The Land Stewardship Letter

Keeping the Land and People Together

Vol. 23, No. 4 www.landstewardshipproject.org Oct/Nov/Dec 2005

Picking the Planet We Want

One fruit produced by globalization could be a food and farming system more accountable to local communities.

Abilio Velasquez picks coffee beans on his family's farm in Honduras. Some of those beans are destined for the Midwest, where his brother and sister-in-law market the coffee. Such relationships are giving "local food" a whole new meaning. See page 22 for more on this venture. (*photo contributed***)**

Food production occupies 40 percent of the planet's land surface, scientists revealed in early December at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union. In 1700, just 7 percent of the globe was used for farming. Today, an area roughly the size of South America is devoted to crop production alone. Farmland grew by 12.4 million acres between 1992 and 2002, according to the United Nations.

With all this talk about our society

Pick, *see page 20…*

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The Land Stewardship Letter

Vol. 23, No. 4—Oct./Nov./Dec. 2005

The Land Stewardship Letter is published four times a year by the Land Stewardship Project, a private, nonprofit organization. The mission of the Land Stewardship Project is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture and to develop sustainable communities. Members of the Land Stewardship Project receive this newsletter as a benefit. Annual membership dues are $35.

All inquiries pertaining to the content of the *Land Stewardship Letter* should be addressed to the editor, Brian DeVore, 4917 Nokomis Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55417; phone/fax: 612-729-6294; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

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Commentary !?!?!

A food monolith gets a face-lift

By Dana Jackson

I will bet that everyone who reads this article knows what the food pyramid is. You may not know the details, but you will know the symbol, know that it depicts foods that are good for people. Within three years of the release of the 1992 pyramid, nearly half of American adults had heard of it, and that increased to 67 percent, according to surveys in 1997. Most children learned to recognize the pyramid with the horizontal bands picturing food groups, not only from posters in their classes but from advertisements and cereal boxes.

The familiar icon was originally called the Eating Right Pyramid, but when introduced in 1991, protests from meat and dairy commodity groups and processors sent it back to the drawing board. The industries were unhappy because the pyramid presented a hierarchy of foods good for people. Grain products (six to 11 daily servings recommended) were shown on the broad base, with meat, poultry and milk products (two to three daily servings) on a narrower band above. After lots of money spent on additional

The Wild Farm Alliance Food Pyramid offers an ecological alternative to the USDA's Food Guide Pyramid. (*LSP photo***)**

Pyramid, *see page 3…*

…Pyramid, *from page 2*

research, the pyramid was re-issued in 1992 with only slight changes and a new name, the Food Guide Pyramid.

At a meeting of Wild Farm Alliance board members and advisers in the fall of 2003, Gary Nabhan introduced an idea for a take-off of the 1992 Food Guide Pyramid. He and two colleagues, Jim Dyer and Pam Roy, had created a basic design that would show the soil as the real base of a food pyramid and illustrate natural ecosystems that agriculture depends upon. It would make the connection between healthful food and healthy land. We were all very excited about developing such a pyramid as an educational tool, but we didn't start working on it until the USDA issued a new version of the food guide pyramid early in 2005. Then we decided it was time to create the Wild Farm Alliance Food Pyramid.

The newly designed USDA Food Pyramid eliminates the implied hierarchy of the old by separating categories of food in colored vertical bands. The web site name, www.mypyramid.gov, and the new title, "Steps Toward a Healthier You," emphasize personal responsibility for health through exercise and good food choices. This presentation deflects any responsibility for the public's nutrition and health from agriculture and food industries to the realm of personal human behavior.

Because of the USDA design changes, the Wild Farm Alliance had to re-think its image of a pyramid with the earth as the base and ecological processes above and figure out how to tell its story through vertical bands. It was an extraordinary challenge to reduce complex concepts to phrases and connect food to farming practices, conservation and wildness. Early on we decided to give the pyramid four sides in order to extend the amount of information it could hold.

The Wild Farm Alliance Pyramid, which is pictured on page 2, could be the outline for a college course in agroecology. However, its intended audience is not the college student, but the consumer with environmental and conservation interests who has yet to really grasp the connections between food systems and ecosystems. This audience includes a long list of constituencies: people who seek experiences in the natural, wild, uncivilized areas of the world and people who just want to know they exist and will work hard to protect them; people who lobby for regulations of polluting industries and reform of federal farm policy; people who understand the big picture issues and the Earth's changes because of an oil dependent economy and global warming; people who recycle and drive small cars, and of course conservation-minded farmers and sustainable agriculture advocates. The audience includes all people with a progressive, conservation bent. That's because this connection between natural ecosystems and food systems is so hard to understand and internalize as a motivation for human behavior. Concern for the environment isn't reflected in the kinds of food most people put into their grocery carts. The Wild Farm Alliance Pyramid is intended to help people put ecological considerations into their food choices, to take steps toward a healthier planet.

One side of the Wild Farm Alliance pyramid is a guide to eating, and the vertical bands direct consumers to eat foods that are local and in-season, organic and GMO free, pasture-raised, sustainably-harvested, predator-friendly, shade-grown and salmon-safe. These terms can be found on food labels, and organic, predator-friendly and salmon-safe are backed by certification processes.

The second side implies that if you eat such foods, you can support a farm-based, conservation economy. That includes healthy, fertile soils, native-plant hedgerows and streamside buffers, year-round plant cover for soil conservation, clean air and water, pollinators and beneficial insects, birds and bats, and a broad diversity of species.

The phrases on the third side all begin with a verb, indicating actions that promote wildness on and beyond the farm: manage farms as natural habitat; maintain or restore wildlife corridors, prevent or control invasive species, value large predators and wild fish, safeguard rare animals, plants and habitats, and support watershed-level conservation.

The Land Stewardship Project's program work illustrates the concepts and values contained in the very compact phrases appearing on the Wild Farm Alliance Pyramid. This includes research conducted by the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Program, LSP's involvement in the Green Lands Blue Waters Project, and the Food Alliance Midwest certification standards in the areas of pesticide reduction, soil and water conservation and wildlife habitat conservation. It includes LSP's strong advocacy for the Conservation Security Program organized by our Policy Program, and promotion of local foods through the work of Pride of the Prairie in western Minnesota and the Farm and City Food Connections Program in the White Bear Lake office.

As an affiliate of the Wild Farm Alliance, LSP has been placing the pyramid on tables at conferences and at local food dinners with a base we created that relates it to LSP work. Anyone can freely download the pyramid and base from the organizations' websites: www.wildfarmalliance.org and www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_agroecology.html. ❐

Dana Jackson is an LSP Senior Program Associate and a member of the Wild Farm Alliance board of directors. She can be reached at 651-653-0618 or danaj@landstewardshipproject.org.

Letters

On the other hand...

What I like:

The articles in the *Land Stewardship Letter* are well-written. You actually define what it is you're going to be talking about before you discuss it. Some publications don't.

What I don't like:

You focus too much on Minnesota. I'm reading for concepts that can be applied everywhere.

—Robert Mohler
Ord, Neb.

What's on your mind?

Got an opinion? Comments? Corrections? Criticisms? We like to print letters, commentaries, essays, poems, photos and illustrations related to issues we cover. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Contact: Brian DeVore, 4917 Nokomis Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55417; phone: 612-729-6294; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

→ *Myth*:

Industrial agriculture is efficient.

→ *Fact:*

Measured by the amount of energy it takes to produce each calorie of food, industrial farming systems are extremely inefficient. In 1940, the average U.S. farm produced 2.3 calories of food energy for every calorie of fossil fuel energy it used. By 1974, that ratio was 1:1, according to Richard Manning, writing in his book *Against the Grain*.

These days, the calories-to-calories ratio is more like 3:1, according to David Pimentel, a Cornell University entomologist who has studied the environmental impact of various agriculture systems. That's right: it takes some three calories of energy to produce just one calorie of food, according to Pimentel's estimates.

And that doesn't even include the energy expended to process and transport the food to our supper tables. When both production and distribution are taken into account, it takes 10 to 15 calories of energy for every calorie of food energy produced, according to the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems at the University of Wisconsin. The more processing done to food, the more energy it burns before it even gets to your mouth. It takes around 500 to 600 calories to process a kilogram of flour or canned fruits and vegetables. A kilogram of breakfast cereal gobbles up more than 15,000 calories when it's processed, and instant coffee slurps nearly 19,000 calories.

Blame it on oil: during the past half century agriculture has become increasingly dependent upon petrochemicals to do everything from run cropping equipment to manage stockpiles of liquid manure. It takes diesel fuel to operate tractors and other equipment, and natural gas to produce fertilizer (the U.S. Department of Energy says natural gas accounts for 70 to 90 percent of the cost of producing anhydrous ammonia, a key source of nitrogen fertilizer). Farmers use energy to dry corn, irrigate fields and transport their product to market. It takes fossil fuels to produce chemicals that control insect and weed pests, as well as to heat and cool large livestock confinement buildings.

This fall, a Virginia Tech professor told a group of Midwestern dairy farmers that $8 out of every $10 spent on their farms can be traced back to oil. The agribusiness magazine *Feedstuffs* recently ran an article on poultry production with the headline, "Energy projected to soon replace feed as biggest factor in production costs." For U.S. crop farmers, energy related expenses range from 10 percent to 30 percent of operating costs, depending on the region of the country and type of enterprise, according to the Department of Energy.

Such dependence can be tolerated as long as energy prices remain relatively cheap. But agriculture's energy addiction became painful in 2005, when prices skyrocketed. One southwest Minnesota crop farmer estimated his energy costs spiked $12,000 compared to 2004.

Systems exist for cutting agriculture's energy jones significantly. Farmers who use minimum or no-till cropping systems to reduce the number of times they drive equipment over a field have long realized major fuel savings. Deep straw pork production slashes the need for artificial heating, while grass-based livestock production cuts a farm's reliance on producing feed using energy-intensive row crop systems. Even resource conserving crop rotations that use legumes such as alfalfa can slash the need for petrochemical-based fertilizers because they provide their own nitrogen fertility naturally. A study comparing organic and conventional farming systems in the United Kingdom found that organic systems can cut energy use by 42 percent.

But if all that organic or even sustainably produced food is shipped hundreds and thousands of miles to get to consumers, much of their energy benefits can be canceled out. Another team of British researchers recently examined the "externalized" costs, such as damage to the environment, traffic congestion and human health hazards caused by vehicle emissions, etc., that are a part of a market basket of food in England. The researchers, who reported their findings in a recent issue of the journal *Food Policy*, estimated that the total external costs were $4.3 billion annually in U.S. dollars. Of the 12 commodities assessed, livestock products were the most costly on a per kilogram basis.

These external costs could be cut by 90 percent with a shift to a local food system, where, for example, food is consumed within 12 miles of where it is produced, concluded the researchers. Such a dramatic shift in our food system is not likely anytime soon, but any movement in that direction would help our food and farming system start counting its calories.

→ *More information:*

◆ An excerpt of Richard Manning's book, *Against the Grain*, is at www.harpers.org/TheOilWeEat.html.

◆ The Department of Energy report, *Striking Home: The Impacts of High Energy Prices on Families, Communities, and Businesses*, is at www.energy.gov/engine/doe/files/dynamic/195200312449_chapter2.pdf

◆ The paper, "Why Our Food is So Dependent on Oil" is at www.energybulletin.net/print.php?id=5045.

◆ A study on how making food systems more local in the United Kingdom would cut "external costs" is at www.sciencedirect.com (look for the *Food Policy* journal; the study is in volume 30, on pages 1-19).

300 →

That's the percentage increase in organic dairy cows in Wisconsin between 2000 and 2003, according to the USDA's report, "U.S. Organic Agriculture in the U.S., 1992-2003," which was released in November (www.ers.usda.gov/Data/Organic/index.htm). Between 1997 and 2003 organic cropland in the entire U.S. grew by 71 percent, and organic pasture by 50 percent. However, there's still plenty of room for improvement: only about .4 percent of all U.S. cropland and .1 percent of pasture was certified organic in 2003. See page nine for a related story on the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference.

