

CROPP Cooperative Forum



FEBRUARY 2018

CONSUMER commotion

I just wanted to send your company a shout out! My son loves everything he has tried from Organic Valley! He is almost 11 months old and decided for himself he wanted nothing to do with formula anymore so we have had to switch him over to dairy products including your milk, yogurts and half n half for mommy's coffee. Thank you so much for ensuring we have great products to give to our little man! He is our miracle baby! We were told we would not have kiddos and at age 42 I had him :) Michael is a blessing to us and helping us take a closer look at what we eat.

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EXPERT Advice



Regli Family Farm
Ferndale, California

Feeding for Milk Components

~Dr. Silvia Abel-Caines, Ruminant Nutritionist

The nutritional value of milk resides in its solids content: milk fat, protein, lactose, vitamins and minerals dissolved in its water portion. The monetary value of producing milk is also dependent on the content of the butterfat and milk protein as well as the milk quality.

Under the current milk industry situation, it makes a lot of sense that farmers focus on increasing the amount of milk solids per pound of milk produced. As an animal nutritionist, I will focus on the feeding and nutritional factors that can positively or negatively affect milk components, but I will begin by outlining non-nutritional factors that are known to directly affect the yield of butterfat and milk protein.

NON-NUTRITIONAL FACTORS

Breeding and genetics of the herd are responsible for more than half the difference in milk protein and fat content. Take a look at the table showing the average milk components by breed (see p. 14). Milk yield is negatively correlated to fat and protein percent.

The number of lactations affects the yield of milk fat and protein percentage. There is a decrease of 0.2

see MILK COMPONENTS, page 14

✉ EDITOR'S Letter



The staff at Organic Valley seems to always be busy, but Ruminant Nutritionist Dr. Silvia Abel-Caines and Regional Pool Manager Gerry Cohn were able to take their talents to other countries to help local farmers. Read more about their experiences on pages 8-10.

As always, if you would like to contribute to the CROPP Forum, either through an article submission or a funny story or picture to share, we would love to hear from you. Please contact me for more information.

In cooperation,

Colleen Morrison
Editor in Chief

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🌱 FENCE Post

Protecting the Process

~Missy Hughes, General Counsel

As you know, in late December the U.S. Department of Agriculture proposed to withdraw the Organic Livestock Poultry and Practices Final Rule, derailing a longtime effort by the National Organic Standards Board, farmers and consumers to make organic animal care expectations clearer and more consistent.

USDA's move undermined the fundamentals of organic rulemaking. In the three weeks between Christmas and the deadline to comment on the proposed action, CROPP led a group of influential companies and major farm, environmental and consumer organizations to publish a letter in the Washington Post. We then rallied 80 companies and organizations to sign our statement demanding U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue change USDA's position (see below). Finally, the Chicago Tribune published a personal op-ed from George, which voiced his position on the public process.

Organic Valley will continue to lead the effort to uphold the public-private partnership that the National Organic Program represents. As our public partner's attention drifts from this issue—for now—we must all lean in to protect the organic market and seal in creative and meaningful ways.



January 17, 2018

The Honorable Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue
Department of Agriculture
Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We are deeply disappointed by your proposal to eliminate the new organic standard on animal welfare.

This is an affront to the many people and organizations engaged in a multi-year, transparent, and highly participatory process that resulted in an animal welfare standard overwhelmingly supported by organic farmers, organic companies, humane animal care advocates, and consumers.

Please remember that farmers choose to be organic and adhere to strict standards. We support this voluntary regulatory program on which the \$50 billion organic industry depends. The program is an outstanding example of how private initiatives can marry public process and it has had strong bipartisan approval from its inception.

Organic farmers have pioneered new practices to enhance animal welfare because consumers demand it and because it makes farms more resilient and profitable. Eliminating the rule not only fails to acknowledge innovation in the organic farming sector and provide fair and transparent rules, it also undermines the faith people have in how organic agriculture is governed.

We implore you to restore the organic animal welfare standard. Businesses depend upon it, and consumers expect nothing less.

Sincerely,

Organic Valley

(co-signers continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

Stonyfield Organic
Applegate
Clif
Maple Hill Creamery

Dr. Bronner's
Horizon Organic
Vital Farms
Pete and Gerry's Organic Eggs
Lundberg Family Farms
Nature's Path
Amy's Kitchen
H.P. Hood
Garden of Life
Traditional Medicinals
GoMacro

RETAIL

Whole Foods Market
National Co+op Grocers

United Natural Foods,
UNFI

ORGANIC

Organic Trade Association
Organic Farming Research Foundation
National Organic Coalition
Rodale Institute
The Organic Center
Organic Consumers Association

Montana Organic Association
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont
Northeast Organic Farming Association Interstate Council

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York
Angelic Organics Learning Center
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services
Georgia Organics
Wild Farm Alliance
CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers)
IFOAM North America
Organic Seed Alliance

CERTIFIERS

Accredited Certifiers Association
Oregon Tilth
CCOF Certification Services, LLC

Midwest Organic Services Association
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Ohio Ecological Food and Farming Association
Pennsylvania Certified Organics
Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Inc.
OneCert, Inc.

