

NEWS AND TRENDS

Study estimates cost of ag “externalities”

The negative effects from crop and livestock agriculture in the United States may cost society somewhere between \$5.7 and \$16.9 billion each year, according to findings published recently in the *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*.

Looking at the costs of “externalities” related to U.S. agriculture in a study conducted during 2002 and 2003, Leopold Center scholar Erin Tegtmeier and former associate director Mike Duffy found that U.S. crop production has external costs ranging from \$11.92 to \$38.74 per acre. As a result, they recommended that agricultural policy be restructured to shift production toward methods that lessen external impacts.

The study looked at six different categories: damage to water sources (\$419.4 million), damage to soil resources (\$2.2 to \$13.4 billion), damage caused by greenhouse gas emissions from cropland and livestock (\$450.5 million), damage to wildlife and ecosystem biodiversity (1.1 billion), and damage to human health from pathogens and pesticides (\$416 million and \$1 billion, respectively). Findings were based on 417 million cropland acres in the United States as reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2000. Not included were approximately 37.8 million acres that were idled that year.

The study showed that current agricultural practices result in negative economic, social and environmental effects, which would significantly affect the perceived economic efficiency of agriculture if these costs were paid by the industry.

Although U.S. farmers spent \$8.2 billion on pesticides during 2002, this represents only 80 percent of the actual cost of pesticide use if one includes the \$2.2 billion in damages to water resources, wildlife and ecosystem biodiversity, and human health.

Go to www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/staff/files/externalcosts_IJAS2004.pdf for the findings.

EATING ORGANIC FOOD REDUCED PESTICIDE EXPOSURE

A study has shown that children who switch to eating organic foods get “dramatic and immediate” reduced exposure to pesticides used on a variety of crops.

In the study, environmental health scientists from the University of Washington, Emory University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tested the urine of 23 children ages 3 to 11 in the Seattle area for 15 days. During the first three days and last seven, children ate their normal diets. During the middle five days, they were given organic items, including fruits, vegetables, juices and wheat-



and corn-based processed items including cereal and pasta.

Average levels of malathion and chlorpyrifos—two organophosphate pesticides—in the children’s urine decreased to nondetectable levels immediately after the introduction of organic diets and remained nondetectable until the conventional diets were reintroduced, researchers reported in the Sept. 1, 2005, online version of *Environmental Health Perspectives*. The findings suggest children are exposed to organophosphate chemicals mainly through food.

Lead author on the study was Chensheng Lu at Emory University in Atlanta, GA. The study was funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

To read the abstract, go to <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/docs/2005/8418/abstract.html>.

From that page, there is a



link to the full article, available free in pdf format.

BRITISH STUDY: ORGANIC FARMING BENEFITS WILDLIFE

Results from five years of research to compare the differences between organic and non-organic cereal-producing farms in lowland England show that organic farming systems provide greater potential for biodiversity as a result of greater variability in habitats and more wildlife-friendly management practices, according to findings published in the Royal Society journal *Biology Letters* Aug. 3.

In the study led by Dr. Rob Full, scientists from the British Trust for Ornithology, the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, and the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit of the University of Oxford found:

- Organic crops contain 85 percent more plant species.
- There were 17 percent more spiders, 5 percent more birds and 33 percent more bats on organic farmland.
- Organic farms contained more grassland and higher densities of hedges. Organic farms have smaller fields, and thicker hedges than their conventional counterparts.
- Organic farmers plant their crops later and cut their hedges less frequently.

In the integrated study covering 160 farms from Cornwall to Cumbria, researchers showed that organic farms supported higher numbers of species and overall abundance across most groups of plants and animals.

FRENCH FINDINGS

Meanwhile, a three-year study conducted in southeastern France found that the great tit, a common European bird, thrived in organic apple orchards versus orchards where intensive spraying occurs.

