



# Family Farm Agenda

**NFFC**  
National Family Farm Coalition

2012 Spring Issue

## From the President by Ben Burkett

We had some great achievements in 2011 within the Coalition, but we still have challenges to meet within the agricultural community. Prices are rather good for corn, soybean, cotton and other commodities but the costs of fuel, labor and other resources have also increased. If you are one of the farmers buying grain for feed or planting, you may be paying even more to farm again this year.

Last year I traveled quite a bit representing the Coalition, including a trip to Cuba with Via Campesina. Farmers are the highest respected profession there, ranking above doctors and lawyers.

I would like to thank everyone for attending the winter meeting - we had good food and good company. My traveling party included Jerry Pennick, Daniel Teague and Charles Houston. Jerry Pennick gave an excellent presentation on the Farm Bill and discussed credit reforms the Federation is researching for farm bill recommendations.

I also thank the members, board of directors, executive committee, and staff for the hard work in 2011 and hope that everyone is willing to continue this work through 2012. I have enjoyed serving as President, and am most appreciative that the board had enough confidence in me to re-elect me as the president of this organization for 2012.

I look forward to visiting with as many membership organizations, located in various states, as I can this year. It would be great to see more members, especially from the western United States, become more visible. We need their support and we want to support them.

**Farmers wishing to file claims related to the Pigford II settlement have until May 11, 2012.** Information about meetings and other resources can be found at: <https://www.blackfarmercuse.com/> and <http://www.federationsoutherncoop.com/press/pr2012/feb2912.htm>

As we learn about the struggles of fishermen and other farmers, we find that we have so much in common; our purpose is to support one another. We are on the right track but we need to get more of our members, from California to Vermont, working together. Again, thank you for your contributions and ongoing support.



Ben at NFFC meeting in DC with Margot McMillen, Wesley Rieth and Liz Solorio in background

## 2012 Hopes and Expectations



The new Martin Luther King Memorial shone on January 29

NFFC board, staff and guests met in DC during a balmy weekend at the end of January. Discussions ranged from resource grabs to grain reserves and the farm bill's commodity title to the struggles to build markets for local farmers and fishers as competition from cheaper sources and long gone infrastructure impedes it. MAC/FSC members offered ideas on initiatives that are gaining traction in the Southeast, while others noted the criminalization of family farmers in their states.

Messaging to media and the public was another significant aspect of the meeting. Margot McMillen, John Peck and John Kinsman led a workshop that was augmented by suggestions from various allies, including Susan Youmans, host of *What's For Dinner?*, who participated by telephone. A long list of sound bites was compiled, although caution was offered as they are often co-opted. One term that

has not yet been co-opted is 'food sovereignty', which defines and connects the work of NFFC members and many allies. As someone said in DC, there will be no world peace without food sovereignty -- food justice *is* world peace.



Standing: B. Wilson, B. Burkett, I. Rodgers, C. Houston, K. Ozer, D. Teague, L. Griffith, P. Rozwadowski, M. McMillen, J. Peck, J. Kinsman, A. Pahnke, N. Dorry, S. Horne, C. Quinn-Thibodeau, W. Rieth. Seated: L. Solorio, T. Gibbons, S. Weinblatt, B. St. Peter. Mark Hoffman photo

## 2012 NFFC Executive Committee

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*The Family Farm Agenda is published several times annually by the National Family Farm Coalition, a nonprofit providing a voice for grassroots groups on farm, food, trade and rural economic issues to ensure fair prices for family farmers and fishers, safe and healthy food, and vibrant, environmentally sound rural communities here and around the world.*

## April 17 - International Day of Peasant Struggle

Via Campesina and allies will celebrate April 17 - the date in 1996 when 19 peasants struggling for land and justice in Brazil were slain - as the International Day of Peasant Struggle. Family farmers worldwide struggle to procure and save seeds of their preferred crops instead of those promoted by GMO seed companies; to buy and sell their products in a fair, competitive marketplace; and to farm as their families did long before the green revolution. Likewise, family fishermen strive to avoid being bought off by bigger boats with bigger catch share allotments and to receive fair prices. Small-scale producers want to nurture themselves, their families and their communities.

This year there will be special attention to **resource grabs - the taking of land, water, fish and minerals by investors speculating on the future value of these resources**. This phenomenon is neither new nor limited to any one continent: developed countries buy from developing ones to enhance their own food security; university and corporate pension funds purchase land to sell later at a profit; and energy companies extract oil, gas, water and sand from underneath unsuspecting landowners. If you can, join one of these events or plan your own to celebrate peasant farmers and fishermen around the world.

*Globalize the Struggle! Globalize Hope!*

**April 17-24 - Food for Maine's Future** hopes to achieve 100 showings nationwide of **'You Wanted To Be A Farmer: A Discussion Of Scale'**. Watch this new documentary about small farmer challenges at: <http://nombrella.com/nublog/no-umbrella-tv/you-wanted-to-be-a-farmer-a-discussion-of-scale-video/>. Contact 207-244-0908 or [foodformainesfuture207@gmail.com](mailto:foodformainesfuture207@gmail.com) to show this film; a DVD and discussion materials will be provided.

**April 17 - Rural Vermont** - Multiple VT showings of "You Wanted To Be A Farmer": WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, Upper Valley Co-op, 7 pm, free and open to the public; MONTPELIER, Kellogg-Hubbard Library, 6 pm, free and open to the public; Neighborhood Screenings in: Newport; Chester; Wheelock; Fairfield; Burlington; Shelburne; Poultney; Peacham; Wells; St. Albans; and Ripton

**April 17 - Northern Plains Resource Council** - GLENDIVE, MT - Film showing

**April 17-18 - Family Farm Defenders** with Stand Up Chicago - CHICAGO, IL - Chicago Mercantile Exchange (5pm Tuesday and 12-1pm Wednesday); Jane Addams Hull House Museum (Tuesday 7pm) for potluck dinner and food sovereignty discussion