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Your Certified Organic, LLC
Nature's International Certification Services

FARM

National Farmers Union
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Farm Aid
National Family Farm Coalition

National Young Farmers Coalition
California Farmers Union
California Dairy Campaign
Iowa Farmers Union
Kansas Farmers Union
Michigan Farmers Union
Minnesota Farmers Union
New England Farmers Union
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Rural Advancement Foundation International
Dakota Rural Action
Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture
Center for Rural Affairs
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Organic Farmers Association

CONSUMER

The Humane Society of the United States
Environmental Working Group
Natural Resources Defense Council
Consumer Federation of America
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Union of Concerned Scientists
Food & Water Watch
Beyond Pesticides
Food Tank
Ceres Community Project
Small Planet Institute
Friends of the Earth

CROPP COOPERATIVE
Scholarships



Organic Valley strives to create a more sustainable future for all by supporting the education of our cooperative's family members. Each year, the CROPP Cooperative Scholarship Program awards up to eight \$1,000 secondary-education scholarships. Applications are available now!

Applicants must be:

- Immediate family members (child, spouse, legal guardian or dependent) of a CROPP farmer-owner or employee.
- Attending or accepted to an accredited post-secondary two- or four-year educational institution.
- In good academic standing.

APPLICATIONS DUE
APRIL 27, 2018

For more information and to get an application, visit Farmers.coop or contact the Farmer Hotline at 888-809-9297.



DEFINING QUOTA

~Beth Wells, Director of Farm Milk Management

Quota is a tool that the cooperative's dairy pool uses to help balance supply with demand. The dictionary defines it as a proportional part or assigned share to each member of a division or body. At CROPP Cooperative, quota is governed by cooperative policy. It has three dynamic movers: percent of active base, deduction level, and exemptions—all determined by the board of directors.

Quota operates within a financial framework that reduces milk cost, thereby mitigating the loss of selling organic milk on the conventional market. The cooperative implements quota when its supply significantly exceeds sales demand. When this happens, excess supply can no longer be absorbed by managing inventory with longer shelf life (e.g., butter, cheese and powder). The cooperative then implements supply-side tools, like quota, to manage the supply and demand imbalance.

Each member of the cooperative's dairy pool is assigned an "active base," which is the farm's monthly production level that the cooperative commits to paying full organic premium on during quota. Regional pool managers work with new members to establish their active base with data from prior milk production or milk production plans. Once established, active base is adjusted based on a formula set by the board of directors, the producer's actual production or an approved appeal. As stated in cooperative policy, producer appeals to increase active base

are not approved during quota. When the cooperative is in quota, each producer's monthly milk production is compared to the active base assigned to that month. Milk pounds produced over that month's assigned active base receive a pay price deduction.

CROPP's 2017 quota was defined as March 2017 through February 2018. The three movers of this quota period were 100 percent active base, \$20/cwt. deduction on pounds over active base, and exemptions that included farms with less than 270,000 pounds active base, foundation pools, and the Grassmilk pool. Foundation pools include farms in new and/or geographically isolated areas where CROPP is working to establish milk supply.

The results and financial savings from the 2017 quota, from March through November, are detailed below.

The average number of monthly shippers during this period was 1,657 producers. The number of producers affected by quota each month ranged from 22 to 39

percent of active shippers. From March to November 2017, 1,082 producers were affected by quota at some point. This is 65 percent of the average number of active shippers.

The 2017 quota saved the cooperative \$8.4 million in milk costs from March through November 2017. For reference, a dollar down in pay price saves the cooperative approximately \$12 million over a nine-month period. The average quota deduction per hundredweight was \$1.70 during that time period.

In 2017, CROPP farmers saved the cooperative an estimated \$80 million through supply-side actions including quota. It should be noted and appreciated that the farm families of CROPP shouldered quite a burden in a challenging time. Working together, CROPP is moving forward with a new understanding of existing tools like quota and is researching more effective ways to manage supply and demand.

2017 CROPP COOPERATIVE QUOTA FINANCIAL SAVINGS

Month & Year	Farms with Deductions	CWT Production	CWT Base	CWT Over Base	Percent Over Base	Cost per CWT	\$ Deducted
March 2017	637	754,713	667,364	87,348	13.09%	\$1.67	\$1,260,687
April 2017	586	653,272	586,074	67,199	11.07%	\$1.66	\$1,081,906
May 2017	488	677,869	609,421	68,448	11.23%	\$1.69	\$1,148,615
June 2017	361	495,688	453,665	42,023	9.26%	\$1.56	\$771,064
July 2017	395	503,992	457,046	46,946	10.27%	\$1.78	\$898,523
August 2017	464	555,370	499,824	55,546	11.11%	\$1.91	\$1,062,122
September 2017	448	448,382	409,799	38,583	9.42%	\$1.58	\$709,451
October 2017	419	432,607	392,161	40,446	10.31%	\$1.74	\$752,617
November 2017	446	437,714	397,286	40,428	10.18%	\$1.72	\$754,093
	1,082	4,959,608	4,472,641	486,967	10.89%	\$1.70	\$8,439,078

WORKING TOGETHER ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 3-5, 2018

REGISTRATION AND FARMER FOOD ORDERS DUE MARCH 16.