LSP News

Real Dirt film in Twin Cities Jan. 20

The award-winning film, *The Real Dirt on Farmer John*, will open at the Regal in Brooklyn Center, Minn., the weekend of Jan. 20. The Land Stewardship Project and the Wedge Community Co-op will hold a discussion on local food between showings of the film on Jan. 20.

The Real Dirt on Farmer John (www.therealdirt.net) is a character study/docudrama depicting a 55-year span in the life of John Peterson and his Illinois farm. Filmmaker Taggart Siegel documents how despite several obstacles and setbacks, the conventional farm was successfully reinvented as Angelic Organics, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation that serves the Chicago area. Angelic Organics is a partner in the Stateline Farm Beginnings program in Illinois (see page 7). Join us for what promises to be an evening of cinematic inspiration and good conversation.

For more information, contact LSP's Dana Jackson at 651-653-0618 or Barth Anderson of the Wedge at 612-465-8810. ❒

'Family Farms' show & discussion in January

"Family Farms: A Tribute" will be presented at the Northfield (Minn.) Arts Guild from Jan. 9 to Feb. 10. This is the third and final stop of this traveling art show dedicated to the family farm. An opening reception/gallery crawl will be held Friday, Jan. 13, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Arts Guild, which is at 304 Division Street (phone: 507-645-8877) in Northfield. The gallery's regular hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Saturday. On Thursdays, it's open until 8 p.m.

Through this exhibit, a group of l4 artists from around the state have come together to provide a glimpse into the rural landscape as they see it—the farm families, the livestock, the fields of grain, the small towns and their main streets. This show is not meant to celebrate a bygone day, but to inspire hope for the future. This event is sponsored by the Land Stewardship Project, Minnesota COACT, Minnesota Farmers Union and Clear Water Action Alliance.

Family farm discussion Jan. 30

The Northfield League of Women Voters will moderate a panel discussion called, "What is the Future for Family Farms?" on Monday, Jan. 30, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. (snow date is Jan. 31). This will be held at the Northfield Arts Guild in conjunction with the "Family Farms: A Tribute" art show. For more information, contact Stephanie Henriksen at 507-645-7086 or dkamis@rconnect.com. ❒

LSPers named outstanding conservationists

Land Stewardship Project members Dave and Diane Serfling have been selected for the "Outstanding Conservationist" award in Area Seven by the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. They were one of eight finalists for the State Outstanding Conservationist award, which was given out in December.

The Serflings, along with their children Hannah and Ethan, raise crops and livestock on 350 acres near Preston in southeast Minnesota. Dave is a member of LSP's Federal Farm Policy Committee and played a major role in helping develop the Conservation Security Program (see the cover story in the July/Aug./Sept. 2005 *Land Stewardship Letter*). ❒

LSP members among top pork producers

Niman Ranch recently honored farmers who produced the "highest quality pork" for the company during the past year. Several Land Stewardship Project members were among the honorees, including: Arvid and Lois Jovaag of Austin, Minn.; Glen Bernard of Rushford, Minn.; Dave and Diane Serfling of Preston, Minn.; and the VanDerPol family of Kerkhoven, Minn.

Niman Ranch markets pork that is raised without antibiotics in outdoor systems and in deeply bedded pens. The pork is produced by 445 family hog farmers in 13 states. For more information, call 641-998-2683 or visit www.nimanranch.com.

LSP News

LSP partners with USDA to expand Farm Beginnings™ outreach in Minnesota & surrounding states

One of Minnesota's most successful beginning farmer programs is expanding its outreach to people from a greater diversity of social and economic backgrounds. The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ program has received a $70,000 grant from the USDA's Risk Management Agency.

During the past nine years in Minnesota, Farm Beginnings has provided beginning and transitioning farmers an opportunity to learn firsthand about low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. More than 220 people have completed the class, and 60 percent of its graduates are farming today. The program has recently expanded to Illinois, Missouri and Nebraska (see page 7).

Farm Beginnings students take part in a course that teaches goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative farming techniques. Farm Beginnings instructors are primarily established, successful farmers.

The Risk Management Agency grant provides funds to involve community leaders in Farm Beginnings training and get feedback on how to re-tool the program to improve it for a wider audience. It also provides scholarships for Farm Beginnings participants. Business-planning classes will be offered in upcoming months, and during the summer people interested in pursuing farming will be invited to on-farm field days.

The Risk Management Agency grant will help Farm Beginnings do outreach to populations that have not been involved in traditional beginning farmer initiatives. Getting started in farming is daunting—even more so if people need to cross economic and cultural barriers to access help, according to LSP staff member Amy Bacigalupo.

"Farm Beginnings has always served economically and socially disadvantaged people, but this grant significantly expands our outreach and training to people from a greater diversity of backgrounds such as Latinos and Native Americans," she says. "With this grant we hope to make the opportunities we see in sustainable farming available to a wider group of people."

"This project provides one ray of sunshine on a landscape that is yearning for change and opportunity," says Lou Anne Kling, project coordinator for the Farm Service Agency's American Indian Credit Outreach Initiative. Kling has taught LSP workshops on farm business planning (see page 7).

For more information on Farm Beginnings, call the Land Stewardship Project at 320-269-2105 in western Minnesota, 507-523-3366 in southeast Minnesota, or 612-623-7710 in the Twin Cities. More information is also available at www.landstewardshipproject.org /program_farmbeginnings.html. ❒

Western Minnesota beef grazier Terry VanderPol discussed soil monitoring at a Minnesota Farm Beginnings™ class this fall. VanDerPol, who is also a Land Stewardship Project organizer, gave the presentation on the Dave and Florence Minar dairy farm near New Prague. (*LSP photo***)**

Twohig appointed to USDA beginning farmer group

Land Stewardship Project staff member Kate Twohig has been appointed to a national advisory committee for beginning farmers and ranchers.

Twohig will serve a two-year appointment on the USDA's Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. The committee, which includes 19 other members from across the U.S., identifies ways to increase participation between federal and state programs to provide joint financing for beginning producers.

Members also suggest other creative methods for new agricultural opportunities that will help beginning farmers and ranchers, according to the USDA.

Twohig is Director of LSP's Farm Beginnings™ program. She can be contacted at 612-623-7710 or cathyt@landstewardship project.org. ❒

2005-2006 Farm Beginnings™ classes commence in 5 locations

Fall 2005 marks the launch of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ program in Missouri, Nebraska and Illinois. As with the Farm Beginnings program in Minnesota, participants are attending classes twice a month until late winter, when they will have a chance to get an up close and personal look at some of the farms they've been learning about. Farmers and others are giving the presentations. Here's a brief rundown of how the expanded Farm Beginnings is going so far:

Missouri

The Missouri Farm Beginnings classes are being held in West Plains, in the south-central part of the state on the Arkansas border. Eleven individuals or couples are signed up for the class, with on average 12 to 14 attending each session, according to Randy Saner, a coordinator with the program. He says the presentations are going well, and participants are already starting to draw information from outside the classroom setting via other farmers, extension educators and each other.

"They are already networking," says Saner.

For more information on the Missouri Farm Beginnings program, see http://agebb.missouri.edu/mac/fbp. You can also contact: Randy Saner at 417-256-2391 (SanerR@umsystem.edu); Debi Kelly at 800-433-3704 or 573-882-1905, (kellyd@umsystem.edu); Jim Thompson at 417-532-7126, (ThompsonJO@umsystem.edu).

Nebraska

In Nebraska, 14 individuals or "units" (husband-wife, parent-child, etc.) are taking the course and 10 had to be turned away because it was filled to capacity. The sessions are taking place in Syracuse, near the state capital of Lincoln. "There's a lot of enthusiasm in this group," says Martin Kleinschmit of the Center for Rural Affairs, which is coordinating the Nebraska program.

For more information on the Nebraska Farm Beginnings program, contact Kleinschmit at 402-254-6893 or martink@cfra.org.

Central Illinois

Nineteen people are enrolled in the Central Illinois Farm Beginnings program, and their ages range from 20-56. Their areas of agricultural interest range from vegetables and livestock to specialty grains and flowers.

For more on the Central Illinois program, visit www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu/index.html. You can also contact: Leslie Cooperband at 217-244-2743 (lcooperb@ad.uiuc.edu); Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant at 217-968-5512 (cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu); Terra Brockman at 309-965-2407 (tlcterra@jasmith.net).

Stateline

The Stateline Farm Beginnings program is located in northern Illinois, and services southern Wisconsin as well. The program has 20 families enrolled, and there are 10 on the waiting list for next year, says Parker Forsell, coordinator of the Stateline initiative. Many of the participants are interested in vegetable production and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), he says. By the way, the Stateline program is partnered with Angelic Organics, which is featured in the film *The Real Dirt on Farmer John* (see page 5).

For details on the Stateline Farm Beginnings program, see www.csalearningcenter.org. You can also contact Forsell at 608-498-0268 or CRAFT@csalearningcenter.org.

Minnesota

Last but not least, a report from where it all began. Forty people are currently taking the Farm Beginnings class in the east central Minnesota community of New Prague. Their areas of interest range from dairy and pork production to CSA farming and agritourism.

For more information on the Minnesota Farm Beginnings program, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_farmbeginnings.html. In southeast Minnesota, you can contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org. In western Minnesota, call 320-269-2105 and ask for Amy Bacigalupo (amyb@landstewardshipproject.org). In the Twin Cities, contact Kate Twohig at 612-623-7710 or cathyt@landstewardshipproject.org. ❒

See page 14 for a profile of two recent Farm Beginning graduates.

Insider tips on credit

Lou Anne Kling (*left*) led a presentation on farm record keeping and loan applications during a Land Stewardship Project workshop in early November. The workshop, which was held in the southeast Minnesota community of Lewiston, provided participants with tools to manage a farm more as a business, and showed them how to approach a lender with greater confidence. Kling, an LSP Board member, was recently named project coordinator of the Farm Service Agency's American Indian Credit Outreach Initiative. She has administered farm loan programs at the state and federal levels. For more on LSP's efforts to help farmers develop better business plans, contact Caroline van Schaik in Lewiston at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. (*photo by Caroline van Schaik***)**

LSP News

Voices of Minnesota Farm Women program launched

The Land Stewardship Project is ready to reach many audiences with the hopeful messages in its new educational program based on the film documentary, *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women*. The program, produced by Cynthia Vagnetti, gives witness to the vitality of contemporary Minnesota family farms and new opportunities for beginning farmers. The 10 women who share their lives through the filmed oral histories speak about the high quality of life for their families, their love for the land, and the satisfaction of growing food for people and selling it directly to customers. The film affirms the contribution that stewardship farming makes to rural economies and to consumers everywhere who appreciate fresh, local food.

Book a program

Call Land Stewardship Project to schedule a program for your church group, community club or food cooperative. A facilitator will give a short background introduction, followed by a showing of the 27-minute video, then lead a 10- to 30-minute discussion (depending upon participants) covering themes in the film. The facilitator will conclude with suggestions for follow-up action steps to support sustainable farming, rural communities and local food systems. The program will appeal to both urban and rural audiences. There is no fee, but travel reimbursement for the program leader is required.

Buy an educational packet for your church or group and schedule many showings and discussions in your community. The *Voices* packet contains, in addition to a *Voices* DVD, introductory background materials, a discussion guide, several different handouts about beginning farmers, how to buy directly from a farmer and a Take Action list. It also includes the new *Local Foods* guide from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (see page 19) and a bibliography for additional reading. Order by sending a check for $25 to LSP, 2200 Fourth Street, White Bear Lake, MN 55110. The DVD is also available by itself for $15.