Findings, published in *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry* (Vol. 24, No. 11), showed that the birds produced more young

in organic orchards than in those where pesticides are used. The authors credited the difference to the loss of insect prey killed by pesticides in the non-organic orchards. They found that in organic orchards, there were both more nesting pairs and fewer abandoned nests, and greater food resources to support greater numbers of the bird.

FINDING ORGANIC SEED

The Save Our Seed project's new organic seed sourcing service offered by the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association helps organic growers find dealers that sell the organic seeds they need.

The Save Our Seed project accepts organic "wish lists" from growers and replies with a list of dealers that sell the seeds needed. If no organic seeds are available, the Save Our Seed project provides documentation that is suitable to show to certification agents and the contact information for all of the organic seed dealers it has searched. It now lists information from 66 organic seed dealers.

This service is currently free and will continue to be until Feb. 28, 2006, when it will charge \$10 per item requested. To use the service, send a list to Cricket Rakita at sourcing@savingourseed.org, or go to www.savingourseed.org and click on "sourcing."

Meanwhile, The Save Our Seed project has a series of seed production manuals. They include production manuals for organic pepper seed, organic bean seed, organic tomato seed, and organic Brassica seed, as well as *The Isolation Distance Guide*, and *The Seed Processing and Storage Manual*. All are available at www.savingourseed.org.

ENCOURAGING FARMERS

Organic Valley Family of Farms has set up a transition to organic fund to provide financial assistance to dairy farmers who are transitioning to organic. Growing demand for

organic milk that exceeds supply has prompted this step.

The transition premiums have been made possible through a partnership between Organic Valley and Stonyfield Farm. The fund has a three-tier structure to meet the needs of each phase of transition through the first three months of marketing milk as organic.

Organic Valley has established a toll-free farmer hotline (1-888-809-9297) to provide information and referrals to farmers during the day on weekdays. In addition, the cooperative has set up a web site exclusively for farmers, at www.farmers.coop.

Meanwhile, California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) is expanding its Going Organic farmer training, education, and mentoring program. Using renewed funding from the California State Water Board, the Going Organic program will train 40 new organic growers through educational meetings and one-on-one mentoring with experienced farmers.

In addition to regional meetings, the program will hold eight key seminars to discuss organic farming techniques, the organic certification process, and more.

CCOF estimates this will increase organic acreage by nearly five percent through converting 40 conventional farms in California's Central Valley, San Joaquin Valley, and the Napa and Sonoma regions. For information on the program, see www.ccof.org/programs/php.

The Future of Food

DVD versions of the film, *The Future of Food*, by Deborah Koons Garcia go on sale Dec. 6 at a wide variety of venues.

The DVD includes the film plus additional resources, including interviews, suggestions for taking political action, and ideas for GMO-free menus to eat while viewing the DVD. For more information, go to www.thefutureoffood, or call 415-383-0553.