The CROPP Cooperative Annual Meeting is a unique moment in the year that connects our cooperative community. Every spring, CROPP farmers, employees and partners come together to exchange ideas, learn about what's happening in the business and share feedback with our co-op's leaders to collectively shape our future. The three-day experience culminates in one of the most important moments of our cooperative democracy: the board election.

Here are 5 reasons you should attend:

- 1. Engage.** Exchange ideas with fellow farmer-members and get to know employees and their passion for the work they do. You'll also be able to meet with the board candidates before you cast your ballot.
- 2. Deepen Understanding.** Dive into current business and industry issues, better understand the complexities CROPP faces and ask tough questions.
- 3. Speak Up.** This is your co-op. Annual meeting is a prime opportunity to connect with leaders across the business to collectively shape our future.

- 4. Renew Your Purpose.** Take an active part in cooperative democracy and learn how you can stay involved beyond the meeting. It's guaranteed you'll leave with a renewed sense of purpose and enthusiasm for what we do.

- 5. Celebrate.** This year marks our 30th year in business. Celebrate with great people, tasty food... and karaoke!

Bonus Free onsite childcare during the event.

Registration is open! The meeting will take place at the La Crosse Center in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Watch for a new farmer food order catalog in the mail this month for free delivery to the event. Register online at Farmers.coop.

ART WEDIG DISASTER RELIEF FUND

We need your silent auction donations!

Please consider supporting the Art Wedig Disaster Relief Fund through a monetary donation or by contributing an item to the silent auction fundraiser held at annual meeting. The fund aids members in times of need, such as floods, tornadoes, accidents, fire and personal tragedies. Past silent auction contributions have included homemade cooked items, hand-sewn pieces, artwork, special crafts and more.

A successful auction helps ensure we can support cooperative members when they need it most. To donate or ask questions, contact the Farmer Hotline at 888-809-9297 or farmerhotline@organicvalley.coop.



Growing Engagement in the Produce Pool

~Libby Brandl, Farmer Communications Team Lead

This November, 62 produce pool members (over 70 percent of the pool) gathered in Cashton, Wisconsin, to shape the future of the produce program together.

“Before the meeting, we had concerns about production trends on the farm side of the business,” explained Miranda Leis, Organic Valley feed and produce operations manager. “We were concerned about the engagement of the farmers because of the low level of fulfillment on their sign-up [commitments] this year, which had an effect on the pool’s finances.”

It was a challenging year for the co-op and a challenging year for the produce pool. Every year, growers face new obstacles—weather, plant disease, insects—which affect production quality and volume. This year was no exception. Due to a cool and wet spring, many crops were off to a late start, which challenged yields and the health of certain crops and decreased farm production fulfillment.

Some of this impact can be mitigated by changing on-farm practices. In some cases, that requires additional education and cooperation between farmers and staff to arrive at an improved outcome.

Meanwhile, CROPP staff are dealing with their own set of issues. In a competitive marketplace, they are working hard to uphold the individual certification,

quality and delivery standards of an expanding customer portfolio. Like most departments at CROPP, the Produce team has also been asked to significantly reduce its budget.

During the 2017 season, Sales was unable to fulfill many produce customer orders due to inadequate supply. “We know we are not meeting our current sales opportunities for Midwestern-grown product,” said Produce Pool Manager Annake Ramsey. “We really wanted to get everyone in a room to talk about it.”

UPDATED MEETING STYLE

Traditionally, the end-of-year produce meeting would consist of final reports and quarterly statistics; but this year, leadership decided to incorporate something new: discussion.

“The goal of the meeting was to help outline cause and effect and how that related to the co-op’s finances,” said Leis.

When farmers and staff arrived at the meeting, they were asked to split into small groups and sit with someone they had never met. Together, farmers and employees tackled some of the tough questions facing the pool:

- How can we increase the total volume of each farmer’s sign-up and shipment?
- Which costs should CROPP be covering, and which should the farmer be covering?
- How should we handle farmers who are not meeting their sign-up minimum?

Through this discussion, staff from several departments and farmers from

different communities were able to share their perspectives. Each group worked through a list of issues to clearly define the problems and record potential solutions.

Not all questions had simple answers. So while the discussion did not always create a perfect outcome, it did result in something new: clarity. Staff clearly outlined customer needs and the daily costs of business operations. Farmers gave firsthand accounts of growing, packing and shipping a perishable product; they also defined the type of support they needed from staff.

“Problems and solutions identified in the meeting will drive the work plan for the Produce Executive Committee in 2018,” said Ramsey. “As staff, we now know what we need to focus on.”

