

D.C. ORGANIC GARDEN – Continued from Page 1



OTA's Executive Director Christine Bushway (left) and OTA President Julia Sabin (right) stand with Barbara Robinson at USDA's organic garden.

facilitate its transition to organic.

"Our hope is that this will be a living garden, where people can come to be educated both on what organic is and what it is not," said Robinson, who added that USDA plans to convert six acres of its property to sustainable practices over the course of five years. Robinson also explained that USDA hopes to eventually build a greenhouse to accompany its organic garden.

"That plan may take longer to complete, but it's definitely on our 'organic wish list,'" Robinson added.

The garden, which was

developed in honor of President Lincoln's 200th birthday, has been named "The People's Garden" in reference to the "People's Department" that existed during his tenure in office. Its goal, according to Secretary Thomas Vilsack's Deputy Chief of Staff Carole Jett, is to "bring whole foods to Americans" and to encourage them to get involved in food production. "The Secretary's hope is that this will be a place that the community can come together, connect with the land, and better understand where their food comes from," Jett explained. ■

VIEWPOINT

Equivalency

TO THE EDITOR:

As an economist, I completely agree with Sophia Twarog that 'minor variations' in organic standards and conformity assessment systems for the purpose of imports do not make sense (*The Organic Report*, Fall 2008). However, Twarog fails to draw a bright line between what are minor differences and which ones are international deal breakers. Variations should not give an unfair competitive advantage to the trading partner with the lower standard or undermine consumer confidence in organic food in the importing country. What is barely tolerated in one country may be wholly unacceptable in another.

For all to benefit from trade in organic food, any equivalency agreement must 1) respect food sovereignty, 2) be fair to all stakeholders, 3) allow for continuous improvement, 4) be transparent and accountable, and 5) adhere to organic principles. If we adopt the basic framework above, I believe it is possible that we can have both Free and Fair trade in organic agriculture. ■

— **Brian Baker**

The views expressed are the authors own personal opinion, and do not necessarily reflect those of his employer or any voluntary associations with which he is affiliated.

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