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Organic news

- A Cool New Products preview room at the National Association of Convenience Stores' (NACS) 2005 show Oct. 29-Nov. 1 included an organic aisle featuring new organic product options for convenience store retailers to encourage consumers to shop in their stores. According to NACS, as consumer eating habits change to include more healthy choices, many convenience retailers are looking for organic solutions to satisfy customer demand. Convenience stores represent more than 130,000 outlets nationwide, NACS said.
- OTA member company Greenling, Inc., publisher of a practical web site on organic products and practices, has launched an organic produce delivery service in Austin, TX, and surrounding areas. The service offers a variety of organic products delivered to consumers, businesses, restaurants and caterers.
- Wyoming cattlemen and businessmen are exploring the possibility of starting up a slaughter, processing, packing and shipping facility for natural and organic beef, according to an article in the Sept. 6 issue of the *Billings Gazette*. A newly formed group called Farm to Fork, Inc., would be the parent company for the proposed Rocky Mountain Custom Cuts operation.
- Students, faculty and staff at California State University-Monterey Bay can purchase organic salad greens, vegetables, fruit and other items at the Otter Bay Café. The Otter Express also provides "grab & go" organic salads, apple slices, carrot dippers and raisins. Making this possible is a partnership between foodservice provider Sodexo and Earthbound Farm. Earthbound Farm is also working to launch similar partnerships with Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula and Carmel Unified School District, as well as with the University of Notre Dame, Michigan State University, Stanford University and Boston College.
- Students at more than 200 universities are urging their administrations to switch to Fair Trade organic cotton for apparel that bears their school's logo. Cornell, Duke and Georgetown are among the 100 universities and colleges that have met the United Students Against Sweatshops' "Sweat-Free Campus Campaign" that calls for the Fair Trade college apparel to be marketed. Meanwhile, the Sustainable Cotton Project is urging college bookstores to sell organic cotton apparel, with Chico and Humboldt state colleges in California signing on to the program. Info: www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org/about/chapters.php.
- Opening in October, the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, includes the Nasher Museum Café under the direction of Chef Amy Tornquist, owner of Sage & Swift. Tornquist's plans are to offer a menu focusing on local and organic products, as well as organic wines from around the world.
- The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture has partnered with the Iowa State University College of Business and the ISU Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture to offer a master's degree in business administration with a minor in sustainable agriculture. Three students began MBA course work in August. All have assistantships with the Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture (VCPSA) program coordinated by the Leopold Center, ISU, and Practical Farmers of Iowa. VCPSA operates working groups that focus on niche pork, regional foods and bio-based businesses. A fourth group is forming for enterprises associated with organic flax production.
- Food Lion has remodeled 63 stores in Maryland and Delaware to offer more fresh, natural and organic products. In fact, more than 40 of the stores have added a new section called "Nature's Place," devoted entirely to natural and organic products.
- OTA member Supervalu Inc. announced it will launch Sunflower® Market, a value-priced organic foods retail outlet. The first is scheduled to open in Indianapolis, IN, in January. Supervalu will source a large percentage of the store's produce through W. Newell & Co. More than 100 private label items, marketed under the "Nature's Best" brand, will be distributed through Supervalu warehouses.
- Eureka Locker, a butcher shop in downtown Eureka, IL, in July received certification as an organic meat processor, according to an article in the *Peoria Journal Star*.
- A 92,000-square-foot Giant Super Food Store opened in October in Camp Hill, PA, with its natural and organic department featuring 3,500 stock-keeping units.
- Sam's Club stores began selling organic frozen blueberries in October.

Research updates

- A report, *Breaking the Mold—Impacts of Organic and Conventional Farming Systems on Mycotoxins in Food and Livestock Feed*, released by The Organic Center in September shows that organic farming practices can lessen the risk of dangerous mycotoxin contamination in foods, especially grain-based products. The report found that organic agricultural practices often reduce the prevalence of serious fungal infections, and hence mycotoxin risks in the food supply, by promoting diversity in the microorganisms colonizing plant tissues and living in the soil and by reducing the supply of nitrogen that is readily available to support pathogen growth. It pointed out that conventional farming systems increase the risk of fungal infections through a lack of diversity and reliance on monocultures, and because of heavy use of fertilizers

that deliver plant nutrients in a readily available form. The executive summary and full report are posted at www.organic-center.org/science.htm?articleid=59.

- Studying the connections between soil parameters and their infiltration capacity, scientists at the Institute of Plant Nutrition and Soil Science and the Institute of Organic Farming at the Federal Agricultural Research Center in Germany have concluded that organic farming helps provide “bio-pores” in the soil, improving infiltration and helping to counteract flooding.