LOOKING AHEAD

According to the Organic Trade Association’s 2017 Organic Industry Survey, organic fruits and vegetables are a \$13 billion category growing at a rate of 10 percent. Produce has always been, and continues to be, a gateway to organic. It is easy for shoppers to make the connection between agricultural practices used in the field and the fresh produce they hold in their hands.

As the market continues to evolve, so does Organic Valley’s produce pool. Growers in the pool are becoming more experienced. “Some of the services we offered, farmers felt they would be okay without them,” Leis explained.

Produce leadership now plans to structure future pool meetings in ways that emphasize conversation and

collaboration. The goal is to challenge all farmers and staff to engage with the process and understand how the decisions they make on the farm and in the office directly correlate with the success of the pool.

“Lukewarm participation has an effect on finances,” said Leis. “But by the end of the meeting, farmers were challenging each other to meet their sign-up and to contribute their obligation to the pool.”





CROPP EXPERTS SPREAD ORGANIC MESSAGE

~Steve Williams, Farmer Communications Coördinator

Cooperation can lead to rewarding results in unfamiliar settings. Two CROPP professional staffers recently entered unfamiliar territories aiming to help nascent organic farmers develop production and marketing techniques. Through separate farmer development programs, Southeast Regional Pool Manager Gerry Cohn shared his knowledge of dairy, agronomy and cooperative enterprise in Jamaica, and Ruminant Nutritionist Silvia Abel-Caines taught women in a remote West African border town how to grow a business and become more food-secure. Here are their stories in words and photos.



JAMAICA - GERRY COHN

Over Thanksgiving, I spent a week in Jamaica as part of the Jamaica Sustainable Farm Enterprise Program (JSFEP). The objective of the project, sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development, is to help build local organic food systems in Jamaica through technology transfer and management expertise that links farmers to markets.

The local partner for this project, the Source Farm, is a beautiful 63-acre permaculture community in Jamaica that teaches organic methods as new opportunities for food production and rural economic development around the country. CROPP Cooperative's Nova group sponsored a Source Farm Foundation educational trip to America in 2015. During their visit to North Carolina, they realized that we had valuable information to share in production, herd health and cooperative engagement with Jamaican dairy, goat and beef farmers.

Grazing is widespread in Jamaica, with a fertile tropical climate that produces a wide variety of grasses, legumes, forbs and trees on every inch of earth and up into the sky. However, protein levels are low in the thin tropical soils. Most dairy farmers feed some imported pellets along

with sorghum molasses, which is produced primarily for the rum industry.

The country has plenty of aloe vera and neem growing wild. Although the JSFEP project has been training tincture makers for human purposes, farmers had never explored the use of these plants for veterinary purposes. I continue to work with project organizers to find an entrepreneurial tincture maker to create formulations for ruminants that farmers could purchase locally.

After touring the College of Agricultural Sciences campus dairy, I gave a lecture on organic dairying to the students and faculty. I donated books on organic herd health management written by CROPP Veterinarian Paul Dettoff and Veterinarian Hue Karreman to build their library.

I feel blessed to have had this extraordinary opportunity to share our cooperative



1) Hillside Community, where 35 families manage anywhere from 2 to 10 cows apiece. These small farmers milk their cows by hand once a day, delivering their milk mostly by bicycle in 5-gallon buckets to a community bulk tank at the Serge Island Dairy Processing plant. 2) The parlor at Serge Island Dairy, where they graze and milk 800 cows that comprise the bulk of the local milk supply. 3) Besides the basics of organic rules, the soils-up approach, and CROPP's history, Cohn addressed issues particular to local farmers like mastitis, hoof rot and parasites (ticks are voracious there!). 4) Jamaica has developed their own breeds of dairy (Jamaica Hope) and beef (Jamaica Red Poll) cattle, which exhibit hardy resistance to heat stress and internal parasites. 5) The Ujima Market, an organically oriented farmers market in downtown Kingston.

experience and to learn from theirs. I encourage everyone to seek out these chances for adventure and learning when they arrive in your life, as the lessons and impressions last long beyond the last strains of reggae music.



SENEGAL - SILVIA ABEL-CAINES

I spent two weeks as a volunteer teaching milk processing techniques to the Dental Hayre women's cooperative in the West African nation of Senegal. ("Dental" is the Senegalese word for "association.")

The training was organized and funded by the National Cooperative Business Association, CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA) through its Farmer-to-Farmer program. It was an amazing experience!

I met the group in the northwest region of Ourosogui, an eight-hour drive from Senegal's capital Dakar. The dairy industry does not have strong government support. Rural dairy farming is done mostly by women, and the cooperative I worked with has approximately 90 members. Their herds were a mix of sheep, goats and cows, with herd sizes ranging from 15 to 60 dairy animals.

These Muslim women came to the workshops every day after finishing their morning chores, some of them carrying their infants. They were eager to learn how to transform their milk into extended shelf-life products and sell them the local market. I was amazed at their

high entrepreneurial spirit and desire to improve their nutritional and economic status.