Volunteer to lead a program

LSP seeks volunteers to lead programs featuring *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women*. Training with the educational packet and support will be provided to make this experience comfortable and rewarding. To volunteer, contact Dana Jackson at 651-653-0618 or danaj@landstewardshipproject.org. ❒

How do we pay for a public good?

A "Dialogue on Performance Based Conservation Policies for Agriculture" took place Nov. 14 in Ames, Iowa, as a joint effort of the Land Stewardship Project, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture Board of Directors, University of Northern Iowa and the North Central Region Center for Rural Development.

Nearly 40 people from around the country discussed the idea that public goods from working farmlands and associated wild lands merit financial rewards via farm policy. The meeting was premised on a concept paper co-written by LSP Executive Director George Boody and Dennis Keeney of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. Besides Boody, other LSPers involved in the meeting were staff member Caroline van Schaik and farmer-member Dan French.

For more on this issue, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html. (*photo by Caroline van Schaik*)

The cultivation of an organic farming conference

As organic farming has grown, so has the Midwest's premier ecological ag gathering.

By Joe Riemann

Winter is here, which means many organic farmers across the Midwest will once again be thumbing through seed catalogs and preparing for spring. Farmers are also looking forward to the 17th annual Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse, Wis. The conference, which is the last weekend in February, is organized by the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES).

Since 1990 the conference, called UMOFC for short, has grown from 90 attendees to an impressive 1,800 in 2005. "We're expecting 2,000 people this year," says Faye Jones, MOSES executive director and conference organizer. "This conference can't get much bigger."

The UMOFC has followed the overall growth in organics, but remains dedicated to offering education, networking, and camaraderie to organic farmers.

For many people, the conference has served as an entry point into organic agriculture, a way to rub shoulders with others who collectively have decades of experience to share.

"We wanted to get into organic farming and heard the UMOFC was offered during the winter," says Eric Wangness, a Spring Grove, Minn., organic farmer who's been attending the conference since 1998. "The conference is close by and has nice timing."

"It's more in-depth than other conferences. There are more people at the trade show, and more professionals to network with," adds Wangness, who farms with his brother John and father Clayton.

His sentiments are echoed throughout the organic farming community.

"The biggest impact of the UMOFC has been helping new farmers make the transition to organic farming and helping existing farmers improve their operation," says Joyce Ford, an organic inspector from Winona, Minn., and president of the MOSES board of directors, "I have heard many stories over the years about how [the conference] has changed people's lives. They will never go back to farming with chemicals."

This kind of recognition has brought forth a more diverse attendance and sponsorship to the event. State departments of agriculture and university extension programs are just some of the public institutions that are participating in the conference, offering a well-deserved nod to the hard work and dedication of the Midwest organic farming movement.

Beyond the exchange of ideas and supplies offered, the conference brings forth an interesting array of informative keynote speakers. "In recent years, the most inspiring speaker to me was Tom Frantzen, an organic hog farmer from northeast Iowa," says Ford, "He has done a lot of on-farm experimentation, and has revolutionized hog farming for organic production."

Top keynotes

This year, the UMOFC features another unforgettable line-up with Michael Ableman, author of *From the Good Earth: A Celebration of Growing Food Around the World*; Michael Sligh, of the Seeds & Breeds Project and Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA; and Leslie Duram, professor of Environmental Management at the University of Illinois-Carbondale.

The UMOFC has workshops covering a plethora of topics including specialty crops, marketing issues, crop production, animal husbandry, soil management, and organic certification. The La Crosse Center holds over 130 exhibitors, representing every aspect of sustainable and organic agriculture.

"It's great for people wanting to know more about organic farming," says Cindy Heilman, an organic gardener and hormone-free beef producer from eastern Iowa. "There is a lot of variety in what is offered there. It's for organic gardeners and full-scale farmers alike."

While the conference has always been and always will be "for the farmers," the 2006 conference will also feature an entire workshop dedicated to the retail end of organics. This will allow farmers easy access to marketing information and further interaction with retailers and potential buyers, which can often be a vital part of growth and sustainability in organic farming.

The conference is also host to Organic University. This all-day seminar, offered on the Thursday preceding the conference, covers topics ranging from organic poultry on grass and soil improvement to advanced weed management and medicinal herbs. The course offers a chance for current and potential organic farmers to educate and learn from fellow stewards of the land. These are the connections and communications that can be hard to come by for many farmers throughout the rest of the year.

This year, aside from volunteering possibilities, MOSES is offering scholarships to cover the cost of the conference registration. This will enable even more farmers to attend that may not have had the resources in previous years.

"Attending the conference gets you back to the roots of farming," says Heilman. "Take care of the land, and the land will take care of you." ❐

Joe Riemann is a Land Stewardship Project communications intern.

The 2006 conference

The 17th annual Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference is Feb. 24-25, with "Organic University" being held Feb. 23. MOSES is now accepting volunteer and scholarship applications for the conference. For more information, call 715-772-3153 or visit www.mosesorganic.org.

Ripley Township steps ahead

By Adam Warthesen

On Dec. 5, supervisors in southeast Minnesota's Ripley Township voted to enact a comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance. The new zoning ordinance establishes guidelines for major development and includes limits on such things as large-scale livestock operations, racetracks and adult entertainment facilities.

Work began on the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance in April after over 75 percent of residents twice signed petitions calling for the township to adopt zoning regulations to address the potential negative impacts of large-scale livestock operations. Concerns focused on negative impacts to family farmers, the environment and property values.

As a result of sustained citizen engagement on behalf of their community, the Ripley Township Board adopted an interim ordinance that placed a temporary moratorium on certain major development. A planning committee of township residents was then appointed. The committee proceeded to hold bi-monthly meetings to develop a draft comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance, and after three public hearings this fall township supervisors voted overwhelmingly to adopt the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance.

"I applaud our supervisors for acting on behalf of the majority of residents and adopting planning and zoning," says Lois Nash, Ripley Township resident and planning committee member. "This is a win for local residents who believe in democracy and the fundamental right to have a say in what our community looks like in the future."

Ripley Dairy drops proposal

The action by Ripley Township to adopt a new zoning ordinance came shortly after Ripley Dairy LLP, a 3,000 animal unit factory farm proposed for the community, announced on its website and in the media its intent to withdraw the project. In addition, Ripley Dairy dropped a lawsuit against the township. The lawsuit had claimed that Ripley Township's interim ordinance did not apply to the project.

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"If this means taking away township control in the process, so be it."

—Paula Mohr, editor of the *Farmer* magazine

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This announcement and withdrawal of the lawsuit comes three years after a New Jersey investor first proposed building two factory farms in Dodge County and then focused on Ripley Township to build one mega-dairy operation. Ripley Dairy was vigorously promoted by corporations such as Land O' Lakes, Monsanto and AgStar Financial Services. Those corporations, as well as the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and commodity groups such as the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, sent representatives to meetings in the county to support the project. In one case, these outside supporters of Ripley Dairy filled so many seats at a township meeting that local residents were forced to stand. If built, Ripley Dairy would be one of the largest livestock operations in the state. The proposal was met with immediate and strong opposition from neighboring farmers and residents, many of whom are members and leaders of the Land Stewardship Project.

LSP believes that Ripley Dairy's investors have made the right decision in deciding to stop development of the industrial-scale facility. LSP's members believe that the future of the dairy industry lies with family farmers, not outside investors owning industrial-scale operations.

Is it really a dead project?

However, after making an initial announcement that they were withdrawing completely from the proposal, the investors later made public comments implying that Ripley Dairy may only be on hold temporarily.

"All options are open," Bill Rowekamp, one of the dairy's proposers, told the *Country Today* newspaper.

Proponents of Ripley Dairy and corporate agriculture's supporters are also continuing their push for the weakening of state laws governing factory farms.

In the December issue of the *Farmer* magazine, editor Paula Mohr, a critic of townships rights, called for efforts to make it easier to build large livestock facilities.

"If this means taking away township control in the process, so be it," she wrote.

It remains to be seen if Ripley Dairy will challenge the new zoning ordinance enacted by Ripley Township, but so far it appears Ripley Township has taken all the right steps in creating a zoning ordinance that will stand up to challenges under the laws of Minnesota. ❒

Adam Warthesen is an LSP Policy Program organizer. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org. For more information on Ripley Dairy, see the April/May/June 2005 Land Stewardship Letter, *page 13.*

Gov. Pawlenty proposes weakening feedlot review

By Bobby King

In 2004, Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty's Livestock Advisory Task Force created a report to guide the Governor's policy on animal agriculture. The Governor's Task Force was a who's who of corporate ag interests and came up with recommendations that undermine local democracy and environmental protections in the interest of promoting large-scale, animal confinements (see July/Aug./Sept. *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 10).

As a result, last legislative session Gov. Pawlenty proposed legislation to weaken the power of townships to enact ordinances that affect large-scale feedlots. As we reported in the last issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, the Land

Review, *see page 11…*

…Review, *from page 10*

Stewardship Project and a coalition of other organizations defeated this effort. Now the Pawlenty administration is moving forward with an effort to double the size the state's largest feedlots can be before environmental review is required.

Currently, environmental review is mandatory for proposed feedlots that are 1,000 animal units or larger. This has affected only the largest 4 percent of feedlots in the state. The Pawlenty administration is proposing to double this to 2,000 animal units. One thousand animal units is equivalent to 3,333 hogs or 714 dairy cows and is a very large operation by Minnesota standards. In fact, 83 percent of the state's livestock farms have fewer than 300 animal units, according to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

The threshold for mandatory environmental review of feedlots is set in Minnesota rules, not in legislation. That means it can be changed administratively and without legislation. The rulemaking process, however, does require public input and can be challenged through the courts. The Pawlenty administration was proposing to begin the rulemaking process at a specially scheduled December meeting of the Environmental Quality Board.

On Nov. 16, LSP, along with 26 other environmental and family farm groups, sent a letter to Pawlenty calling on him to withdraw this proposal. The letter outlined why environmental review of factory farms is critical.

Wrote the groups:

"The environmental review process plays a critical and unique role in safeguarding Minnesota's natural resources.

➔ Environmental review prevents environmental harm. Because it assesses potential environmental harm before permits are issued, it allows for environmental harm to be avoided by identifying the need for alternative designs or locations.

➔ Environmental review allows for meaningful citizen participation. Through the public comment period and a public hearing, citizens have an effective means to contribute to the process and to have concerns addressed. The permitting process often does not allow for meaningful public participation.

➔ Environmental review is comprehensive and so provides a forum for environmental issues that are not addressed in the permitting process.

➔ Environmental review provides a process for multi-disciplinary and multi-agency review of a proposed project. Environmental review allows state agencies not involved in the permitting to review and comment on projects. This allows for geologists, hydrologists, wildlife biologists and others to comment on a proposed development so that potential harm can be avoided."

(The full text of the letter is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/05/newsr_051123.htm.)

At the same time several groups sent action alerts to their members asking them to contact Gov. Pawlenty. Following this, it was announced that the December meeting was cancelled and that the proposal would be presented to the Environmental Quality Board in January at the earliest.

Environmental review of the state's largest feedlots is supported by the best science as well as common sense. Despite that, the Minnesota Legislature weakened the environmental review process significantly in 2003 when they exempted most feedlots that are less than 1,000 animal units from environmental review. The Pawlenty administration's proposals to weaken the standards even further posed a major threat to the state's environment.

This initiative is driven by corporate special interests, not the interests of family farmers and rural residents. A healthy livestock industry and meaningful environmental protection are not incompatible. Environmental review is only a problem for large-scale livestock operations that are unable to adequately demonstrate that they will not harm the local environment. Watch for upcoming action alerts on this issue. It is very possible this issue will come up during the 2006 legislative session. ❒

Bobby King is an LSP Policy Program organizer. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

LSP prepares to defeat new attacks on local control

By Bobby King

Minnesota has a heritage of strong local democracy. Accordingly, townships have the right to create local planning and zoning ordinances. Townships throughout Minnesota have used this right to enact ordinances that reflect the values of the community, including support for family farms and a respect for the environment. As part of that vision, many townships have prohibited or put limits on large-scale factory farms.