**April 15-17- NFFC, Student Farmworker Alliance/Coalition of Immokalee Workers** and Food First - WASHINGTON, DC - Discussion of *Food Movements Unite* at Busboys and Poets and CIW action against Giant grocery stores' headquarters

**April 23 - Missouri Rural Crisis Center** - COLUMBIA, MO - Film showing and local foods potluck at Café Berlin

## National Hmong American Farmers Meet

By Annette Hiatt, NHAFF Policy Analyst

On March 22, 2012, NHAFF held its third national conference in Fresno, California. With almost 200 people registered, we were thrilled to welcome farmers, community leaders, organizational allies and agency representatives from Minnesota, Washington, Idaho, North Carolina and across California. Not only were there Hmong farmers, but Cambodian, Lao, Mien, Latino and African American farmers, as well. Our keynote presentation by the USDA Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Dr. Joe Leonard (above, right, with NHAFF executive director Chukou Thao), also



created a space for attendees to express the unique challenges, obstacles and successes faced by the Southeast Asian farming community. (Photos by Jonathan Mathis)

## NYFC Celebrates Tools and Innovation

by Ben Shute, National Young Farmers Coalition

The National Young Farmers Coalition, celebrating its second year, recently introduced a new community forum called FarmHack. FarmHack offers farmers new opportunities to work together on tools and innovations to make their farms more sustainable and efficient. They also seek to collaborate with engineers, designers, architects and other non-farmer allies who want to help strengthen sustainable agriculture.

Mainstream agricultural research and development tries to solve farmers' problems with top-down, chemical and energy-intensive inventions. FarmHack seeks to solve problems by helping their community of farmers to be better inventors, developing tools that fit the scale and their ethics of their sustainable family farms.

Of course, farmers for generations have developed their own tools and solutions in farm shops and in the field, and shared them with neighbors: tillage, transport, power generation, processing, seeding, and spinning. What's new here is that FarmHack makes it possible to share these innovations with the entire community of farmers, and gives farmers the opportunity to support and improve upon one another's ideas, across geographic boundaries.



### The Principles of FarmHack:

- Cooperative innovation by farmers to address their farms' challenges.
- Collaboration with allies such as designers + engineers.
- Research and development driven by the needs and insights of sustainable farmers.
- Bringing farmers and allies together face-to-face at charrette events on farms, in grange halls and at institutions.
- Idea sharing that is open source, over the internet and face-to-face.

Innovations and events will be posted online weekly at:

[www.farmhack.net](http://www.farmhack.net)

In a similar story, TED Fellow Marcin Jakubowski is open-sourcing the blueprints for 50 farm machines using wikis and digital fabrication tools, allowing anyone to build her own tractor or harvester from scratch. To learn more about Marcin's efforts visit:

[http://www.ted.com/speakers/marcin\\_jakubowski.html](http://www.ted.com/speakers/marcin_jakubowski.html).

## LLPP Advice for Disaster Preparedness

The Land Loss Prevention Project offers insight from Rural Coalition on disaster preparation at <http://www.landloss.org/irene.php>.

**If a natural disaster - from an early freeze to a tornado - is imminent or has hit your farm, here are things to do just before and after the disaster to lessen the damage:**

- 1) Maintain copies of any crop insurance or NAP policy, the names, phone numbers and policy numbers for all farm, home and family insurance agents and policies, and your records! (Scan and email records to family members off-farm, if possible.)
- 2) Prepare your farm and buildings for the particular disaster. Put away machinery, and turn off power anywhere it will not be used during a storm. Consider keeping a generator - be sure you have adequate fuel and a safe place to operate it.
- 3) Clear waterways of debris and secure anything that might damage buildings. If you have crops or hay in a field near harvest, consider harvesting what you can if facing a predictable disaster.
- 4) Prepare to make insurance claims. Take pictures to document production before the storm. Retain planting records, seed purchases, and other evidence (e.g., loan documents, farm and home plan) to show what you planted, as well as schedule F of your tax return and other sales records to verify your crop's value.
- 5) Keep an inventory (photos, videos, lists) of your house, buildings, vehicles, and valuable equipment and farm BEFORE the disaster occurred, which are helpful in documenting your claims for insurance purposes. If possible, keep this on a computer and be sure copies are kept somewhere other than your home.
- 6) Have plans in place with family, friends and other farmers nearby. Your plan should include the best ways to reach people (i.e., a phone tree) to warn or help each other.
- 7) Keep your cell phone and other equipment fully charged. Print or copy important phone numbers of family and other key contacts onto a sheet of paper that you carry with you so that if your cell phone loses power, you can access contact information.
- 8) Have a plan in place for your animals' care, including options if you lose electrical power or access to water.
- 9) Be sure that you and your neighbors record evidence (photos, video) of the destruction to your property. This is crucial - disaster programs do not pay for damage until long after the disaster.
- 10) DO NOT CLEAN UP UNTIL YOU HAVE CONTACTED YOUR INSURER AND HAVE DAMAGE APPRAISED, then develop a rapid response team with neighbors to help each other clean up the damage. Maintain clear records of the time spent on this activity, which may be eligible for reimbursement from the Emergency Conservation Program.
- 11) Emergency Conservation Program (ECP): The FSA's ECP provides emergency funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters, and to carry out emergency water conservation measures during severe drought. County FSA committees determine land eligibility based on on-site inspections of damage, assessing the type and extent of damage. ECP participants receive cost-share assistance of up to 75 percent of the cost to implement approved emergency conservation practices. Producers should check with local county FSA offices regarding ECP sign-up periods, set by FSA committees. For more info on USDA help after the storm see: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=diap&topic=landing>.

## What the Frack?

By Mardy Townsend, ALG-OFU member, grass-fed cattle farmer

Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake Counties (Ohio) Farmers Union has been working hard to educate ourselves and the public about hydraulic fracturing of horizontally drilled natural gas wells. At the OFU annual convention in January, two Pennsylvania farmers spoke of their experience with above-ground spillage of frack water. A well fracked uphill from Terry Greenwood's small beef operation leaked toxic fluid into his livestock watering pond. The following year, 13 of 15 calves were stillborn, seven of them with blue or white eyes. The testimony of these two farmers helped convince convention delegates to adopt a new policy on fracking.