- Nearly 20 percent of adults eat gourmet foods whenever they can, according to *The U.S. Market for Gourmet Foods and Beverages*, a new report from Packaged Facts. “More gourmet products are using natural and organic ingredients (and appealing to consumers’ social consciences by offering products that are good for the environment and for the workers who produce them), and more natural foods retailers are carrying upscale, gourmet food and beverage items that meet their quality standards,” according to Don Montuori, publisher of Packaged Facts.
- In a consumer survey conducted by the Soil Association in the United Kingdom, 95 percent of respondents said they buy organic products to avoid pesticides and food additives. Meanwhile, 72 percent said organic fruits and vegetables taste better than their non-organic counterparts, and 71 percent said they preferred the taste of organic meat.
- Consumers are extending the concept of health and wellness from personal

Their research found that organically managed soils have approximately seven times more earthworms and twice as high infiltration rates as soils on conventionally managed farms. Such positive effects are evident after only three years of organic management.

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Integrated Organic Program has awarded Iowa State University, Michigan State University, the University of Florida and the Rodale Institute \$480,000 to evaluate strategies for

Consumer trends

health to that of planetary health and wellness, according to the Natural Marketing Institute’s *Health & Wellness Trends Database*™. “Almost one in four American consumers state that when given the choice to buy a product or service, they make decisions with an understanding of the effect the purchase will have on the health and sustainability of the world, its environment and people,” said NMI managing partner Steve French.

- An online survey conducted by GCI Group and Equation Research in June 2005 found that 68 percent of expectant mothers willingly make changes to their eating habits after becoming pregnant. Of those 26 percent started eating more natural and organic foods, according to Whole Foods Market. Forty-two percent of all expectant and new moms completing the survey said eating natural or organic products is important, and 37 percent said they believe natural and organic foods offer health advantages. A total of 2,344 persons completed the survey.

Environmental News

longer be able to use the antibiotic Baytril, known generically as enrofloxacin, in poultry.

- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has withdrawn approval for the use of Cipro-like antibiotics in poultry due to concerns it could lead to antibiotic-resistant bacteria in humans. The ban, first proposed by the Clinton Administration in October 2000, took effect in September. As a result, conventional farmers will no
- New York Governor George Pataki signed into law a bill requiring schools in the state to use environmentally responsible cleaning and maintenance products.
- A grizzly bear study conducted in British Columbia, Canada, showed

managing soybean rust in organic systems. The long-term goal is to identify and test best management organic practices for controlling Asian soybean rust, caused by the *Phakopsora pachyrhizi* fungus.

- Researchers with the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology based in Kenya have announced the development of an organic pesticide to control deadly locust swarms in Africa. Tests conducted in Sudan have prevented such swarms by spraying juvenile locusts with a pheromone taken from adults.

- Americans choose where and what to eat primarily based on convenience and cost, according to The NPD Group’s 20th annual *Eating Patterns in America* report. The survey, which is based on data collected during the 12 months ending February 2005, showed that Americans are more likely to take out from a restaurant than eat there. Due to increasingly hurried lifestyles, factors driving eating habits seem to be time and money, the report found, noting that if a meal is not cheap, it had better be quick, and vice versa. The survey also found that in 1985, 56 percent of in-home meals included a fresh product. Today, that has decreased to 46 percent of in-home meals.
- Based on an August 2005 ESP™ (E-Screener Panel) study conducted by the Natural Marketing Institute, consumers using one natural/organic product category were three to 12 times more likely to use another natural/organic category.

a link between the high presence of pesticides and a salmon diet, according to an article in *The Globe and Mail*. In the study, fat and hair samples from coastal and inlet bears were examined. Results showed significantly higher levels of pesticides and other toxins in the coastal bears.

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- Exposure to chemicals found in pesticides and herbicides may increase the risk of Parkinson's disease in people with a family history of the disease, according to findings published in *Current Biology*. Studying fruit flies that lack both forms of a gene associated with the inherited form of Parkinson's disease, researchers found the flies became extremely sensitive to the herbicide paraquat and the insecticide rotenone, and died after exposure.
- A biomonitoring study of 11 prominent Californians conducted by Commonwealth's Biomonitoring Resource Center found higher levels of DDT and mercury than those found in the average American. The study, "Taking It All In: Documenting Chemical Pollution in Californians Through

Biomonitoring," analyzed urine, blood and hair samples from subjects of diverse backgrounds and lifestyles. All participants tested positive for DDT with levels exceeding those in the Center for Disease Control's *Third National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals*. Overall, all six categories of chemicals or their metabolites were found in all 11 participants.