Strong local democracy is one of the most effective checks on corporate abuse of local communities. As a result, proponents of factory farms want to limit local democracy. After the Iowa Legislature exempted feedlots from local control, corporate-financed factory farms spread quickly throughout the state despite strong opposition from local farmers and rural residents. During the 2005 session of the Minnesota Legislature, the attack on local control came from Gov. Tim Pawlenty's office and powerful special interests, including the Agri-Growth Council. Right up until the end of the special session, Sen. Steve Dille (R-Dassel) pushed hard for legislation that would have weakened local control. Land Stewardship Project members made hundreds of calls, testified at legislative hearings and made it clear they want strong local control kept in place. Sen. Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls) stood up for local control and led a successful effort in the Senate to protect our rights.

Next session begins March 1

The biennial session of the Minnesota Legislature begins March 1. For more information, contact Bobby King at the Land Stewardship Project by calling 612-722-6377 or e-mailing bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

New group created to weaken township rights

For the past two legislative sessions, special interests have tried unsuccessfully to weaken Minnesota's township rights. Unfortunately, it looks like they may be gearing up to try again during the 2006

Local Control, *see page 12…*

…Local Control, *from page 11*

session, which begins March 1. Large ag interests have created a new group called the "Minnesota Farm and Food Coalition," which has released a report that attempts to blame problems in the livestock industry on township rights. This group has close ties to the Agri-Growth Council.

This new publication is similar to an Agri-Growth Council report that came out two years ago, as well as Gov. Pawlenty's 2004 Livestock Task Force report. Like those reports, this latest one singles out local zoning as a problem, with no facts to support that conclusion. Like those reports, this one ignores low prices, corporate concentration and rising land costs—the real issues that livestock farmers, especially beginning ones, are struggling with. Instead the report talks about the need for "consistency" and "predictability" when it comes to local zoning. These are code words the opponents of local control have developed for weakening township zoning.

Governor still determined to weaken local control

Gov. Pawlenty gave the state-of-the-state of agriculture address at the annual Agri-Growth Council meeting on Nov. 8. This meeting, which cost $150 a person just to get in the door, was attended by a who's who of the state's largest corporate agricultural interests. Gov. Pawlenty spoke directly about wanting to limit the rights of townships to enact local ordinances that apply to large feedlots. He made it clear that weakening township rights is still a priority for him.

You can act now to protect township rights

Now is the time to contact state decision makers to make sure this latest campaign to weaken township rights doesn't go any further. We value strong township rights in Minnesota and they should too. Let them know that you are tired of the repeated attacks on township rights and that legislation that undermines or weakens township rights should be off the table next legislative session:

➔ Call Gov. Pawlenty. He can be reached at 800-657-3717 or 651-296-3391.

➔ Call your state senator and representative. For the name and number of your state Senator, call 888-234-1112 or 651-296-0504. For your Representative, call 800-657-3550 or 651-296-2146.

For more information contact me at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org. ❒

Scorecard tells where legislators voted on environment

Key House vote on township & community rights part of scorecard.

The protection of Minnesota's natural resources took a back seat to partisan bickering this year, according to the Minnesota League of Conservation Voters 2005 Legislative Scorecard on Conservation and the Environment.

Legislators failed to pass the Clean Water Legacy Act, a widely supported plan to clean up Minnesota's polluted water. Under federal law, businesses and communities can't expand the output of wastewater treatment plants into water that is already polluted. Forty percent of the waters tested by the state already exceed pollution standards. Also, a measure requiring energy companies to increase electricity from renewable sources such as wind and solar power to 20 percent by 2020 stalled in the Senate and was defeated in the House.

A key vote on local control was part of the scorecard. In the House, Representatives Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul), Aaron Peterson (DFL-Madison), Mary Ellen Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie) and Patti Fritz (DFL-Faribault) offered an amendment on the House floor to remove language from a larger piece of legislation that would have created unnecessary roadblocks for townships and counties that want to enact local feedlot ordinances to protect their communities and land. The legislation to roll back community rights was created by Governor Pawlenty's Livestock Advisory Task Force and was carried by Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls). Ultimately, the legislation was blocked by the Senate in an effort led by Sen. Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls). This scorecard details how legislators voted on the issue of township rights as well as other key environmental and conservation issues

For a full copy of the scorecard and to see the scores of individual legislators, see www.mnlcv.org. Also, the Land Stewardship Project has copies of the report that we can mail to our members. For more information, contact LSP's Bobby King at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

Next CSP sign-up

The next sign-up for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) is expected in early 2006. To see which watersheds will be eligible for the program in 2006, see www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office for details on how to begin the sign-up process. You can also get information on how to prepare for CSP sign-up by contacting the Land Stewardship Project's Policy Program office at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org. CSP fact sheets are available at http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html. For more on CSP, see the July/Aug./Sept. 2005 *Land Stewardship Letter*. ❒

Correction

The July/August/September 2005 *Land Stewardship Letter* incorrectly reported on page 10 ("Local control remains strong") that an amendment was passed by the Minnesota Legislature that would require a public hearing and 10 days notice before an ordinance affecting a feedlot can be passed. This stipulation was already in place before the passage of the amendment.

The amendment in fact requires a public hearing and 10 days notice before a *temporary, interim* ordinance affecting a feedlot can be passed. An interim ordinance provides a township time to develop a permanent ordinance.

A step towards real food security

By Terry VanDerPol

In October the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) held its ninth annual conference in Atlanta, Ga. CFSC is dedicated to building local sustainable food systems and community self-reliance across North America. With over 325 member organizations, CFSC has diverse perspectives including sustainable agriculture, social and economic justice, nutrition, community gardening and urban agriculture.

Patty Wright of Springhill Community Farm and I represented the Land Stewardship Project at this year's conference.

The conference, entitled "It's Home Grown: Cultivating the Roots of Real Change," opened with a day of training on civil rights in nonprofit organizations, effective policy campaigns, and seed saving. The remaining time was organized along several tracks, including: a policy focus on gearing up for the 2007 Farm Bill debate; a farm to school cafeteria discussion; and a race, justice and power track with stories from communities of color, as well as a forum about 1500 years of Hopi farming.

On the second evening, the 400 participants were treated to music, storytelling by three generations of African American farm families, and local food. Farmers and vendors served food ranging from pit-roasted goat and fresh fruits piled high, to boiled greens with or without sausage and fried chicken. It was truly southern in composition and hospitality. At a booth serving boiled crawdad, a helpful gentleman was eager to demonstrate the technique. "Here," he said. "The first thing you do is you snap off the first segment and peel the shell back from the belly. Then, suck the juice out of the head..."

"Juice?" I asked, skeptically.

"No, now don't overthink this. It's real good." So, I stopped thinking about it and the "juice" hit the back of my mouth a split second ahead of my gag reflex. He was right. It was real good.

The conference provided an opportunity to learn more about one of its co-sponsors, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives. The Federation is a decades old association of cooperatives formed by African American farmers in the South. They are actively involved in low-income areas across the South, assist in the development of purchasing and marketing cooperatives and credit unions, and advocate for public policy to benefit their membership and poor rural communities. Ben Burkett and Jerry Pennick, farmers and advocates from Mississippi and Georgia, respectively, told the story of the development of a marketing cooperative that covers South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, and Louisiana that enables member-farmers to sell truckloads of fruits and vegetables in Boston and Chicago as well as to the white table cloth trade in the casinos on the Gulf Coast. "It's a lot shorter distance to service the casinos now that Katrina blew 'em across the highway," quipped Pennick.

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Clearly, many Americans are food insecure. Some simply are hungry. Many live in neighborhoods without a grocery store with a produce department.

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The aftermath of Katrina was evident at the conference. It seems to have lifted a veil off the eyes of the mainstream media, enabling it to catch a glimpse of American poverty while proving environmental problems are also social justice problems. Whether we will address the root causes of those problems remains to be seen. The CFSC Board issued a statement in which five lessons from Katrina were laid out:

➔ Dedicate more resources to ensure poor people's access to healthful foods.

➔ Reduce dependence on fossil fuels from farm to table.

➔ Create more decentralized and democratic agriculture and food systems.

➔ Protect and develop the infrastructure for regional agriculture and regional food systems.

➔ End poverty and racism for real homeland security.

Clearly, many Americans are food insecure. Some simply are hungry. Many live in neighborhoods without a grocery store with a produce department. Working class people might turn to highly processed foods with preservatives and high fructose corn syrup because they spend too much time and energy earning a living to come home and prepare whole foods. Or, for some communities, available food may be culturally inappropriate.

Providing poor and working class people and communities of color access to the great food farmers in the sustainable agriculture movement grow (as well as access to land to grow their own food) will only happen if these groups see the tremendous stake they have in this movement.

We need to build a bridge to low income and ethnically diverse communities. Perhaps a solution can be found in the observations of Ali Sharif, Project Director of Permacultura Latina America in Santa Fe. During the CFSC conference, he argued that the more developed countries of the North and the poorer countries of the South have much to gain from each other. Systemic, nature-based solutions for degraded agricultural lands being developed here in the North can benefit the South. Conversely, the South can model for us what we so desperately need—the restoration of the social fabric of the human community.

On a national level, this subtext in the stories of the African American farmers from the Federation was compelling. They harbored no illusion that access to markets for their products, timely availability of affordable inputs, or even access to USDA programs would be provided to them by any means other than their own organizing across sectors of their communities. They link themselves to each other—as well as to vendors and members of the communities around them—raising everyone's boat in the process. It's about the food, the farmers, the land and the community. That's true security. ❐

Land Stewardship Project organizer Terry VanDerPol raises beef cattle near the western Minnesota community of Granite Falls. She can be reached at 320-269-2105 or tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org.

More on CFSC

For more on the Community Food Security Coalition, see www.foodsecurity.org, or call 310-822-5410.

Brad & Leslea Hodgson

Seeing & believing

Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming

One day in 1997 Brad and Leslea Hodgson drove from their home in Minneapolis to southeast Minnesota's Fillmore County to check out a farm that was for sale. As they crossed the Root River on a blacktop road they came to a rise overlooking the former dairy farm. It had seen better days: the house was a mess and the rest of the farmstead was a hodgepodge of rusty fencing and small, slumping buildings, one of which was mounted on old herbicide containers. Showplace Acres it wasn't.

"Fortunately we aren't grossed out easily," says Leslea, 41. "If we would have been looking for something pristine, we would have been out of luck."

The couple looked beyond the shabby farmstead at the land's rolling hills and saw the makings of a beef grazing operation. They bought the 100 acres in February 1998.

When Brad, 36, worked for a Montana irrigation company in the 1980s, he loved seeing all that grass on the High Plains. He sees no reason why their farm can't have such a perennial system as its basis. "I've always dreamed of seeing all this land in grass," he says.

They rented the land out for crop production while they began the process of making it into a pasture farm.

It wasn't easy—there had not been cows on the farm since the early to mid-1990s, so even basic fencing was either lacking, or half buried in the neglected fields. "You would grab a piece of wire fence sticking out of the ground and it might not stop pulling up until you get to the north end of the farm," Brad says, only half joking.

Over the past few years, the Hodgsons have been seeding down one small field at a time, slowly converting the farm into a series of rotationally grazed paddocks.

Brad and Leslea Hodgson: "...we always wanted to make it a business. We didn't want to just live in the country," says Leslea. (*LSP photo***)**

But it wasn't just the farm that needed preparation. Both Brad and Leslea had grandparents who farmed. Despite the summers they spent on those farms while growing up, the Hodgsons admit to having little real world farm management experience, and they didn't want their love of rural living to just become some romanticized hobby.