The New OFU policy calls for Ohio's Governor, General Assembly and Department of Natural Resources to ensure the exploitation of Marcellus and Utica shales is regulated and monitored to protect the health of Ohio citizens, natural resources, public roads, water treatment systems and other public infrastructure. The policy also calls for a moratorium on new permits for horizontal well stimulation by ODNR until the EPA issues its initial report on the potential impacts of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water resources.

At OFU's March 21 lobby day, fracking was the hottest topic among conversations with our state legislators. Many assured us that keeping our ground and surface water clean was of paramount importance, and that what happened in Pennsylvania will not happen in Ohio. Although Gov. Kasich introduced stronger construction standards for injection wells after the Youngstown area earthquakes, we have yet to see where he really stands.

My greatest personal concern about the fracking process is over the disposal of its wastewater. There are 173 wastewater injection wells in (mostly eastern) Ohio; two are in my township of Windsor. Our farm has four water wells for two houses and 130 head of cattle. Water well contamination would put many small farmers like us out of business; water for human use could be trucked in at great cost, but there would never be enough for food crops and livestock, thereby killing our fast-growing regional food system.

Pennsylvania has determined that it does not have the proper geology for injection wells, and its municipal water treatment plants are not equipped to safely treat the chemicals found in frack water. Due to the commerce clause in the U.S. Constitution, if Ohio allows Ohio waste frack water to be injected into their wells, we cannot turn away frack waste water from other states, so Pennsylvania trucks their frack water (at least one hourly) to Ohio.

The first step in every battle is education. Realizing that most people in Windsor weren't aware of what was happening, AGL Farmers Union organized a meeting on March 26, and 140 people attended! Joe Logan (representing Trumbull County Farmers Union, OFU executive committee and Ohio Environmental Council) showed a PowerPoint presentation on fracking. I spoke on the two injection wells in Windsor and the probability of the well casings' eventual failure. A retired schoolteacher explained how to use conductivity strips to detect the presence of chloride, the first contaminant to reach fresh water wells from an injection well plume. At the next meeting we'll educate people on locating unknown mineral leases and get baseline tests done on water wells.

It feels like we are struggling for the soul of northeast Ohio. In one year, the discussion has deteriorated from generating wind energy along the lake to exploiting shale gas. Will we be seduced by a dying industrial model based on petroleum, with the lure of a few relatively high-paying jobs in energy extraction for 20 years? Or, will we have the courage to curb the petroleum/natural gas/coal industry and demand renewable energy for our future?

A sustainable, robust northeast Ohio economy must include a high quality, affordable local food system. This cannot be accomplished without plentiful and clean water, and we'll be vigilant in advocating for this both here and in Columbus.

## Freedom of Speech is Across the Tracks

By Brenda Cochran, Pro-Ag member and dairy farmer

Several members of the NFFC Dairy Subcommittee attended the first of several field hearings scheduled by the House Agriculture Committee on March 9, 2012, in Saranac Lake, New York.

The press release announcing the hearings stated that they would allow Ag Committee members "...the opportunity to hear firsthand how U.S. farm policy is working for farmers..." and "...to improve programs for farmers, increase efficiency, and reduce spending... with perspective from the field...".



Robin Fitch, Gretchen Maine, Brenda Cochran and Arden Tewksbury with Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine), sponsor of the Local Foods Act

Progressive Agriculture Organization members Ken

Dibbell, Brenda Cochran, Robin Fitch, Gretchen Maine and Carol Sullivan traveled with Pro Ag Manager Arden Tewksbury to the hearing. Efforts to address the representatives were thwarted by the process that had selected the hearing speakers, and it was soon apparent that no one else would be allowed to speak.

Even efforts to carry a few politely worded picket signs into the auditorium at North Country Community College, despite earlier approval by local law enforcement officers, were nixed by federal authorities. Robin Fitch was ordered to take the signs out of the building and across the driveway as the "...freedom of speech area was on the other side of the tracks."

The oral testimony presented by three dairy farmers, obvious supporters of Rep. Collin Peterson's (D-MN) Dairy Security Act, was ripe with the pitch for maintaining the overall status-quo in dairy policy. A few tweaks will continue support for the federal policies that long ago eliminated the socio-economic balance sustaining our once vibrant rural dairy communities, meanwhile bilking taxpayers and replacing America's fresh, local milk with imported, processed dairy products and ingredients, such as milk protein concentrate (MPC).

In reviewing the Ag Committee's press release distributed before the Lake Saranac hearing, it is clear that the public interest in dairy policy is irrelevant to the farm bill writers. Despite claims that they are committed to a new direction in dairy policy, the committee has fully ignored S. 1640, Sen. Robert Casey's (D-PA) Federal



Robin Fitch at Saranac on the 'other side of the tracks' with pro-S.1640 signs

Milk Marketing Improvement Act, which would allow farmers to be paid a price based on their costs of production. Sadly, a safe, fresh, local milk supply produced by real dairy farmers paid fairly by dairy processors seems to be of no concern to the power brokers in Washington.

## TPP - NAFTA of the Pacific Rim By Liz Solorio

With the next round of negotiations scheduled for May 8-19 in Texas, advocates should be informed and engaged about the movement of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP). Currently, the U.S., Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam are involved. Unfortunately, TPP was created with the capability to grow exponentially per its docking agreement, allowing other countries - Japan, Mexico, Canada, Russia, Indonesia and potentially China - to join over time. Although the Obama administration is advertising TPP as a 21<sup>st</sup> century trade deal, information leaked early 2011 paints it as a NAFTA-style agreement benefiting only a few at the top.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Upon President Obama's inauguration, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) announced its intent to initiate negotiations on a Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership. At the end of 2009, USTR Ron Kirk formally announced to Congress, "The President intends to enter into negotiation of a regional, Asia-Pacific trade agreement, known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement, with the objective of shaping a high-standard, broad-based regional agreement." Since talks officially opened in 2010 there has been very little transparency. Negotiation rounds have been held behind closed doors, with no texts formally released to the public or media. At the Chicago round of negotiations in September 2011, TPP negotiators admitted they had signed a special pact to keep all related documents secret, despite the recently completed Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) that draft trade negotiation texts are released before agreements are finalized. More than 600 corporate lobbyists are listed as advisors, regardless of USTR claims. Congressional leaders have urged the Obama administration to create mechanisms for broad public participation in the process before talks advance. Sen. Sanders (I-VT) and Sen. Wyden (D-OR) expressed concerns about the secrecy shrouding the talks. Wyden noted: "The rules that are to govern international trade and are supposed to give American producers a level playing field on which to compete must be designed with our broad, collective interests in mind, not just those interests of the well-connected few."