- A University of Pittsburgh researcher and two doctoral students have found that the herbicide Roundup® is deadly to tadpoles at lower concentrations than previously tested. In addition, their research, published in the Aug. 1 issue of *Ecological Applications*, showed that the presence of soil does not mitigate the chemical's effects, and the

product kills frogs as well as tadpoles. Their findings: even when applied at concentrations one-third of the maximum concentration expected in nature, Roundup® still killed up to 71 percent of tadpoles raised in outdoor tanks. Also, they found that the recommended application of Roundup® Weed and Grass Killer (marketed to homeowners and gardeners) killed up to 86 percent of terrestrial frogs after only one day.

- The Goleta School Board in Santa Barbara County, CA, voted this summer to become the first school district in the county to ban pesticides in schools. As a result, the district has earmarked money to hire a groundskeeper to pull weeds and trap gophers.

IFOAM Update

At the 15th IFOAM Organic World Congress entitled "Shaping Sustainable Systems" held in Adelaide, Australia, in September, the more than 1,000 delegates from 72 countries issued the Adelaide Declaration calling upon governments worldwide to actively endorse and support organic agriculture.

Among the provisions were calls for governments to allocate funds for investing in organic agriculture proportionate to the organic sector's production in their countries, to internalize social and environmental costs in the prices of agricultural

products, and to compensate organic farmers for the ecosystem services they provide. Further details: www.ifoam.org.

In other news:

- IFOAM has established its Africa Organic Service Centre (AOSC) in Dakar, Senegal. Chido Makunike of Zimbabwe, a recognized leader in African environmental and organic initiatives, has been selected as coordinator for the center. IFOAM had originally established AOSC in 2004 in Kampala, Uganda.
- The Italian Organic Standards have been reviewed and approved as consistent with the IFOAM Basic Standards.

- The General Assembly of IFOAM elected ten World Board members from a slate of 19 candidates. The new IFOAM World Board has chosen Gerald A. Herrmann of Germany as its president, and Mette Meldgaard of Denmark and Alberto (Pipo) Lernoud of Argentina as vice presidents. Other World Board members include Antonio Compagnoni of Italy, Prabha Mahale of India, Brendan Hoare of New Zealand, Ong Kung Wai of Malaysia, Jacqueline Haessig Alleje of the Philippines, Mwatima Juma of Tanzania, and Johan Cejje of Sweden.

News from Canada

Ron Krystynak to convey appreciation to the Canadian government for directing major resources to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in the past year to develop a federal organic regulation.

The group urged the government to negotiate organic equivalency with

the United States, the European Union, Japan, China and other countries that buy Canadian organic exports as soon as the regulation is implemented. OTA also asked that CFIA continue to work closely with the organic sector in monitoring the implementation of the regulation.

On Oct. 19, Joe Southall, director

OTA HELPS GIVE NATIONAL REGULATION HIGH PRIORITY

In September, Canadian OTA members participated in OTA's Congressional Education Day by visiting the Embassy of Canada in Washington, D.C. A delegation of ten met with Agriculture Counsellor

of CFIA's Organic Task Force, told OTA and Canadian Organic Growers that the organic file has become "one of the most important on the government's 'to-do' list." Southall said the sudden increased interest was largely due to OTA's letter to the new CFIA president François Guimont. OTA had written to welcome Guimont to his new position and encourage him to continue support for the energetic Organic Task Force and its commitment to a federal organic regulation.

