrelease sent via email.)

Small farms are more productive than large farms, yet their continued existence is threatened by international trade agreements, according to a major study that can be found at <http://www.foodfirst.org/pubs/policybs/pb4.html>.

The Institute for Food and Development Policy, also known as Food First and the Transnational Institute in the Netherlands published a study authored by agricultural development specialist Dr. Peter Rosset. Challenging the conventional wisdom that small farms are backward and unproductive, the study shows that small farmers worldwide produce from 2 to 10 times more per unit area than do larger, corporate farmers.

"In fact small farms are 'multi-functional'—more productive, more efficient, and contribute more to economic development than do large farms," said Dr. Rosset.

Communities surrounded by populous small farms have healthier economies than do communities surrounded by depopulated large, mechanized farms, according to the study. Small farmers also take better care of natural resources, including reducing soil erosion and conserving biodiversity. Small farmers are better stewards of natural resources, safeguarding the future sustainability of agricultural production.

Unfortunately the study shows that today the world's small farmers face unprecedented threats to their livelihoods, thanks to free trade agreements negotiated in recent years. "Free trade causes the prices farmers receive to drop through the floor", said Rosset, "driving them into bankruptcy by the millions."

Food First/The Institute for Food and Development Policy, 398 60th Street Oakland, California 94618 USA tel: 510/654-4400; <http://www.foodfirst.org>.

Corporate Influence in India

(Continued from page 1)

Insect pests intensify under the barrage of poisons.

Though some income is now earned from agriculture, for the vast majority of Indian farmers, the land is primarily feeding their families. As the agroecosystem sickens, so too the family's livelihood grows increasingly jeopardized.

For the farmers I interviewed, profits are generally good in the beginning, and the damage is not so great that it cannot be disregarded. However, as time goes by, productivity continually decreases and cash inflows slow. At the same time agrochemical expenditures stay the same or sometimes increase in a vain attempt to recreate the yields of the past. Eventually, the earnings and harvest decrease to the point of futility, and either the company or the farmer rescinds the relationship.

At this point, the family is left with less fertile land, sometimes far worse. Their economic base is damaged. The long-term wealth of that family has decreased. As one farmer who had grown seeds for 15 years explained, the former seed land has lower yields, the food that is grown on the land is less flavorful and does not store as long. In the meantime, the company has recruited another farmer with fresh lands to begin the process anew. They have merely moved on without diminishing their bottom line.

Corporate recruiting of seed farmers in India is pushing the country closer to the precipice of food insecurity, to say nothing of the damage to the traditional farmer to farmer seed exchange mechanisms nor the loss of genetic diversity, nor the myriad of other concerns from this emergence. As already scarce lands lose productivity and already scarce economic resources are devoted to agrochemicals, the ability of India to feed herself decreases.

Unfortunately, though damage to lands from chemical use is now widely recognized by India's agricultural institutions, the information has not spread out to the public. The combination of past government policies promoting synthetics and current corporate misinformation have kept farmers in the dark about the threat of corporate collusion.

**Women, Food
& Agriculture
Network**

A Tides Center Project
59624 Chicago Road
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Women, Food, & Agriculture Network links
and amplifies women's voices on issues of food systems,
sustainable communities and environmental integrity.

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Let's keep connected:

Women, Food and Agriculture Network

Membership in Women, Food and Agriculture is either \$30 or \$10 (your choice). Fill out the form below and we will sign you up. This newsletter is a benefit of membership.

We are a network of women with food, agricultural, environmental and economic concerns. Please share your thoughts, ideas, successes, interests, and solutions with us.

Enclosed is \$30 for my membership.

I have the following to contribute

Enclosed is \$10 for my membership.

Name _____

Phone _____

Organization _____

Fax _____

(if you are joining as a representative of a group)

Address _____

E-mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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59624 Chicago Road
Atlantic, IA 50022