### **TPP RISKS:**

#### ***Investor-state rights***

Investor-rights in trade agreements can be used by foreign corporations to challenge federal, state and local governments over countless issues, including natural resource management, food labeling and safety standards.

Such provisions have been used to attack environmental, consumer safety and other public interest policies that pose "barriers to trade", per corporations.

Corporations select private sector lawyers to serve on a panel of arbitrators. Meeting in secret, the panel claims the outrageous power to override decisions of any public court system of any sovereign nation. Rules prohibit third parties - the most affected - from appearing at hearings.

#### ***Enforcement***

#### **Labor rights**

Vietnam and Brunei, two participating countries, have a track record of serious, well-documented human and labor rights issues. Trade unions are illegal in both countries, and Vietnam is typically labeled as the "low-cost labor alternative" to China.

Other participants, such as Chile, Singapore and Malaysia, may be unwilling to improve their lax labor provisions; Malaysia has even opposed labor standards in previous trade pacts.

#### **Environment**

Mining, fisheries, agriculture, ship and air transport and oil and gas extraction/transport can be greatly impacted by liberalized tariff and non-tariff measures.

California's climate standards that account for emissions during a fuel's entire life cycle may be vulnerable in TPP negotiations.

Latin American frontier forests and fisheries are threatened by future mining projects, toxic pollutants and heavy mine silt.

Distance to the Pacific Rim means likely increased pollution due to emissions and discharges from air and marine transport.

#### ***International Intellectual property law***

#### **Access to medicine**

The push for stronger intellectual property requirements would protect brand-name drugs from generic competitors for an additional seven years, hurting groups such as Doctors Without Borders who note that the availability of generic meds has allowed for a revolution in treatment in developing countries.

TPP proposals could build intermediaries similar to SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act) that would hold internet service providers accountable for online copyright violations.

#### ***Procurement***

According to Lori Wallach's recent article in the American Prospect she points to the chapter on procurement that would make operating firms in any participating country be given equal access to U.S. procurement contracts over a certain dollar threshold, therefore banning 'Buy America', which would eliminate policies that recycle our tax dollars to create American jobs.

The U.S. procurement market in 2010 was seven times the market of all the TPP countries combined.

Firms may be challenged on the basis of prevailing wages for any obligations, such as renewable/recycled energy or sweatshop-free uniforms.

#### ***Dairy***

New Zealand, with only 4.3 million in population, produced 18.6 million metric tons of milk in 2011, much of which was turned into product for export. Its largest dairy co-op, Fonterra, could also act as a monopoly by exerting pricing power enforced by marketing and other subsidized services.

The U.S. imports annual average of \$646 million in New Zealand dairy products. National Milk Producers Federation estimates that U.S. dairy farmers could face losses of \$20 billion in TPP's first decade.

Since little is known about the TPP, advocates are forced to make inferences based on past results. Transparency should be demanded, and as John Kinsman said in his article at Common Dreams, "*We need to express our opposition - not only to convince our elected officials that this will lead to more economic chaos on top of the current crisis, but to also let our friends across the Pacific know that they are not alone in opposing free trade deals that are only designed to profit the 1%.*" (John's article was first posted at <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2012/03/12-6>.)

## LVC and FOEI Work to Combat Monsanto

A new report produced by La Via Campesina, Friends of the Earth International and Combat Monsanto provides snapshots of front-line struggles against Monsanto and other agrochemical corporations pushing GM crops onto farmers and the environment is at: [http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1235:opposition-to-biotech-giant-monsanto-growing-worldwide-new-report-shows&catid=49:stop-transnational-corporations&Itemid=76](http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1235:opposition-to-biotech-giant-monsanto-growing-worldwide-new-report-shows&catid=49:stop-transnational-corporations&Itemid=76)

## Would You Like Some 2,4 D With That?

By Margot McMillen, MRCC board rep and organic farmer/educator

Saddle up, monster hunters, because there's a new creature coming our way—genetically engineered corn modified to resist 2,4 D, an herbicide that was partially forgotten when Roundup-Ready seeds became the darlings of the Big Ag world. Maybe 2,4D was forgotten because of its association with Agent Orange, which has left so many of our Vietnam Vets permanently disabled.

But 2,4 D is coming back because incessant Roundup applications to kill weeds have turned out to make weeds resistant. At least 20 weeds can now survive Roundup, including ragweed and water hemp. For this, Big Ag blames family farmers, who use Roundup year after year on beans and corn, just as Extension agents and chemical salesmen told them to do.

Now, farmers are told, rotation between Roundup and 2,4 D will be the silver bullet. The major problem with this new genetics, besides the fact that it's strange to play with genes like a game of 52-pick-up, is that the new seeds will certainly create a new set of resistant weeds.

And, the impact of spraying more 2,4 D on our rural communities will have impacts we don't understand yet; once again, rural America is industry's guinea pig. A study by the National Academies for Science mentions "health outcomes with sufficient evidence of an association" for 2,4-D for some lymphomas and leukemias, and "limited or suggestive evidence of association" for Parkinson's disease.

There's another problem here, and it's with the manufacture of 2, 4 D, which comes from several manufacturers using different production methods. Some produce more dioxins than others, some are more likely to drift than others. Some are made in older factories, where there is more danger of, say, leakage or unstable machinery that might result in more unknown outcomes than in a newer factory. In the Vietnam era, Dow Chemical decided to ramp up production by increasing the temperature in its process and inadvertently poisoned its own workers.