Mike LeClair of CFIA's Organic Task Force gave an overview of the regulation during the Canadian Health Food Association's Organic Day in Toronto Oct. 14. He said the Canadian government would be the overall competent authority overseeing the regulated system, which includes producers, processors and distributors or traders that make organic claims. Equivalency negotiation with other countries regarding this federal system will be the responsibility of the federal government. The system will enforce comprehensive organic labeling requirements. Rules governing the optional use of a readily identifiable Canada Organic seal will be described in the regulation.

LeClair said the standard will be "evergreen," meaning a document that will be constantly kept fresh, maintained by industry. The Permitted Substances List will be maintained by the Expert Committee on Organic Agriculture, which is part of the Canadian Agriculture Research Council and linked to the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada.

CFIA has engaged a full-time lawyer to review all details of the drafted regulation to ensure clarity and full accordance with existing laws. Once the legal green light is given, there will be a period of consultation with the provinces. The regulation will then be pre-published in the *Canada Gazette*, perhaps as early as December but no later than March 31, 2006. It will then be open for 90 days of public

comment. Barring any major snags, it will become law one month later.

Both Southall and LeClair said equivalency negotiations would begin as soon as the regulation is pre-published in the *Canada Gazette*. Preliminary groundwork for those negotiations has already begun in the European Union.

OTA is now working with other members of the Organic Regulatory Committee (ORC), the ad hoc committee working on a national regulation, to arrange a meeting with Prime Minister Paul Martin. All OTA members in Canada are encouraged to contact their MPs to describe their farms and businesses and encourage support for the coming regulation. If you need guidance on talking points or a letter to your member, contact OTA Canadian Council liaison Stephanie Wells at otacanada@ota.com or 613-787-2003.

FINAL ROUND ON STANDARD

In early November, the 40 members of the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) organic standard committee were slated to vote on the revised Canada Organic Standard. The next steps will be to draft proposed resolutions to any negative ballots and comments, and then send the ballot results, comments and proposed resolutions back to the committee for consideration.

Once consensus is reached and the committee approves the drafted standard, it will return to CGSB for second-level approval, be submitted to the Standards Council of Canada for ratification and, finally, be edited and published.

CONTINUING COORDINATION

On Oct. 4, ORC met to discuss the development of a national organic industry council. The proposed council's broad mandate will be to advance the organic perspective in Canada. The organization will evolve from the very effective ORC, with representatives from each province and region, as well as such organizations as OTA.

The envisioned council will not

replace OTA or any other existing organizations, but will help to coordinate advocacy, policy work, marketing and education across the Canada's organic community. The council will foster communication within the domestic organic sector, as well as with international organizations such as IFOAM and CODEX. The work will be done by a paid coordinator within a defined structure that assures transparency and broad participation from all across the organic sector. It will appoint or elect the group that will advise government on the standard and permitted substances list.

Other topics on the table in October were organic inspector training, criteria, and grandfathering of current organic inspectors, as well as ways to develop and maintain a list of brand names to accompany and ease use of the generic Permitted Substances List.

As it has been a force within ORC and the regulation development, OTA intends to continue to be a very active player in the Canadian organic movement.

OTA PARTICIPATION

This winter, OTA is sponsoring "Organic Matters on the Prairies" and "Gaining Ground" in November in Brandon, Manitoba.

OTA is also a sponsor of the Guelph Organic Conference. It's scheduled at the University of Guelph Jan. 26-29. Please visit OTA at Table 20, and bring your friends and colleagues along to join!

IN OTHER CANADIAN NEWS:

- An appeals court judge has given Saskatchewan organic farmers the nod to appeal an earlier court decision denying them a class action lawsuit against Monsanto Canada and Bayer CropScience for compensation for loss incurred with the introduction of genetically modified canola. All farmers certified since 1996 would be included in the action. On Aug. 29, appeal court judge S.J. Cameron gave the farmers leave to appeal the earlier denial. 🍀