"I wanted to get out on a farm as soon as I was old enough to move out of the house," says Leslea. "But we always wanted to make it a business. We didn't want to just live in the country."

"With an 80-acre lawn," Brad adds.

Putting it all together

So in 2000 and 2001, the Hodgsons took the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ class. Over the years, the couple had attended LSP field days on alternative livestock production techniques, but they wanted to learn more about such things as business planning and direct marketing. Leslea, who worked for years as a sign painter and took soils classes at the University of Minnesota, says they felt they had gathered a lot of good information on how to raise beef cattle on grass, but needed a way to put everything together in one place. Farm Beginnings offered a way to do that. The program provides participants an opportunity to learn firsthand about low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. Students take part in a course that teaches goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative farming techniques. Established farmers and other professionals present at the seminars and provide a strong foundation of resources and networks for those interested in farming. There are also opportunities to connect with established farmers through farm visits and one-on-one mentorships.

"There was so much information at every class pertaining to all the decisions you'll need to make putting a farm together," says Leslea. "We gained a huge network out of it."

Brad says Farm Beginnings also exposed them to a great diversity of people, who represented not only various agricultural interests, but also non-farm professions and expertise. This added greatly to the class discussions, say the Hodgsons.

They also benefited from Farm Beginnings presentations given by established farmers. Those farmers talked about how important it was to not get locked into one way of doing things, especially when it came to something as unpredictable as agriculture.

"You can plan and plan and plan and it

Fresh Faces, *see page 16…*

A fresh start on an old farm

How can you keep them down on the farm? Make it flexible.

On a summer day half-a-dozen dairy cows take advantage of an open gate on the Bill Gorman farm and make a break for the border, heading down the driveway in search of that proverbial greener pasture. Gorman mounts his lanky frame onto a mini-bike and buzzes after them, his knees flaring out from the sides clown-style. Within a few minutes the cows come jogging back up the driveway, Gorman in warm pursuit. The farmer parks the bike, shoos the cows in and shuts the gate.

"Nobody can outmaneuver me on this thing," he says with a wide grin, gesturing toward the mini-bike.

Maneuverability is the name of the game on the Gorman farm, which sits on 160 rolling acres near the southeast Minnesota community of Goodhue. At a time when an increasing number of farming operations are investing in systems that lock them into one way of doing things for decades down the road, Bill Gorman's operation is, like that speedy mini-bike, able to turn on a dime. He credits this nimbleness to a conversion to managed rotational grazing in the early 1990s. It's an example of how flexible sustainable systems can be. In fact, the operation was able to do more than change direction recently—it actually shut down operation altogether, in the process helping to get another dairy farm off the ground.

In 2001 Gorman sold his cow herd and got a town job. That part didn't surprise his family and neighbors—Gorman was in his early 50s at the time and had been around dairying since he was a child. He had taken over the farm from his father John in 1978, and he and his wife Sue had raised three children on the operation. By 2001, Sue was working in town and the children had all graduated from high school and started lives of their own.

In the late 1990s Gorman started scaling back his 50-cow herd and in 2001 sold the remaining two-dozen to a nephew, Mike Augustine, who was getting started in dairying in the neighborhood. It was nice to know the cows were going to someone in the family, but still it was strange to see an empty dairy barn that had been active since the 1940s. The land was rented out to a corn and soybean farmer.

Gorman went to work for a home medical services company based in Red Wing, a 20-minute drive from his farm. At first he liked working a regular 8 to 5 schedule. Then a larger firm bought out the company and the numbers game began: working 7 to 8, being on-call 24/7. Gorman started remembering what he liked about being a farmer: being his own boss and having control of his daily schedule.

In May 2003, at the tender age of 52, he returned to dairy farming.

"People were coming up to me and saying, 'I heard a dirty rumor that you got back into dairying. Or they'd say, 'You what?' " Gorman recalls. "Which is understandable. Most dairymen look forward to the day they turn 50 and sell the cows."

Gorman's experience is a prime example of how sustainable systems can allow a farmer to roll with the punches. He is Exhibit A of why courses like Farm Beginnings™ (see page 14) emphasize farming systems that make an operation quick on its feet, instead of bogged down in high costs, single-use facilities and markets controlled by a handful of processors. In fact, Gorman spoke about his move back into farming at a recent Farm Beginnings class. His nephew, Mike Augustine, who was taking the class at the time, made it clear to the other students that Bill's return to the cows isn't considered routine in farm country. In many rural communities, dairying has gained such a bad reputation as a line of work that's hard, stressful and lacking in financial rewards that some people consider anyone who stays on (or returns to) the farm to be lacking in viable options, or worse.

"I couldn't count on my hand how many people have said to me, 'Why the heck is he getting back into it. Is he crazy?' " Augustine told the Farm Beginnings class.

Methodical in making change

Gorman isn't crazy, and despite his willingness and ability to execute change, the farmer isn't one to make rash decisions. When he took over the farm in the late 1970s, he produced milk much like his neighbors: feeding the cows grain and forage stored in silos much of the year. In

Return, *see page 16…*

Bill Gorman: "People were coming up to me and saying, 'I heard a dirty rumor that you got back into dairying.' " (*LSP photo***)**

…Return, *from page 15*

the early 1990s, when he was switching to a system where the cows got most of their nutrition via grazing on pastures, Gorman spent a lot of time on a hill that gave him a bird's eye view of the operation. He sat up there and planned where paddocks, water lines and hay fields should go. For Gorman's land, and for him, grass-based dairying seems to be the best fit.

The farmer is convinced the highly erosive acres that make up the farm need to be covered in well-managed grass and hay. He also feels the cows are healthier out on the pasture. Grazing has allowed him to become certified organic so he can take advantage of premium prices.

"This is basically an excellent grazing farm," Gorman says as he walks past his herd and into a hillside paddock where bits of limestone poke out through the thin soil.

The farmer also says grazing is not as physically demanding on the body as conventional dairying. Since the cows are harvesting their own feed during the spring, summer and fall (Gorman feeds them bagged haylage during the winter), the farmer isn't spending long hours bouncing around on a tractor to produce field crops for feed. And because the cows rotate through paddocks on a regular basis, spreading their own manure, he doesn't have to struggle with manure storage and disposal.

If he had been highly invested in a confinement system that required lots of field and manure handling equipment, financial constraints would have shackled him to that type of dairying.

Bill also feels the two and a half years off from dairying gave him some perspective on grazing, which is a technique that's constantly evolving. Since returning to dairying, Gorman has adjusted his paddock sizes, made his watering system more efficient and focused on raising higher quality hay for the winter months.

But Gorman didn't come back from his sabbatical thinking he now knows it all when it comes to grass-based farming. The farmer belongs to a grazing group, a loose collaboration of farmers from the region who meet regularly on each other's farms to share ideas. Since he took his break from dairying, a lot more support and information is available on how to produce milk using managed rotational grazing. This is important, says Gorman. Such a system may lack a heavy investment in equipment and facilities, but it is definitely management-intensive.

"You can't write a book on grazing," he says. "Every farm is different. It's such firsthand knowledge."

Gorman has built his herd back up to 40 cows, which is a size he feel comfortable with. Does he see himself jumping out of dairying again anytime soon? No, says the farmer. The demand for organic milk is high right now, which means Gorman is receiving a good price for his product. But it also means organic milk cows are going for a high price, which gives farmers like him the flexibility to change directions in the future.

"Because I'm not invested in a lot of heavy metal, I could again sell my herd, or part of it, or expand a bit," says Gorman. "This system lets you explore your options. It's a nice way to dairy." ❐

…Fresh Faces, *from page 14*

can end up completely different," says Leslea. "I like to let life and nature show me how it's all going to go. That seems to be why things turn out different than you plan them and why you need to be flexible and innovative. There are some great ideas people are trying out there for dealing with all those surprises."

After taking the class, the Hodgsons hooked up with Arlene and Melvin Hershey, LSP members who produce eggs, poultry and specialty meats for direct marketing to consumers near St. Charles, Minn. Leslea worked for a summer with the Hersheys.

Today, almost a decade after seeing the pasture potential of a broken down farm, the Hodgsons' green dreams are closing in on reality. The land is now covered in pastures and trees, and the couple is in the process of building a brood cow herd to add value to all that grass. They have nine cows, and hope to grow the herd to 30. They got their grazing herd started in 2002 with six cows and six calves they bought with a Heifer International no-interest livestock loan. As Farm Beginnings graduates, the Hodgsons qualified for the loan, which they have five years to pay off (during the first two years, no payments have to be made).

They chose to raise Black Galloways because they have a reputation as "easy keepers"—natives of the highlands of Scotland, their thick coats make the cattle good at weathering the harsh climate of the Upper Midwest. They don't need as much backfat to keep warm, making for a leaner beef, and they make good use of poor quality grazing lands. Indeed, as the Hodgsons checked on their herd on a blustery fall afternoon recently, a cold rain lashed the hillside grazing paddock the cattle were in. But the brood cows and their calves seemed downright cozy as they moved slowly through the lush forage.

The Hodgsons are easing into marketing, and sell a few animals each year to acquaintances wanting antibiotic- and hormone-free beef. They also raise chickens and direct-market them.

Root Prairie Galloways, as their reclaimed farm is called, isn't providing a fulltime living just yet. Brad is a cabinetmaker and has been running his own custom business out of a shop on the farm for the past two years. Leslea commutes 28 miles to Rochester, Minn., to work at a Menards home improvement store.

And the farm still needs some work. The couple spent $4,000 alone for watering systems. Fortunately, they got money for fencing through the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). In addition, when the Conservation Security Program (CSP) came to the Root River watershed, the Hodgsons qualified for Tier 3, the highest level a farmer can attain. CSP pays farmers for using systems that protect and enhance the environment (see page 12). Through CSP, they will receive $60,000 over the life of a 10-year contract. That will help them further establish their managed rotational grazing system.

As they work to establish a farming system that is not only financially viable, but will be an environmental benefit to the Root River watershed, the Hodgsons realize they have some major challenges ahead. For inspiration, all they need to do is remember what the farm was like when they first set eyes on it, says Leslea.

"We like uphill battles." ❐

Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming

To read other profiles of graduates of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ program, see the Oct./Nov./Dec. 2004 issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, or log onto www.landsteward shipproject.org/programs_farm beginnings.html#profiles.

Farmland preservation tool

By Clara Muggli

Amidst the continuous spreading of the Twin Cities suburbs, Gary and Annette Gilbertson play an important role in preserving rural Minnesotan life. And having their farm's products certified by the Food Alliance Midwest is an important tool for their operation.

Mark, Annette & Gary Gilbertson (*Food Alliance Midwest photo*)

Family history surrounds their land, which is part of the historic Swedish community of Scandia, in Washington County. Gary was born across the street from their current home, on a farm that was also the birthplace of his mother and grandmother. Sixteen years ago, they bought some nearby property and started Gilbertson Farms (www.gilbertsonfarms.com), where they now grow sweet corn, vegetables and flowers that are sold to markets almost every day of the week during the growing season.

"We're here because we love the land," says Annette. Annette and Gary are constantly learning new techniques for their farm, and currently employ crop rotations, minimum tillage, drip irrigation, and green manure as sustainable ways to increase economic viability and improve their yield. Their variety of efforts has resulted in loyal customers.

"People are coming to us at the markets, looking for us," Annette says. "People have come to know who we are."

Committed to sharing their heritage of the land, the Gilbertsons have spent many years employing high school and college students, believing that the farm is an ideal place for young people to learn work ethics and self-respect. "They love being out in the field and having the satisfaction of watching something grow," says Annette, smiling. "And they're tired when they go home, so they don't have time to get in trouble." Their son Mark has finished studying agronomy and now works on the land that has been in the family for generations.

But sustainable management and student involvement are just part of the Gilbertsons' efforts to preserve the importance of the farm. As Gary explains, "This isn't a farming community anymore. The good land is in the houses."