Local grocery stores sold imported milk and yogurt, but at prohibitive prices. The women's interest was to produce a product that was nutritious and easy to make and sell with minimum investment. When I was offered the opportunity to work with them, I immediately thought of making kefir.

I brought a sample of a kefir culture from the Wisconsin farm of CROPP members Philip and Linda Johnson, who feed kefir to their calves. Transforming their milk into this highly nutritious probiotic drink was something completely new for these women, but they were eager to learn, taste and custom-flavor their kefir!

Some of the challenges I experienced were finding adequate glass containers to ferment the milk and teaching how to



1) Dairy farming in Senegal is done mostly by women. NCBA CLUSA thought Abel-Caines would be a good match for them, teaching herd health, nutrition and milk processing. 2) Cattle-keeping is an important livelihood for rural households in Senegal. Milk is a high-protein food, and even small amounts of milk can significantly increase nutritional security. This cow is a Zebu Gobra, which yields an average 1,700 pounds of milk per year. In comparison, an average Organic Valley cow averages 15,250 pounds of milk annually. 3) Abel-Caines teaching the kefir-making process. 4) An important part of kefir-making is sanitizing the milk through heating. Here, the women learn quality control during processing. 5) It's just as important to find the right person to market your product, and they found the perfect person. 6) For those who can afford it, imported milk from France is available at the grocery store in plastic bags. Milk is relatively expensive. A gallon of imported milk costs around \$6.62, equal to three days' wages.

INTERNATIONAL TRIPS— continued from page 9

sanitize the milk collected from various households. I collected glass spaghetti sauce and fruit jelly jars, bought a water kettle and sterilized the utensils in my hotel room every day prior to class.

We also made butter and farmer cheese, which were a real treat to eat after the long hours in class. I taught them how to use milk for other purposes, including skin treatment and beauty products. They were very interested in learning how to make goat milk soap and wanted to know how to make hard/aged cheese, which is a gourmet item in Senegal.

These women hope to market their kefir to surrounding villages and have a permanent presence at their weekly farmers market. The first item on their agenda after I left was to select a marketing saleswoman.

I shared with them a picture of an Organic Valley milk carton, showcasing the picture of one of our farmer-members. They were thrilled to imagine their picture on the first Dental Hayre milk kefir container!

They are looking forward to continuing this project and welcome the opportunity to partner with other organizations to help them reach their dream to transform their milk into something nutritious and marketable.

The time I spent in rural Senegal was life-transforming. I saw with my own eyes the power of how small co-ops can enrich a community by providing food and additional income to people with little access to training due to gender, religion or education.

LEARN MORE

Organizations like those mentioned in this story seek to engage experienced, capable farmers like you to volunteer, teach and learn abroad.

CROPP is a member of the National Cooperative Business Association, CLUSA International.

Reach out to inquire about current opportunities through the association's Farmer-to-Farmer Program. Email volunteer@ncba.coop or call 202-638-6222.

FAFO Supports North Carolina Organic Plant Breeding Developments

~Michael Sligh and Kelli Dale, Rural Advancement Foundation International

Organic farmers across the Southeast have identified one of the major barriers to greater expansion in the region—a lack of regionally adapted organic seeds. They need crops with greater early vigor to out-compete early weeds, early dense canopy to further reduce competition, strong structures to withstand high winds, disease resistance and high yields.

Through a grant provided by CROPP Cooperative's Farmers Advocating for Organic (FAFO) program, Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) has been working with Major Goodman, a corn breeder from North Carolina State University. He is one of only a few breeders left in the public sector to screen and evaluate corn germplasm from around the world to find the best corn crosses for Southeast farmers. RAFI also worked with CROPP dairy farmers George Teague, his nephew Ben Miller, and Buddy and Chris Hoffner to develop the first-ever farmer-bred, double-cross hybrid, organic field corn adapted for the region. This represents seven years of organic farmer, nonprofit and plant breeder collaboration, where farmers were trained in on-farm variety selection, evaluation and double-cross breeding to produce a new superior variety.

The new organic corn variety recently won second place in a statewide North Carolina corn competition against 31 of the best conventional corn varieties. More impressively, it took first place in silage yield per ton and milk per acre in pounds.

The next phase for the project is to teach participating farmers to grow out the inbred corn lines for the double-crosses so that they have the “full kit” to perpetuate this important and exciting regionally adapted corn variety. RAFI is also collaborating on breeding an improved “GMO-blocking” trait into the corn to better prevent cross-contamination. This will allow organic farmers to plant at the right time and gain more comparative yields.

This is part of RAFI's ongoing Breeding for Organic Production Systems work focused on developing adapted corn, soy, cotton and cover crops, and on building

farm-scale pollinator habitats on North Carolina organic farms. The larger project includes the other CROPP dairy farmers in North Carolina: Neill Lindley, Sam Dobson, Charlie Payne and Patrick Purcell.