Farmers that remember back to the beginning of glyphosate-resistant beans can roll out the scenario we'll expect. First, the product is introduced as a problem-solver. Next, it's promoted as a money maker for the farmer. Thirdly, it's accepted as the logical next step in sound science. And, finally, when you make your seed order, you learn there's no other choice. You have to buy the new system, even if you don't want it and don't need it.

Or, if you think it's unnecessary. As George Naylor pointed out in a recent conference call, 2,4 D corn is an unnecessary invention because there are already products that can kill weeds without using glyphosate. Dicamba, he mentioned, stays active in the soil, and can be used on corn until it's 4 inches tall. In fact, Dow—one major producer of 2,4 D—owns Mycogen, the seed company that plans to put 2,4 D resistance into Pioneer seed.

For the past couple of months, NFFC has been active with a coalition of groups to figure out how to fight this new monster. The coalition includes the Center for Food Safety, Pesticide Action Network North America, Food and Water Watch and other groups. But industry's lobbyists are in the halls of Congress every day. In fact, this administration's record—most recently with the approval of Roundup-Resistant alfalfa, another unnecessary crop—is to ignore public input, expert testimony and the history of failure.

And, as attendees heard at a recent panel discussion at the University of Missouri, entitled, "CAN WE ACHIEVE WORLDWIDE FOOD SECURITY?", the ultimate market isn't the U.S. consumer at all. The market is the world—Asia and Africa—continents where, the PR flaks tell us, people will starve without GE foods.

## Free Market in the Southern Hemisphere

By Megan Mills-Novoa, NFFC 2010 Emerson Hunger Fellow

Chile is a striking country with jagged, snow-crueted Andes Mountains to the east, the vast Pacific Ocean to the west, the world's driest desert to the north, and the awe-inspiring Patagonian glaciers and fjords to the south. A central agricultural valley nestled between the coastal range and the Andes, enriched by volcanic soils deposited from nearby mountains, enables Chile to be a key food exporter to much of the Northern Hemisphere.

After returning to the U.S. after a year at the Center for Global Change in Santiago de Chile as a Fulbright Fellow, one of the first things I did was to stock up on all the grocery items missed the past year. Walking among neatly packaged strawberries, blueberries and grapes - so foreign to Minnesota in February - the "Grown in Chile" stickers transported me there again.

Chile is touted as the world's truest experiment in unbridled free market capitalism. The Chicago Boys, a group of Chilean economists trained by Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago, worked with dictator Augusto Pinochet to deregulate and privatize the nation's economy. While Pinochet tortured and killed thousands of Chileans, the Chicago Boys opened Chilean markets to global trade, restricted union power and privatized state-controlled industries and social services. Pinochet was ousted in 1990 but his economic structure and constitution persist today.

Along Route 5, which runs the length of Chile, you see billboards promoting ConAgra, Cargill and other transnational agro-industrial companies. Genetically



Chemical-based agriculture

modified canola, soy and corn (GMOs) are grown with unbridled vigor. The large universities training agronomists teach an agro-industrial curriculum with entire courses dedicated to chemical pesticides, GMOs and export regulations. In the central valley you see avocado plantations creeping up arid hills, irrigated by heavily used alpine rivers and dropping aquifers. Traveling south towards the lakes region are huge salmon farms, largely owned by foreign investors. The intensive nature of Chilean agriculture is apparent from north to south, with the majority of foodstuffs leaving Chile for other countries.

Chile is one of the most prosperous South American nations, thanks to its mineral wealth. Food exports play a significant role in its economy, and agriculture employed 13.6% of the workforce in 2007. Despite its stable and prosperous economy, Chile is besieged by social inequality. According to 2009 figures of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development, the richest 10 percent of the Chilean population received a monthly wage 46 times greater than the poorest 10 percent, placing it among the top 15 countries with the most disparate wealth distribution.

My year's work involved studying the impact of climate change on the central wine-growing region, and I was often struck by the number of similarities between the U.S. and Chilean agricultural systems, including the fallacy of free trade and the narrative from the White House and La Moneda (offices of the Chilean president) that free trade benefits farmers and creates jobs. What free trade has created in these countries is a system allowing corporate interests to become wealthier while peasant farmers remain oppressed, unable to make a living wage. One can also see the real impacts of unbridled agro-industrial agriculture in the health of workers, the environment and the economies of rural areas.

Both Chile and the U.S. are proponents of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a free trade agreement between nine countries of the Pacific Rim. I urge readers to demand of their representatives true trade reform, such as the TRADE Act, and not another free trade agreement that will destroy family farmers, fishermen and their communities.

## Needing a 2012 Farm Bill

By Ben Burkett, MAC/FSC board rep, produce/cotton farmer

There's a nasty budget fight brewing in DC. that could determine whether a farm bill is enacted in 2012. Given the gridlock that has afflicted Congress since the 2010 elections, some lawmakers say it should wait until 2013. I couldn't disagree more. Our farm and food system is broken, and it's wrecking the lives of family farmers in the U.S. and across the globe.

There's a lot at stake. Dairy farmers in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin milking their cows every morning have seen their monthly income plummet by 20 percent since last November, while the costs to produce that milk are escalating. Consumers are paying higher prices for milk, cheese, and ice cream while middlemen are reaping big profits. Dairy cooperatives, processors, and commodity traders exert near total control over the industry.

Congress passes a farm bill about once every five years. It's the single most influential piece of legislation affecting agriculture in the United States and governs many aspects of USDA's budget, which totals \$145 billion this year. We're due for a new one, and family farmers need it passed as soon as possible. The next farm bill should stabilize prices at levels that allow farmers and ranchers to recoup their production costs. This is crucial for family farmers and ranchers as well as for the growing number of consumers who care about the source of their food.