They are both concerned about the general lack of knowledge of local agriculture, so they give farm tours, answer questions and give recipes that teach customers how to preserve fresh Minnesota vegetables for the winter.

For them, Food Alliance Midwest represents a part of that process. "We hope that it's something people will recognize," says Gary. "You'll know it's quality food." Annette agrees: "I want to be able to put that seal on my food and let people know what it stands for." ❒

Clara Muggli recently completed an internship with Food Alliance Midwest.

Food Alliance Midwest

The Food Alliance seal certifies that a farm is producing food using environmentally friendly and socially responsible practices. Food Alliance certification is available for all crop and livestock products, including fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products and meat products.

Food Alliance Midwest, based in Saint Paul, Minn., was established in 2000 by the Land Stewardship Project and Cooperative Development Services. It is the Midwestern affiliate of the Food Alliance, which is based in Portland, Ore.

Food Alliance certified products are available for sale in major cities throughout the United States and Canada in natural food co-ops and grocery stores, and in select restaurants and food service dining halls.

For more information about Food Alliance and its certification program, visit: www.foodalliance.org/midwest/partners_mw.htm, or call 651-265-3682.

From coffee beans to collard greens

Can fair trade come home to roost?

By Joe Riemann

When it was passed in 2002, the USDA Organic Rule codified organic standards on the national level. This national standard has helped make organics the fastest growing sector of the food market in the country. For farmers seeking a way out of the get-big-or-get-out rut, the organic market has provided a way to stay relatively small and still be profitable. For consumers who want chemical-free food produced in an environmentally-friendly manner, organics has made it possible to put their money where their mouths are.

But organic's success has attracted the attention of the same corporate interests that helped make conventional agriculture an unprofitable venture for family farmers. Food giants such as ConAgra and Philip Morris/Kraft are horning in, buying up organic processors left and right. On top of that Congress, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) and other pro-agribusiness interests have been working to water-down organic standards.

And for many shoppers, organic farming couldn't answer every food and farming concern. What about labor practices, for example? Or local versus international products? The organic label was never really equipped to address such concerns.

Enter fair trade

One way in which people are seeking to protect small- and mid-size farmers from the creeping industrialization of sustainable agriculture is the introduction of fair trade into U.S. agriculture. According to the International Federation for Alternative Trade, fair trade is a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers.

Fair trade is not a new concept: starting in the late 1940s, fair trade was launched with Alternative Trade Organizations (ATOs). ATOs developed in North America and Europe as a way to ensure higher prices for quality goods produced by refugees and poverty stricken communities. In the late 1980s Equal Exchange began importing fairly-traded coffee to the U.S., and soon after the development of the fair trade label was introduced in Europe. The creation of a fair trade label made it possible to assure the consumer that the product was purchased at a fair price to the producer.

Not long after the creation of a fair trade label came the Fairtrade Labeling Organization (FLO), an umbrella for all of Europe's certification organizations. FLO has transformed the marketplace for large commodity products like coffee, tea, chocolate and bananas, and has enabled farmers to get rid of middlemen.

Transfair USA is the U.S. certifying agency for internationally traded fair-trade products. It has received some criticism for the copyrighting of the "fair-trade" name, and recently certifying products from questionable producers such as Procter and Gamble. While the current fair trade program hasn't completely protected farmers from the negative elements of the global economy, the fair trade name still stands for a fair price for producers, fair working and environmental standards for the world, and a concern for the workers who are otherwise unnoticed in the global market.

Fair trade here at home

So, thanks to the pioneers of fair trade, we can buy fair trade chocolate bars and sip on fair trade lattes. But where is the fair trade produce, milk and beef? "Attempts at a domestic fair trade program in the U.S. have been slow because U.S. agriculture is not transparent enough for fair trade," says Barth Anderson, Research and Development Coordinator with the Wedge Community Co-op in Minneapolis. "There are many secrets in U.S. Agriculture that even the most well-intentioned farmers don't want told." While the U.S. does not have an official domestic fair trade program, consumer, retailer and farmer demand is drawing the possibility ever closer.

"Fair trade helps secure a fair and competitive price for the products we grow and harvest. Without an economically feasible return for our efforts we couldn't do what we are able to do," says Rufus Hauke of Keewaydin Farm in Viola, Wis. Hauke started selling his produce to the Wedge Co-op in 2004 and is one of many farmers that receive a premium price for their premium goods. "Fair trade means consumers are supporting farms within their general community who are striving to be stewards of the land."

There are no steadfast regulations for domestic fair trade, but there are a few pilot projects underway. The Twin Cities based Local Fair Trade Network (LFTN) is working towards building relationships between consumers, retailers and farmers by encouraging not only sustainable farming methods, but also sustainable working environments for employees at both the producer and retailer level. They have partnered with other such programs around the U.S. and agreed to pilot the same set of standards so the end product will be something that everyone will be satisfied with.

While these pilot projects work on hammering out a nationwide set of fair trade standards, there are other "fair trade" options for farmers and consumers. Most natural food cooperatives already implement many qualities of fair trade in their marketing practices. By setting prices at negotiated premium rates, many co-ops and farmers maintain long-lasting personal relationships.

"It serves as a real working model of a sustainable economy which is something our modern global economy has basically ignored," says Hauke.

"We want to see the farms in our community return yearly, that's why it's important to make sure we are offering a fair price to our growers and giving them what they need to be successful," says Dean Schladweiler, produce manager at the Wedge Co-op. "Buyers that ask for cheaper pricing are not just stealing from the grower, but are helping to end locally grown produce."

Many of the relationships that food co-ops like the Wedge have with farmers is an "unofficial fair trade" agreement involving contract negotiations with price weighted towards the farmers' specifications. Farmers may discuss pricing and crop projections amongst each other and

Fair Trade *see page 19…*

…Fair Trade, *from page 18*

decide for themselves what a fair deal would be for their products. The fair deal between retailers and farmers is sometimes as simple as a handshake.

Through such "fair-trade" agreements, customers are assured that they are buying an eco-friendly product, as well as given an opportunity to know the "story" behind their purchase. They also get a better understanding of where their money is going. Many Wedge Co-op shoppers recognize Greg Reynolds of Riverbend Farm, or are at least acquainted with his gorgeous greens, eggplants and peppers.

"My experience with selling directly to the co-ops and locally-owned restaurants has been great," says Reynolds. "They all pay a premium for local products, and they put up with the production problems that we have, such as bugs, weather, a short season, or non-uniform products."

The consumer is always right

Fair trade is not only about ensuring safety and fairness for farmers and workers; it's also about ensuring that there is integrity behind every link in the chain of production and sale. Customers recognize something beyond organics with every pound of PastureLand butter or Coyote Grange carrots because of the closeness between the retailer and the farmers.

These are just a few examples of how a close relationship between a farm and a retailer can provide a de facto "fair trade" culture for consumers. But such a close relationship is not always possible.

The same fair trade relationships found at co-ops can also be established with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms. CSAs allow the farmer to set membership rates that create fiscal security for the farm. They also allow for an even more direct interaction between the farmers and consumers. Many CSAs even require that members come out to the farm and work at least once in a season. Not everyone can belong to a CSA farm. A nationwide fair trade program could at least deliver the values integral to CSA farms to a larger slice of the public.

Shoppers will decide the importance of a domestic fair trade program. It's taken over 30 years for consumers to really understand the value of organic foods. It may be too much to ask consumers to go beyond the organic label and critically evaluate the decisions they are making at the check-out stand.

"The problem with previous attempts at fair trade was that they covered all the bases with the workers, the farmers, and the retailers, but they forgot to close the sale and include the consumers," says Reynolds. "If the end customer isn't on board with the program, it's all just wishful thinking."

With the organic industry growing at an unprecedented, some say "frightening" rate, many faithful consumers and farmers are wondering what will happen next. A domestic fair trade program could help make it clear that there is more to food than its pretty packaging. ❒

Joe Riemann is a Land Stewardship Project communications intern and Organic Retail Certification Coordinator at the Wedge Co-op.

More on fair trade

➔ Local Fair Trade Network, (http://localfairtrade.org/newsindex.html).

➔ Fair Trade Federation (www.fairtradefederation.org)

Opportunities Resources

Want to buy local food? Get this guide

Local Foods is a must-have resource for Minnesota consumers who want to put more local food on their table. This new guide, published by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), features sections on:

➔ Where to buy local foods, including a guide to farmers' markets, retail outlets, Community Supported Agriculture farms, etc. This section also contain some handy "local food system" definitions.

➔ How to make local food purchasing economical, including a list of 10 easy ways to add local foods to your diet.

➔ How to store local foods for year-long eating.

➔ The health benefits of local food.

This guide is also full of resources, including recipes and lists of sources of local food.

A free copy is available at www.misa.umn.edu. Paper copies can be ordered from MISA by calling 612-625-8235 or 800-909-6472. ❒

Sustainable farmers needed for new farmers' market

The Mill City Market will open in June 2006 in the train garage attached to the Mill City Museum in downtown Minneapolis near the new Guthrie Theater. Farmers who use organic and sustainable practices are invited to inquire about vending opportunities.

Interested farmers can contact Patsy Noble at 651-249-9414 or noble@farminthecity.org; or Dana Jackson at 651-653-0618 or danaj@landstewardshipproject.org. Both are members of the Mill City Market advisory committee. ❒

Food For Folk dinner this spring

Food For Folk is hosting a benefit salmon dinner this spring in the Twin Cities metro area. The April/May/June 2005 *Land Stewardship Letter* featured an article about the initiative, which is working to get local, high-quality food to low-income people. The benefit dinner will not only raise awareness and money for the Food For Folk Project, but also be a great way to enjoy a night of fabulous food, great music and enlightening speakers on sustainable farming.

Food For Folk is looking for volunteers to help organize this benefit dinner. To help out, contact Gary Brever of Ploughshare Farm at gjbrever@midwestinfo.net or 218-267-5117. Further information is also available from Sheila Barsness at 320-763-3191 (ext. 5) or Sheila.Barsness @rcdnet.net. ❒

…Pick, *from page 1*

moving into the post-agrarian age, the fact remains that we must all eat to live, and the growing amount of acreage devoted to producing sustenance is proof of that. We also all need clean air and water to live. Burgeoning demands on our land threaten these critical elements of the environment.

Proponents of corporate-controlled industrial agriculture argue that this growing pressure on our agricultural lands means we must push even harder for a brand of globalization where whoever can produce the cheapest commodities should do exactly that. These intensively managed breadbaskets will become "sacrifice zones" environmentally, goes the scenario. In return for sacrificing their land and communities, these communities will make money selling food all over the world, say globalization's boosters. Such thinking is being used to justify a host of sins in the name of global competitiveness and "feed the world" evangelism. Everything from multimillion gallon manure lagoons in rural communities to eroded cropland to contaminated water are all part of the price we pay for being part of this drive to globalize.

Pick of the Planet

This issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* describes a few examples of people who aren't willing to allow this faceless force of "globalization" to decide how their food is raised where and by whom. Ironically, they are getting their point across by embracing a form of globalization—but this globalization is not of the same pedigree being led around on a leash by the Cargills, ADMs Monsantos and ConAgras of the world. This one consists of farmers and consumers creating relationships with like-minded farmers and consumers all over the world. They are sharing ideas, sharing food, and sharing a common attachment to the land that a multinational corporation or a high-level trade mission just can't quite attain. This *LSL* shows people using local democracy to fight for their land and its resources, farmers traveling the world to learn what they have in common with other agrarians, and a family putting a new twist on what is considered "local food."

Finally, Frances Moore Lappé draws it all together by showing us how all of these stories from around the world are not "random acts of sanity." Rather, they are part of a growing movement to inject values into our global market.