RAFI has also been working to turn this project into a model farmer-owned organic seed cooperative to address ongoing farmer challenges of access to organically bred and adapted varieties in the Southeast. This entails not only the structural needs for business planning and feasibility studies, but also infrastructure for seed cleaning, certification, storage and marketing.

RAFI is very grateful for FAFO's support and is encouraging these efforts to be replicated in other parts of the U.S. to address shared challenges of organic farmers across the country.





Regional Food Hubs: Connecting the Dots for Small Businesses

At CROPP, we show our commitment to Cooperative Principle #7: Concern for Community by giving back to the communities that support us. Just like organic farming, when we give back more than we take out, we all reap the benefits. Through various departments and programs, CROPP donates cash, product and other in-kind support to non-profit organizations across the nation that share in our mission each year. These organizations—our “change the world” partners—collectively reach millions of people. By working together, we strengthen our ability to further the organic food and farming movement, all while raising consumer awareness about CROPP’s mission and brands, building brand loyalty and driving sales. Here you’ll read about one of the many change-makers we’ve had the pleasure of supporting this year.

Together, there’s no limit to the change we can create. We call it the Power of We.

What do you think about as you browse the grocery store for the raw and processed ingredients of your next meal? It’s likely you are focused on flavor and nutrition, for starters. But for a growing number of consumers, the journey their food takes to reach the table is just as important.

And that journey can be truly mind boggling. A humble, two-dollar can of soup might contain ingredients grown thousands of miles apart, or additives formulated in factories scattered across the globe. Mushrooms from Pennsylvania. Carrots from California. Hydrolyzed soy protein from Shanghai. Ferrous sulfate from mainland China.

And these far-flung ingredients have an equally broad impact. Maybe you have an energy-efficient fridge and a gas-sipping hybrid car—but have you considered that U.S. freight trucks log in the neighborhood of 430 billion miles every year, consuming 54 billion gallons of fuel to supply you with consumer goods, including food? Proponents of local food hope to shorten that distance considerably. Loosely speaking, “locavores” advocate eating lightly processed, seasonal foods grown or made close to home. And like the organic movement before it, the local food movement is largely a grassroots, consumer-led effort.

On paper, it’s a simple idea: Buy your food from local sources. In practice, however, it’s a bit more complicated. That’s because the mom-and-pop operation down the road faces basically the same problem as the mega-brand at the big box: Both rely on a healthy “supply chain”—farmers to grow and harvest; middlemen to warehouse, box, and ship; facilities that meet the standards of regulators; packaging,

labeling, and shipping processes that are legal and economically sound; and so on.

National food brands have these aspects down to a science and scaled to mass production. But small-scale producers tend to struggle. That’s because, ironically, a few dozen metric tons of hydrolyzed soy protein can be easier to come by each month than a 100-pound sack of potatoes.

But a new kind of organization is emerging that connects the consumer demand for local production with the entrepreneurial passion of small-scale local producers. A good example is the Worcester Regional Food Hub, a program of the non-profit Regional Environmental Council of Worcester, Massachusetts, in conjunction

with several area organizations. The food hub provides small-scale regional producers with the kind of supply-chain logistics that would be otherwise out of reach.

Launched in 2016, the food hub offers two basic services. First, a “kitchen incubator” that provides access to a certified commercial kitchen, as well as planning and support, for budding food entrepreneurs who seek to start a new food-production business. And second, a marketing and distribution service that helps regional farmers tap into institutional markets like local hospitals and schools, where a consistent supply chain is crucial.

For Peggy Corbett, the commercial kitchen became headquarters for her

successful local business, Peg’s Preserves, which sells jams and jellies from a local storefront and at area farmers markets. A small-scale enterprise founded upon her love of canning, Peg’s Preserves has seen local success, providing income for Corbett and the farmers who supply her.

In addition to the food hub, the Regional Environmental Council works on a number of projects designed to promote food justice in the Worcester region, including a farmers market, community gardens and educational projects for area children.

For executive director Steve Fischer, these various programs, and the food hub in particular, are tied to a larger need to empower both food producers and consumers. “The fight for food justice isn’t just a matter of food,” he said. “It’s about healthy foods and sustainable, local food systems that are good for our farmers and for the people who live here.”



Carol and Brionne, YouthGROW participants, garden at the Regional Environmental Council’s New Lands Farm. Right: Taking advantage of the Regional Environmental Council’s farmers market.



Organic Valley Launches Grassmilk Kids Yogurt Cups and Tubes

~Andrew Westrich, Brand Manager

The latest addition to the Grassmilk® line of products are yogurts made just for kids. Unlike our existing line of yogurts, Grassmilk Kids is homogenized and comes in kid-friendly packaging and flavors, including strawberry, blueberry and bananaberry. Kids yogurt is the largest organic yogurt segment and one of the fastest growing. The new items are the first 100-percent grass-fed kids’ yogurts on the market and are well positioned to take advantage of growing consumer interest in grass-fed dairy. In January, Grassmilk Kids launched as a six-month regional exclusive in over 1,100 Publix stores in the Southeast. Efforts are underway to expand distribution to other mainstream retailers, natural foods stores and online grocers.