I'm not alone in calling for a 2012 farm bill. More than 125 organizations sent a letter to Congress on February 14 identifying important programs that will expire if no action is taken by October 1. These are programs like the Minority Outreach and Education Program, which expands participation in all USDA programs to minority farmers. They also include the Community Food Projects, which provide \$5 million a year in federal matching funds to organizations that build locally based food systems.

Farmers need fair and stable prices, not the rampant speculation that drives up the cost of our seed and other inputs we must buy to get crops in the ground each spring. The 2012 farm bill should make this a reality by creating a farmer-owned reserve. That would give farmers more control over their crops by keeping grain prices at stable levels that make sense for grain farmers and for the farmers who need to buy grain for their livestock.

The 2012 farm bill should also establish a price floor that reflects the farmers' true cost of production. This would put the farmer back in the driver's seat, diminishing the excess control held by grain traders and exporters who buy low at harvest time to sell high when it benefits them and their stockholders. This solution would also benefit taxpayers because farm payments paid when prices hit very low levels would decline.

As a farmer, I know we have to shoulder many risks. Government policy should play a role in reducing, not increasing, those risks.

As it decides whether to craft a new farm bill or extend the last one, the Senate Agriculture Committee has a chance to create programs and policies based on the principles of food sovereignty – the fair and democratic control over one's food supply.

It's not fair that a few middlemen profit from U.S. farm policies while the majority of producers and consumers suffer at their hands. The 2012 farm bill should provide farmers the tools we need while empowering consumers to take back our food system. We must work together to ensure that happens.

*Distributed via [www.OtherWords.org](http://www.OtherWords.org), on March 5, 2012*

## Strategies for Low-Wage Workers

By Liz Solorio

Low-wage workers have become more prevalent in the U.S. since 1980 and now comprise 30 percent of all employees. Scholars and advocates stress political concerns for these rates but acknowledge other issues, including the lack of health benefits, paid sick leave and opportunities for mobility. The Public Policies and Innovative Strategies for Low-Wage Workers conference (sponsored by the Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor, Georgetown, and The Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies, CUNY) engaged economists and advocates to discuss the current state of low-wage workers and key political strategies. Recommendations ranged from utilizing labor union practices, enhancing youth education, raising minimum wage and developing career ladders.

Counter to job-killing arguments, Jeanette Wicks-Lim found that the U.S. economy could absorb a 70 percent minimum-wage hike without generating noticeable negative effects, increasing the federal rate from \$7.25 to \$12.30. She analyzed ways in which businesses could adjust to higher wages without reducing jobs: increased wages lead to greater worker productivity, reduced turnover and training costs; firms can raise prices to consumers; and firms can redistribute their income.

Richard Freeman explored union strategies, suggesting that local groups experiment with ways to affect workplace decisions as well as politics, a spurt in minority unionism, and the development of new internet-based modes giving voice to union members and their proponents. He also advocated for building coalitions and reviewing successful strategies among low-wage worker organizers, such as the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' (CIW).

CIW's Campaign for Fair Food has led to agreements with Taco Bell, Subway and Trader Joe's. The Campaign addresses farm labor exploitation by holding each buyer of Florida tomatoes accountable for contributing a penny



Gerardo Reyes (second from left) with other fasters in Florida - photo by Bob St. Peter

per pound toward laborers' pay and assuring that growers comply with CIW's code of conduct. The Campaign originated from a month-long fast by six CIW members in December 1997. In March 2012, CIW and allies embarked on a six-day fast demanding that Publix grocery stores "...support the fundamental human rights for farmworkers in Florida's fields." NFFC members Bob St. Peter and Niaz Dorry participated on-site in Florida and in Massachusetts, respectively. On day six Bob commented, "A deep connection has been formed, born of the shared dedication of sacrificing for what is right." On day four, Niaz posted: "The fast has helped me let go enough and not give the accusers any more power. [It] goes on as does the struggle for fair food on land and on water."

Restaurant Opportunities Centers United's (ROC) *National Diners' Guide 2012* describes labor practices of the top 50 revenue-grossing restaurants. ROC seeks to improve working conditions by raising the federal minimum wage for tipped workers, win paid sick leave and eliminate occupational segregation by race and gender. Consumers and advocates should patronize restaurants that support local ingredients as well as fair labor practices. Furthermore, it is essential to build coalitions to confront the terms and conditions of low-wage employment.

## Director's Take By Kathy Ozer

As an early spring arrived across the country, farmers try to plan amid uncertainty about the future of farm programs, pricing and their access to credit. This farm bill debate was poised to involve many more people as the concerns about the safety, future and control of our food supply has been gaining national and international attention. Instead, we have seen secretive processes during the committee budget fight last fall and this spring, when much of the debate is behind closed doors.

The reality for many farmers contrasts sharply with the messages from USDA Secretary Vilsack and White House National Economic Council, which tout the benefits of exports and push for more free trade agreements. Meanwhile USDA is promoting their COMPASS to expand local markets and Know Your Farmer/Know Your Food efforts.

NFFC has worked to ensure that the commitments made during the DOJ/USDA workshops in 2010 are not ignored. In addition to the press teleconference and letter, requests were made to the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold a hearing to learn USDA-DOJ plans to move forward on issues raised at the workshops.

While commodity prices are higher than in recent years, so are the costs of growing crops and raising animals - seeds, feed, fertilizer, transportation and others. Our current farm programs and policies ignore the need for stable pricing policies that reflect farmers' true cost of production. Price volatility makes farmers very vulnerable, and recent increases in farm foreclosures/sales and bank liquidations raise serious questions about the real health of the rural economy.

Congress operates on a fiscal year ending October 1, the same day the 2008 farm bill expires. Either the President will sign a new farm bill or a one-year extension will be approved. While there have been many extensions, this one is significant for the 30-plus programs that could end because they have no permanent budget. These very programs have increased access to and participation in farm bill programs the past 15 years and were the basis of the letter that more than 120 organizations sent to Congress in February.