— Brian DeVore

A different kind of trade mission

EDITOR'S NOTE: These days, it's not unusual to run across a farmer who has some sort of international experience. These agrarian internationalists seem to fall into three broad categories: ones that go to places like Sweden or New Zealand to learn about innovative systems like deep straw hog production or rotational grazing; those that take their own techniques abroad to help farmers in Third World countries or from the former Soviet Block learn; and those that join with other farmer-activists from all over the world to raise awareness about unjust government policies and corporate practices.

Audrey Arner would comfortably fit into all three categories. During the past 10 years, Arner, who raises grass-based beef with her husband Richard Handeen on 240 acres in western Minnesota, has traveled to Cuba to learn about its organic farming system and to Europe to see firsthand the way sustainable farmers market and label their products. She and Handeen have also hosted a farmer from Costa Rica, who is now implementing some of what he learned on his own family's operation. A year ago, the couple attended the Terra Madre "Slow Food" conference in Italy, where they shared their own experiences about developing local food systems and learned about similar initiatives arising globally. In July, Arner went to Scotland during the meeting of the G-8 Summit.

Arner, a former Land Stewardship Project organizer in our Montevideo office, recently talked to the *Land Stewardship Letter* about her experiences.

LSL: *The term globalization has become a dirty word within some family farm and sustainable agriculture circles. But recently an argument has been made that it can also create a lot of positive connections with other farmers all over the world.*

Arner: It makes me think about the Malian cotton farmer who came to visit LSP and other organizations like ours last spring. Alimata Traoré came to us because of the impoverished situation of cotton farmers in her country and surrounding countries brought about by the globalization of commodity markets, and U.S. commodities flooding the global market. This type of globalization was suppressing prices for farmers in her country to the point where they were unable to sell their cotton crop. Cotton farmers in her country can't even afford to buy medicine for their sick children, or send their kids to school. That type of globalization, which is based on serving multinational corporations, is literally costing lives.

That's one aspect of globalization, but globalization is also what brought her to us and what increased our level of awareness of this issue. As a result, members of groups like LSP and Oxfam are contacting Senators and Representatives in Congress and letting them know that subsidizing mega-cropping operations in this country at the expense of farms in countries like Mali is not acceptable. We aren't just sticking out heads in the sand and focusing on our own communities.

Globalization is also creating something positive in that regionally people are responding by creating new products, or bringing back old products, or preserving genetics and traditional means of processing. Extreme globalization tends to destroy anything that has a local or regional flavor to it. So people all over

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the world are fighting harder than ever to preserve the things that make their food and farming unique.

And there are market niches for these things that didn't exist before. I feel it's our responsibility to feed our region first and then, as Wendell Berry says, export the excess. So here in western Minnesota we would grow carrots, for example, because carrots do grow well here. And if we had carrots left over, we could ship them to northern Minnesota where perhaps carrots don't grow as well.

LSL: *What you are talking about is just the opposite of what we have—we produce for the world market and leave little fresh, local food for consumption within a rural community.*

Arner: One of my lifetime mentors used to say the closer you get to the land, the worse the food gets. That's certainly been my experience for most of my time in rural Minnesota, and I'm glad to witness that changing now.

We have local foods initiatives that are popcorning everywhere on the planet in response to globalization, Here in western Minnesota we have Pride of the Prairie, for example, which is promoting production and consumption of Upper Minnesota River Valley foods. This is just one of many such initiatives popcorning all over the world. I think it will be a persistent, quiet, but powerful emergence that will have a great capability to replace globalization as we are coming to know it.

So, it's longer term thinking to not just plug into the market forces and the production forces that exist in this time. But there are a tremendous number of people that are committed to it and committed also to the quality of food and the quality of human health, and the quality of environmental health and social health as a consequence.

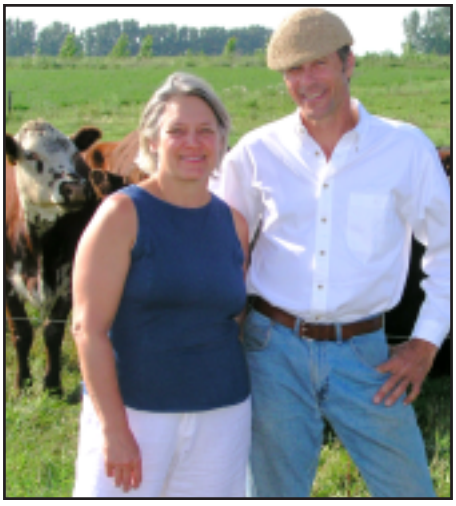
LSL*: *The spawning of local food initiatives is one thing, but being involved with something like the G-8 is a whole different ballgame.

Arner: A lot of people don't know that the G-8 is the meeting of the eight most prosperous nations in the world where very powerful, mostly men, decide futures for hundreds of millions of people. We spent most of our time in Scotland preparing for meetings with delegates from other parts of the world who were just as serious as we were about ending poverty on the planet.

And what we found out is we were preparing ourselves to get a meeting with a couple of senior White House advisers who were going to be at President George Bush's elbows the next morning when poverty in Africa was on their agenda, so we felt that was a meeting that we could not have gotten in Washington.

LSL: *That's kind of ironic. You came all that way, all these thousands of miles, to meet with someone from your own country.*

Arner: These gentlemen met with us because we were there, because we were persistent and because we communicated with them in politically appropriate channels. The leaders of our delegation included the leaders of Bread for the World, Church World Service, CARE, Oxfam, and a host of other international relief organizations who were really working together this assiduously for the first time.



Audrey Arner & Richard Handeen (*photo by Anne Borgendale***)**

LSL: *So you eventually got to talk to people at the G-8 who were at the elbows of the president. What impact did that have, if any?*

Arner: We felt fairly well listened to. There actually was a very well developed strategy to let these people know that not only are we here now, but we will be continuing to be vigilant, that people across the United States will be monitoring how the Bush administration deals with this problem of 50,000 people a day dying because they don't have enough to eat. Because if 50,000 people died in Tokyo on Sunday and 50,000 people died in Little Rock on Monday, and 50,000 people died in Winnipeg on Tuesday, and on and on throughout the G-8 countries, and then for the next week it just kept happening, people would respond.

And so with a changing nature of awareness about the depth of the poverty and the depth of devastation that is going on we have to put a stop to this. We have every capability as a civilization here on the planet to do so. It's time to stop.

LSL: *You bring up the point that it's a long term endeavor—what do we do about these people who are starving right now, who are dying every day?*

Arner: We need to cancel the debt for countries that are unable to contend with AIDs or problems from famine in their own country because they're servicing the debt to the developed countries. I don't think we deserve to be charging interest on money that was lent generations ago and is not meeting the needs of people who are hungry today.

I think we have to improve the way that we provide aid, and let countries that are in need decide whether commodities are what they need, or if money is what they need.

LSL: *As we're speaking here in early November in Minnesota the big news in agriculture is Governor Tim Pawlenty is leading a trade delegation to China to try and drum up markets for Minnesota products.*

Arner: Those people who are thinking that Minnesota's agricultural salvation will happen in a global context, they have to do what they have to do. They believe that with corn continuing to not bring a very good price, we need to sell more of it. We need to produce more of it and we need to sell more of it, in the eyes of a lot of people.

For those of us who don't necessarily take that position, we come back from international experiences like the G-8 or the Terra Madre conference and we try to talk a lot about it. We share it with our faith communities, with other community groups which whom we associate and just try and share the depth of meaning that we experience when you are really eye-to-eye with hibiscus growers from Somalia who had never stepped on concrete before. Or having dinner with Iranian nomadic pastoralists, who still for half of the year follow their flocks and whose lives depend on their animals.

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…Trade, *from page 21*

It's the kind of human experience that I suspect Governor Pawlenty will not get through shaking hands with government and business leaders.

Also, when we visit some of these other countries we get practical ideas about such things as how commerce is done, the way they do a green label, the way packaging happens, etc. That's all been really valuable cumulative information for us. When we come back to western Minnesota we try to share that information as much as possible in a way that makes a difference for the greater community. ❒

The caffeine connection

How one family is expanding our foodshed.

By Cathy Eberhart

I like to tell people that I married the "guy next door." This is amusing, of course, because I grew up in South Dakota and my husband Guillermo was born and raised in far away Honduras. But because of a twist of fate, we ended up as next-door neighbors in South Florida in the early 1990s.

During one of our first halting conversations (a mixture of Spanish and English aided greatly by a small hand dictionary), I learned that Guillermo's family raises coffee in Honduras. And now—three kids and 15 years later—I find myself the co-owner of a small fair trade coffee business: Velasquez Family Coffee. How does one go about starting such a venture?

For years, we talked about selling here in Minnesota the coffee raised by Guillermo's father and brothers. Coffee prices had plunged on the open market and they were thinking they might have to abandon their farms. We felt by bringing their coffee here and marketing it directly, we could greatly improve on the 30 cents per pound that they were receiving in the open market (that price didn't even cover their costs). Was there a way to sell their coffee directly to customers here and keep the profits in the family?

We started slowly, first bringing back small bags of coffee in our luggage when we visited, searching out roasters that were willing to deal with small batches, giving coffee away as gifts and then tentatively offering it for sale to friends and family and co-workers. We were fortunate to hear about European Roasteries, a specialty coffee roaster in LeCenter, Minn., that now does all of our roasting and packaging and has offered us invaluable advice as well.

Thanks to Guillermo's cousin, we learned a bit about the complex logistical realities of international trade and imported our first batch of 1,000 pounds of green coffee in 2001, our second batch of 5,000 pounds in 2002 and just this past summer our third shipment of 12,000 pounds.

Our sales haven't really grown in such an exponential way as this might suggest, but rather slowly and steadily. Working at Land Stewardship Project as I do, it was natural that we have modeled our marketing efforts on those of direct marketing farmers here in Minnesota. The bulk of our sales continue to be individuals—friends, family, co-workers, people in our church and school, and, through word of mouth, people our customers know.

Coffee, *see page 23…*

Pick of the Planet

The extended Velasquez family processes the fruits of a coffee harvest. (*photo by Cathy Eberhart*)

…Coffee, *from page 22*

In 2002, we started a monthly home delivery service in Saint Paul and Minneapolis and a monthly mail coffee subscription for people further away, which brings our coffee conveniently to the homes of about 50 families every month. A year ago, we started a fundraising partnership with our boy's public school. Over the years we have also established connections with local farmers and a few retailers that sell our coffee.

In short, we have built a small business from an idea, and although we have a long way to go, we have come a fair distance as well.

Alicia, the daughter of Cathy Eberhart and Guillermo Velasquez, checks out a trail on the family coffee farm during a recent trip to Honduras. (*photo by Cathy Eberhart*)

A close relationship

We find that the thing our customers seem to appreciate the most is the direct connection to the family that grows their coffee. We keep this personal connection current through a monthly e-mail newsletter with news from the farm and our website that features pictures of the Velasquez family and the farms where the coffee is grown.

Our customers also appreciate the efforts our family members take to farm in ecologically sound ways—not using chemical fertilizers or pesticides, maintaining the forest canopy of older trees above the coffee plants, reducing erosion by maintaining green ground cover between the plants, and other labor intensive practices that are rarely rewarded in conventional coffee markets.

What truly is local?

As a result of my chance encounter 15 years ago with "the guy next door," the international has become intensely personal for me. Honduras is no longer a mysterious Central American country known only indirectly through the Contra wars of the 1980s and vague images of poor people and large banana companies. It has become a second home and the people there are now beloved family members.

But if you think about it, my experience is really not that unique. The globalization of our economy has made all of us much more connected to people around the planet, although arguably in much less personal ways. The clothes we wear, the toys we play with and much of the food we eat is increasingly from far away. Because of continued immigration to the United States, many of you have neighbors and friends from other countries too.

• • •

Because of this understanding of an increasingly interconnected global community, I've often struggled with the idea of "buying locally."

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Because of this understanding of an increasingly interconnected global community, I've often struggled with the idea of "buying locally." Of course, I completely understand purchasing my food closer to home so that transportation costs are reduced, so that produce is fresher and better tasting, so that my dollars are more likely to be reinvested back into my community.