STATS SNAPSHOT Regional Milk Quality Averages DECEMBER 2017

	SPC	PI	LPC	SCC
West ¹	4,000	7,000	55	171,000
Midwest ²	4,000	14,000	83	190,000
Mideast ³	3,000	25,000	36	181,000
East ⁴	2,000	19,000	47	175,000
OV Average	3,000	19,000	24	180,000

¹ California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, Oregon, Washington, New Mexico
² South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Arkansas
³ Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky
⁴ Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Maine, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia

BREED AVERAGES FOR PERCENTAGES OF MILK FAT, TOTAL PROTEIN, TRUE PROTEIN AND TOTAL SOLIDS

Breed	Total Fat (%)	Total Protein (%)	True Protein (%)	Total Solids (%)
Ayrshire	3.88	3.31	3.12	12.69
Brown Swiss	3.98	3.52	3.33	12.64
Guernsey	4.46	3.47	3.28	13.76
Holstein	3.64	3.16	2.97	12.24
Jersey	4.64	3.73	3.54	14.04
Milking Shorthorn	3.59	3.26	3.07	12.46

(Source: Looper, Michael; University of Arkansas)

percent in milk fat for every year of lactation during the first five years, and lower percentage decrease (.02 to .05 percent) in milk protein.

Colostrum accounts for the largest percent of protein and fat in milk and is lowest during the first month and a half after calving. Milk fat and protein naturally change throughout the lactation.

Heat stress and humidity have been negatively correlated with milk fat depression (MFD), as shown in the figure to the right.

It is cost-effective to implement strategies to minimize changes in intake, especially for cows on pasture and under a 100-percent grass-feeding program. As the figure shows, changes in the rumen environment as a result of heat stress have a direct effect on milk yield and milk components.

NUTRITIONAL FACTORS

In one sentence, the most important strategy to maximize milk fat and milk protein is to keep the rumen environment at its optimal condition. Cows that receive good feed sequencing (adequately balanced grazing and stored forages), no abrupt ration changes, and forages with adequate fiber level and digestibility will likely have a steady flow of nutrients to the mammary gland for optimal milk fat and protein production. In general, nutritional factors more strongly affect (and take less time to alleviate) the production of milk fat than the production of milk protein (seven to 21 days for milk fat; three to six weeks for milk protein).

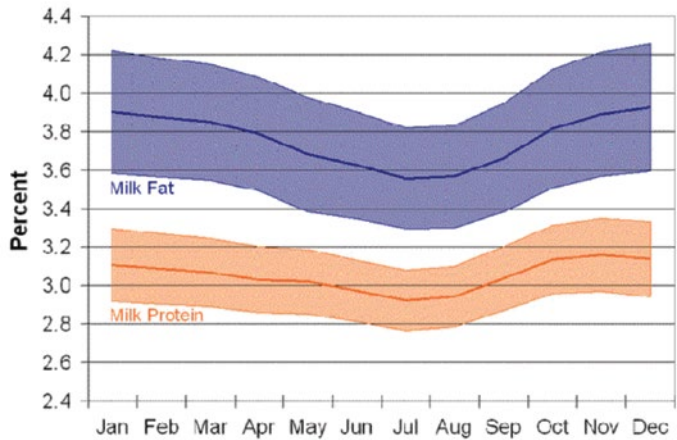
Rumen pH

Fiber-digesting bacteria are very sensitive to low rumen pH, and they are the primary source of the substrate used by the mammary gland to synthesize milk. If you want more milk fat, keep these bacteria happy by providing good quality forages. A good quality forage contains fiber that is more than 55 percent digestible by the cows. Use your forage’s wet-chemistry analysis to find this number, or check your cows’ productivity and manure score to have an indirect idea on this value.

Grain mixes formulated for rumen health

The ecology of the rumen is designed to digest fiber. An overload of rapidly fermenting carbohydrates will favor the proliferation of bacteria that use mostly starch. That in turn will result in excess production of compounds that lower the rumen pH, wiping out fiber-digesting bacteria. However, low levels of a mixed source of

SEASONAL VARIATION IN MILK FAT AND PROTEIN



Level of fat and protein varies across herds and seasonally. Ranges represent one standard deviation above and below the average. The solid line in the center of each range indicates the average for that month. For the three years studied, milk fat% averaged 3.76 ± 0.32 (blue), and milk protein% averaged 3.05 ± 0.19 (orange). (Bailey et al., 2005).

carbohydrates that digest at different rates will help balance the energy and protein microorganisms need. That will have a direct positive effect on milk protein production because more microbial protein will be available in the intestine to be absorbed by the blood, which will deliver more amino acids to the mammary gland. A combination of equal parts ear corn, barley (or triticale) and oats is a simple mix that works.