The Senate Ag Committee spent the month of March holding farm bill hearings, and Chair Senator Stabenow (D-MI) has publicly stated her hope to have a farm bill completed in early summer. While the House Ag Committee held field hearings, the House approved a FY 2013 budget on March 29 calling for significant cuts in nutrition, commodity and conservation programs. This comes on top of November's budget deal that imposed cuts of \$23 billion in agriculture and will trigger automatic reductions in many programs on January 1, 2013. The obvious question to ask is, what happened to that deal and why are House Republicans promoting more cuts, especially to important domestic nutrition programs?

In addition to the farm bill, the appropriations process is underway, allotting annual appropriations (funds) for existing programs. This was also the 2011 venue for the House to limit spending at USDA and to halt the GIPSA rule implementation. Efforts are underway to increase appropriations for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) so that they can implement the provisions around commodity speculation of the Dodd-Frank legislation. Unfortunately, opponents in the corporate banking/financial industry are using

the same approach as the meat packers and corporate agribusiness interests used gutting GIPSA - starving the agency of funds. While the poultry rule was implemented in early February as scheduled, there are fears that appropriations may slash support for other programs as they did for the Farmers Market Nutrition Program. As farmers' markets open this year, many states are dealing with cuts of up to 25 percent, meaning fewer benefits for low-income WIC recipients and reduced income for farmers selling at markets accepting these benefits. It is ironic that a program with 20-plus successful years that helped to expand local and regional food systems and connect farmers with low-income consumers, particularly during a period of high unemployment and increased awareness of the benefits of fresh, local foods, has received such draconian reductions. We have to wonder what these legislators are thinking, or perhaps we just acknowledge that they have no interest in helping farmers and low-income consumers.

This is an election year, just one aspect of an increasingly polarized political climate. The general election will be held in November, but primaries in key states have already had an impact. Ohio's redistricting forced a primary battle between Reps. Marcy Kaptur and Dennis Kucinich, leading to Kucinich's defeat. He was quoted in the Washington Post asking for 'no tears...there's always tomorrow', but he played a significant role in issues at the core of NFFC's work. NFFC and Farmer to Farmer Campaign on Genetic Engineering urged his Subcommittee to hold an oversight hearing on USDA's and APHIS's (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) approval process for genetically engineered crops; this information was crucial to NFFC litigation strategies and to proposals we submitted to the Obama transition team. Rep. Kucinich approached these issues at multiple levels and was the lead sponsor on GMO-labeling legislation. When NFFC held our 2008 summer meeting in Cleveland (where he began his political career as Mayor) he discussed the need to expose the corporate control in agriculture and to address several credit issues affecting NFFC farmers after the debt restructuring process was mishandled. We thank him for leading so many key battles while in Congress, and hope that he will continue to help us wage those fights.



Rep. Kucinich speaks to Farmer Wayne Allen at NFFC's 2008 summer meeting in Cleveland, OH. To watch the video visit: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHs6GqZF7\\_Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHs6GqZF7_Q)

## Documentary Review By Wesley Rieth

Ken Burns' latest film, *The Dust Bowl*, portrays the tremendous effects our government's policies have had on our country. It begins by showing the immense destruction of our western grasslands in the effort to produce more wheat and other grains. This widespread tillage was encouraged by the government, and many families migrated from eastern urban centers to the western plains to find their fortunes. Towards the end of the film, we find these same people begging for government intervention in a situation that had become life-or-death, with extreme droughts, no food and no escape. Many of the historic perspectives were provided by children who lived through the storms, adding an emotional aspect to the storyline that this was the 'worst man-made ecological disaster in American history'. *Dust Bowl* was previewed at the National Archives on March 25, and will be shown by PBS in two 2-hour segments this fall.

## Amendment 18

This recently proposed amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for the South Atlantic Region would benefit the health of small and medium-sized fisheries and of oceanic ecosystems. A18 would support diverse fishing operations while maintaining necessary quotas to ensure sustainable production in this region. The New England Fishery Management Council is accepting public opinion on this Amendment until April 30; visit NAMA's website for insight at <https://namanet.org/take-fleet-diversity-pledge>.

## Competition/GIPSA

The poultry provision is the only part of the GIPSA rule that was implemented after the FY 2012 appropriations process; efforts are underway to monitor efficacy of the provision that took effect February 9, 2012. A March 29 letter signed by 164 organizations and sent to chairs and ranking members of the Senate and House Ag. and Judiciary committees addressed broader issues of a livestock title building on wins in the 2008 farm bill, including the need for the packer ban and other reforms in livestock marketing. Bills have been introduced in the House and Senate on these issues.

## COOL - Country of Origin Labeling

On March 23 the U.S. Trade Representative appealed the World Trade Organization's ruling on COOL, welcome news as COOL provisions were important to the 2008 farm bill. It was one of several issues mentioned in the March 29 letter (noted above) signed by 164 organizations.

## Dairy Policy

NFFC promotes S.1640, Senator Casey's (D-PA) Federal Milk Marketing Improvement Act, as a sensible supply management proposal, and with 20 other organizations sent a letter urging Senate co-sponsorship and introduction of a House version. Please read story of the NY field hearing described on page 4. Readers are asked to sign a petition for fair milk prices at: <http://www.change.org/petitions/want-safe-fresh-milk-support-your-local-farmer>.

## DOJ-USDA Action on Antitrust Activity

March 11, 2012, marked the two-year anniversary of the USDA-DOJ workshop on concentration in seeds. Today, the grievances exposed during the workshops have yet to be addressed, and consolidation in the farm, food and agribusiness sector continues while farmers and consumers pay the price.

A coalition of farmer, rancher and consumer advocates facilitated a March 15, 2012, press teleconference of farmers who participated in the 2010 DOJ-USDA workshops. Farmers assessed workshop outcomes and the need to address agricultural competition issues in public policy arenas. Paul Rozwadowski, NFFC Dairy Committee chair, participated in the press conference. He expressed frustration at USDA-DOJ lack of progress so far. Several hearings have been held in the House Ag Committee pertaining to new reforms under the Dodd-Frank anti-trust legislation which would, if enacted, facilitate greater market transparency and fair competition in the commodity and financial sectors. Efforts are underway to support implementation of the Dodd-Frank regulations, in particular to push for increased funding in FY 2013.

## 2012 Farm Bill

The House Appropriations Committee de-funded key programs, eliminating the support of key regulations and other agriculture programs, such as GIPSA, last year. To counter, NFFC joined more than 120 organizations on a mid-February letter calling for a 2012 farm bill that retains farm programs (including Minority Outreach and Education, Community Food Projects and Farmers Market Nutrition) and policies integral for expanding access to all

USDA programs. Many are slated to expire on October 1, 2012, and inaction could eliminate them.

The Senate Ag Committee completed their DC hearings on March 15 and is slated to begin markup and consideration of the farm bill between mid-April and late May. The House Ag Committee is holding field hearings and will most likely hold DC hearings before their Memorial Day/late May recess. House Republicans approved their FY 2013 budget on March 29; some have suggested this means no 2012 farm bill.

## Genetic Engineering

An ongoing battle concerning the role of GE crops in our food supply continues to evolve, involving many views and government agencies along the way. Rep. Kucinich (D-OH) introduced a labeling provision, H.R.3553. (You may sign a CFS petition to FDA at [http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/1881/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=5452](http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/1881/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=5452).) Sen. Mark Begich, (D-AK), introduced S. 1717, which would ban the interstate transport and sale of GE fish (Frankenfish) if approved by the FDA. Sen. Begich also introduced S. 229 to mandate labeling of GE fish, if approved. The USDA has approved the sale of GE alfalfa as of spring 2011 and fully deregulated its use. USDA continues to seek approval for GE beets and sweet corn. Many concerns are being raised about the lack of a significant approval process for GE sweet corn through the FDA, and public comments are not being accepted for the process. Even more, the new GE crops will not be labeled as such in supermarkets. USDA convened an Advisory Committee on Biotechnology and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (AC21), which met again early March 2012. They are in the process of acquiring data on Biotechnology (seeds and otherwise).

## Local Foods

Rep. Chellie Pingree's (D-ME) Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act (H.R. 3286) continues to gain support, having now 71 co-sponsors in the House and 12 co-sponsors in the Senate, where it was introduced by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) as S. 1773. It would expand programs integral for local and regional food systems - Community Food Projects (CFP), continued USDA research on traditional seeds; local infrastructure; farm to institution markets setup; and crop insurance for organic and diversified farmers.

## Packer Ban

Senators Charles Grassley and Kent Conrad introduced legislation in early March that would help restore fair markets and competition in the livestock industry. Their bill (S. 2141) would prevent meat packers from owning any livestock prior to 7 days before slaughter. The current system in place prevents equal market access, which harms smaller, independent consumers from competing in already tough market conditions.

## Pigford II Settlement

May 11, 2012, is the filing deadline. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives and [www.blackfarmercase.com](http://www.blackfarmercase.com) are offering help.

## Trade

The Administration continues to push for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and has kept negotiations secret. The next negotiations are slated for mid-May in Dallas, TX. See article on p. 5.

## Upcoming Legislative Recess Dates:

*House:*

Memorial Day : May 21-28

July 4th: July 2-6

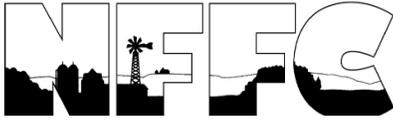
Labor Day: August 6 - September 7

*Senate:*

Memorial Day: May 28 - June 1

July 4th: July 2-6

Labor Day: August 6 - September 7



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## First Class

### Support Family Farms!

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### Book Review

#### ***Folks, This Ain't Normal* - Joel Salatin**

reviewed by Wesley Rieth

Joel Salatin, a prominent pioneer for family farmers across the country, has once again offered his opinion on the many flaws in our corporate, industrialized food system. His latest work offers Wendell Berry-esque insight into why today's food system and food culture are historically absurd.

The book analyzes many facets of food production, from manure to government regulation and inspection standards. He accomplishes all this while retaining his own literary style that is logical yet scientific, provocative yet practical. Offered at the end of each chapter are tips consumers can employ to support food and agriculture production practices that are historically normal. His advice may seem redundant at times (purchase in-season, buy local, know your farmer, etc.), but for a broad-based audience, the information is very valuable.

Some would argue that the book contains as much (or more) information than many textbooks, but it does not read as such. The book is compelling and intimate from the very first page, educating the reader in a more holistic, even profound, way at times.

While his viewpoint remains libertarian, his insights are fitting for a broad range of political ideologies. Many of his ideas will appeal to consumers, even locavores, as well as farmers. Some feel that Mr. Salatin is trying to accomplish his own political agenda through his writing, which is a fair assessment. Like so many activists, he is also trying his best to promote a healthier lifestyle for our country, our soil and ourselves, redeeming our nation's farmland one pasture at a time.

### Congratulations to NFFC Leaders

**John Kinsman**, Family Farm Defenders president, was honored for his longtime work for food sovereignty at a fundraising reception and local foods banquet last November in Madison. FFD also presented the 2011 John Kinsman Beginning Farmer Food Sovereignty Prize to Lindsey Morris Carpenter (Monroe, WI) and Hannah and Daniel Miller (Millville, MN). The dinner and prize will be an annual event.

**Dr. Mary Hendrickson**, MRCC member and NFFC ally, received the Meritorious Service Award from National Farmers Union at their annual convention in March. The annual award recognizes two individuals who have made particularly noteworthy contributions to agriculture, humanity and Farmers Union. It is the highest award bestowed to an individual by NFU's board of directors.

**Food for Maine's Future** was honored with one of five 2012 Harry Chapin Self-Reliance Awards from WhyHunger. "We've carefully selected five of the top community-based organizations in the country, all of which are taking innovative steps to push the boundaries to fighting hunger and poverty," said Bill Ayres, WhyHunger founder and executive director. The five grantees will convene in NYC in June to receive their awards and to participate in training and networking events.

***Well done, John, Mary and Bob/FFMF!***

### Upcoming Events:

*April 17, 2012 - International Peasants' Day - see p. 2*

July 20-22 (approx) - NFFC Summer Meeting - Omaha, NE