Avoid overfeeding corn silage

Corn silage is a good feed to have in the ration of lactating cows, but when it accounts for more than one-third of the forages, it can bring more digestible (pre-fermented grain) carbohydrates than the rumen can handle. A diet high in corn silage has been correlated with MFD in conventional dairy rations. It should be part of the high-forage ration, but not the highest portion of it.

Spoilage yeasts

Mycotoxins have been known to impact rumen fermentation, and the production of milk protein in particular. Keep an eye on forages that have been stored either too wet or too dry, as they tend to favor the multiplication of mold and the spread of spores in feed.

Supplemental lipids

When fed at just the right levels, supplemental fat from natural sources can increase milk fat yield. However, I caution that too little supplementation may not change milk component yield, especially in cases where cows are in late or early lactation with low body condition scores. Too high supplementation (over 5 percent of the ration) can reduce fiber digestibility and cause MFD. Consult your nutritionist if you would like to consider the cost-effective value of adding natural or organically approved commercial fat supplements.

Winter feeding supplements

Research and farmer experiences have demonstrated that the lack of active bio-available compounds in stored feeds reduces the adequate levels of water- and fat-soluble vitamins during the non-grazing season. Supplements that include vitamins A, D and E as well as live yeast compounds will provide additional nutrients to the rumen microorganisms and to the cow. A stronger immune system will provide better health and metabolism.

If you would like to have a second opinion on your ration and feeding management, feel free to contact me through the Farmer Hotline to discuss a strategy that will fit your farming style. A summary of the feeding management practices that impact milk components is included in the table to the right.

FEEDING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND THEIR POTENTIAL IMPACT ON MILK FAT PROTEIN CONCENTRATION

Management Factor	Milk Fat Percent	Milk Protein Percent
Increase feed intake	Increase	Increase
Increase feeding frequency	Increase	Increase slightly
Underfeeding energy	Decrease	Decrease
High NFC (>45%)	Decrease	Increase
Normal NFC (34-40%)	Increase	No change
Excessive fiber	Increase slightly	Decrease
Low fiber (<26% NDF)	Decrease	Increase
Small particle size	Decrease	Increase
High crude protein	No effect	Increase if diet is deficient
Low crude protein	No effect	Decrease if diet is deficient
UIP (34-38%)	No effect	Increase if diet is deficient

(Source: Looper, Michael; University of Arkansas)

ORGANIC VALLEY AT THE OLYMPICS

Join Organic Valley in cheering on Team USA and U.S. Olympic Gold Medalist, Jamie Anderson, during the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea!



The Milk Marketing Board, MilkPEP, secured the official white milk sponsorship of the 2018 U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Teams, and as a MilkPEP member Organic Valley is this year’s largest organic milk sponsor of Team USA.

Throughout February you’ll see snowboarder Jamie Anderson on Organic Valley Team USA-themed retail promotions at your local grocery store and social media. The Team USA sponsorship and connection with Anderson as a prime opportunity to build excitement around organic milk, connect with new audiences and promote our brand during the event.

Check out Organic Valley’s YouTube and Facebook page to learn more about Jamie and our winter sweepstakes (spread the word!).



Hang with U.S. Olympic gold medalist, Jamie Anderson, on the slopes!



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UPCOMING EVENTS

February 20-21.	Southeast PA Graziers Conference	Quarryville, PA
February 22-24.	MOSES Organic Farming Conference	La Crosse, WI
February 22-24.	New York Farm Show.	Syracuse, NY
February 26-27.	Oregon Dairy Farmers Association Convention.	Salem, OR
March 1	Pro-Grassive 100% Grass Fed Dairy Grazing Conference	Fort Plain, NY
March 2	FSMA Produce Safety Alliance Training	Cashton, WI
March 2-3	OAK Annual Conference	Lexington, KY
March 3	Educational Meeting – Grazing for Increased Health and Profitability	Troy, PA
March 5	Educational Meeting – Grazing for Increased Health and Profitability	Penn Yan, NY
March 6	Farm Profitability through Nutrition, Feeding Management and Quality	Spring Mills, PA
March 6	NOFA-NY Organic Dairy and Field Conference	Liverpool, NY
March 9-10	Midwest Gen-O Gathering	Door County, WI
March 13	GrassRoots Grazing and Forage Workshop.	Curtiss, WI
March 13-15	Midwest Poultry Federation Convention.	Minneapolis, MN
March 14	GrassRoots Grazing and Forage Workshop.	Morris, MN
March 14	Animal Care Workshop – Herd Health Plan	Hazleton, IA
March 15	GrassRoots Grazing and Forage Workshop.	Altura, MN
March 15	Fertrell Dairy Meeting	Himrod, NY
March 16	GrassRoots Grazing and Forage Workshop.	Belmont, WI
March 21	Animal Care Workshop – Herd Health	Bonduel, WI
March 22	Animal Care Workshop – Herd Health	Kewaskum, WI
March 27-29	WPS Farm Show	Oshkosh, WI

Visit Farmers.coop for a full list of events, details and registration information.