But perhaps because of the various places I've lived, my loyalties extend beyond my hometown, beyond my state, beyond even my country. I want the people of South Dakota and Florida and Honduras to have good jobs too. And from a purely selfish perspective, I want to keep eating bananas, oranges and chocolate and, of course, drinking coffee each morning—all things we cannot produce here in Minnesota.

I think the answer lies in guiding our buying decisions with our values. To think of the unknown woman who sewed our T-shirt or the unknown man that picked our bananas as our neighbor—someone that we care for, someone that we want the best for. And to push ourselves to learn more about how our purchase impacts their lives. To quote Frances Moore Lappé: "Every time that you and I shop, save, invest, we are either creating the world in decline or the emerging world that reflects our values."

I'm honored to have played a role in helping make a world that reflects my values. ❒

Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator. She can be reached at 651-653-0618 or cathye@landstewardshipproject.org. For more on her family's coffee operation, see www.vfamilycoffee.com.

Local democracy takes on a global giant

What happens when a multinational corporation turns a government against its own people?

By Jim Fassett-Carman

This fall, a community activist from India came to the Twin Cities with an important message: don't allow multinational corporations to take control of one of life's most precious public resources. Sandeep Pandey, convener of the National Alliance of People's Movements, was talking about water, and how the world's largest producer of non-alcoholic drinks, Coca-Cola, is sucking aquifers dry in India, all in the name of profits.

"The corporations have changed the relationship between human beings and water," he said. "Before we only took what we needed. Now we are taking water for greed, and not for need."

Pandey was talking about India, water and Coke. But that statement could just as well have been describing any situation, or location, where a corporation has gained control over a public resource for private gain. Allowing Coke to get away with abusing Indian water sets a precedent for similar exploitation by other corporations in other spots on the globe, including here in the Midwest.

Guzzling a public resource

In November 2004, as a representative of Corporate Accountability International, I visited villages being ruined by Coke's seemingly insatiable thirst. I saw how water tables have been lowered by as much as 40 feet, threatening agricultural production (70 percent of Indians rely on farming for a livelihood) and the basic survival of families. The irony of all this is that in India water has traditionally been relatively available, what with high water tables and residents only taking what they needed. Coca-Cola has taken advantage of loopholes in Indian law and gained control of water supplies that are supposed to be public property.

This has global implications. Imagine you live in a family of six. If your home were a microcosm of the world population, someone in your family wouldn't have access to safe drinking water. Another wouldn't have enough clean water for cooking and bathing. The United Nations says by 2025 more than two-thirds of the world will not have enough access to water. According to *Fortune* magazine, "Water promises to be to the 21st century what oil was to the 20th: the precious commodity that determines the wealth of nations."

Pick of the Planet

It is no accident that even as it drains aquifers in places like Kala Dera, India, Coke is selling bottled water under the Dasani, Dannon and Evian brand names. Bottled water is the fastest growing sector of the U.S. beverage market and is a $55 billion a year business globally. Coke, Pepsi and Nestlé alone control almost half of our country's bottled water market. Bottled water can go for the equivalent of about $15 a gallon—many times the price we pay for gasoline.

In rural India, water has traditionally been available to everyone in the community via public taps. (*photo by Jim Fassett-Carman***)**

Like air, water should be available as a human right. But a corporation like Coke can intimidate governments into allowing it to drain aquifers, meanwhile putting local purveyors of beverages out of business. I saw firsthand while in India how even local authorities can turn against their own people. For 10 days last year, I marched 130 miles with farmers and other rural citizens, including Sandeep Pandey, to publicize how Coke's bottling plants were using up local water. It was a peaceful march, but it turned ugly when we approached Mehdiganj, near the holy city of Varanasi. Police confronted about 1,500 marchers 400 yards from a Coke plant, and after a three-hour standoff, began beating them with batons. Hundreds of people were arrested, and there were charges later of police brutality at the local jail.

I grew up in India as the son of medical missionaries and have seen what scarcity of water can mean when entire communities depend on a few wells or hand pumps for their water. I was shocked at the brutality of the police in shielding Coke from demands by the community for accountability and control of local water.

Local democracy strikes back

But in retrospect maybe the violence was not so surprising, considering what's at stake. Federal officials, as well as the courts, are taking notice. Progressive laws such as India's "Right to Information Act" have recently been passed.

While in Minnesota, Pandey talked about the importance of local grassroots action. Federal laws governing corporate behavior help, but are vulnerable to corruption. Officials elected by engaged local residents are less vulnerable to being intimidated and bribed into doing things that hurt the community. Experience has shown that in parts of India

Coke, *see page 25…*

…Coke, *from page 24*

where grassroots people power is the strongest, corruption is the lowest.

"I say the people who are affected by this must get involved in the solution," says Sandeep. "Until there is a strong people's movement to hold officials accountable, federal laws will do little good."

In fact, in at least two villages where water is being turned into "The Real Thing," newly elected officials are now putting in place local ordinances that restrict how much water corporations like Coca-Cola can take. Change is starting to happen from the ground up.

During the 10-day march to protest Coke's water use, participants stopped in villages along the way to hold public meetings. In parts of India where grassroots people power is the strongest, corruption is the lowest. (*photo by Jim Fassett-Carman***)**

Power of the pocketbook

But even the strongest grassroots movement can't stand forever against a corporation like Coke. In fact, here in Minnesota townships that resist the construction of resource-hungry mega-factory farms find themselves targeted by agribusiness and its political partners in Saint Paul.

Citizens fighting large corporations need the help of the very people who make those firms wealthy. That's where you and I come in. Boycott Coke and tell it to stop stealing water from communities. And buy products from local producers who are not exploiting the earth's resources for profit.

Water, whether it's here or in India, is truly the "Real Thing," and that makes it too valuable to be owned by private corporations. ❒

Land Stewardship Project member Jim Fassett-Carman is a community organizer living in Minneapolis.

Sandeep Pandey was awarded the Magsaysay Award (also known as the Asian Nobel Prize) for Emergent Leadership in 2002. He is Co-Founder of Asha for Education, and a member of the Government of India's Central Advisory Board on Education.

A peaceful march turned violent when local police started beating people within sight of a large Coke plant. (*photo by Jim Fassett-Carman***)**

Liquid assets

Corporate Accountability International (formerly Infact) is undertaking a worldwide campaign to make corporations accountable on the issue of water.

For more information, go to www.stopcorporateabuse.org or call 1-800-688-8797.

Saving global capitalism from itself

Lappé talks about the need for injecting values into the market.

A type of market economy that is based on the idea of highest return to existing wealth is spreading all over the world. It's a narrow, "one-rule" interpretation of how the market should operate—so narrow that it precludes inclusion of any type of belief system based on a desire for social justice, to feed the hungry, or to protect the land for future generations.

This, says Frances Moore Lappé, is the world we live in today. But the anti-hunger activist and author says we need not accept this magic of the market "mental map" as inevitable. Indeed, we are seeing examples in the country and across the globe of people who are infusing the market with values important to them, and in the process saving the market from destroying itself.

"I'm convinced human beings didn't evolve to be spectators, couch potatoes, whiners, blamers. We wouldn't have made it to where we are if that was really reflective of our nature," says Lappé. "People are waking up." And, she adds, the first thing people do when they wake up is reject the idea that the magic of the market will serve all their needs. These people are taking control of the way their community governs and makes decisions.

Lappé was in Minnesota on Nov. 18 to speak at a Land Stewardship Project fundraiser. She is the author or co-author of 15 books, including the bestseller *Diet for a Small Planet*, and her latest, *Democracy's Edge: Choosing to Save Our Country by Bringing Democracy to Life*. She is the co-founder of two national organizations that focus on food and the roots of democracy. Lappé is the fourth American to receive the "Right Livelihood Award," also known as the "Alternative Nobel."

Thin democracy & empty plates

During the more than three decades that she has worked to find answers to our world's hunger problems, Lappé has tried to figure out why so many people starve on a planet that has the potential to produce and distribute more than enough food for everyone. Using a combination of facts, analysis and storytelling that features real people, Lappé has laid out a strong argument that lack of democracy is a main culprit in our hunger problem. Indeed, during her LSP talk and in an interview earlier in the day, she spoke extensively about the role "thin democracy" plays in creating so much hunger in the world.

Pick of the Planet

Thin democracy is based on the idea that as long as we have the simple combination of elected government and a market economy, everything is fine. The problem is that the market concept we have hung our hat on is based on one rule: highest return to existing wealth. Such a market system makes concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands inevitable, and such concentration contaminates our electoral system. The result is we are all boiled down to being selfish accumulators who feel so flawed that we turn everything over to the "magic of the market," says Lappé.

• • •

"Of course, the consequences of this thin democracy notion of the one-rule economy means that the market, which we prize for its openness and competitiveness, ends up killing itself."

• • •

"Of course, the consequences of this thin democracy notion of the one-rule economy means that the market, which we prize for its openness and competitiveness, ends up killing itself."

We've seen this competitiveness killed in the grain trade, with two companies controlling almost half the grain in the world. We even see it in the grocery trade, where consumers have an illusion of choice, even though a handful of corporations control those choices.

"We walk into a food market and see 30 to 40,000 food items and we think how we really live in a competitive market because what we don't see is 10 corporations bringing us half of those items," says Lappé. "We are blinded to the degree of concentration and the consequences of it."

One direct consequence is the obesity epidemic in this country. Because there is an overabundance of corn, there are large stockpiles of cheap corn fructose syrup. In a market economy where the only rule is to get the greatest return, it makes sense for corporations to make corn fructose syrup a ubiquitous ingredient, despite the growing body of evidence showing it to be a major contributor to obesity and other health problems.

"If you are a CEO and your job is to bring highest return to existing wealth, what do you do? You use the cheapest commodities," says Lappé.

Thin democracy has concentrated money to the point where 691 people control more wealth than three billion citizens (half the world's population) earn in a year, according to *Fortune* magazine.

Such concentration of wealth leads to concentration in who our elected lawmakers represent as well. Just as a fully stocked supermarket can lead to an illusion of consumer choice, a capitol building full of elected representatives creates a false belief that we have dispersal of power.

"So we have today 56 lobbyists walking the halls for every one representative you and I have up there to represent us," Lappé says. "So this is what thin democracy leads to. It is always vulnerable to a takeover by a narrow representative group."

The good news

In her travels around the world, Lappé has documented several examples of communities putting "living democracy" into action and injecting values into the marketplace. She says living democracy cannot be distilled down to a simple template or "ism."

"Democracy is what we do, driven not

Lappé, *see page 27…*

…Lappé, *from page 26*

by any random way, but by core values."

In her writing and talks, Lappé describes those values being realized in the form of, for example, groups that are planting trees in Kenya, reclaiming land in Brazil and using cooperative marketing to get a fair price for farmers in Wisconsin.

Lappé also describes how a group of Land Stewardship Project members in Minnesota's Dodge County infused values into the marketplace when they successfully fought a proposed mega-dairy in their community (see page 10). Lappé met with some of the citizens while she was writing her book and was impressed with their refusal to be pressured into thinking the dairy had to be built because it would supposedly make the community and the state's milk industry more globally competitive.

"I was so encouraged by listening to their story of regular people recognizing that some things are more important than commodity exchange, and one of those things is healthy rural community life, and it's not just up for the highest bidder."

Evan Schmeling and Lois Nash presented Frances Moore Lappé with a photo of rural Dodge County residents confronting a tour that was promoting a mega-dairy for their community. To see the photo, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/04/newsr_040811.html. (*LSP photo***)**

The need for stories

If living democracy is to spread, stories like the one of the Dodge County residents resisting the mega-dairy must be repeated, Lappé argues. People are social mimics and gain courage and inspiration from seeing and hearing about people who have risked humiliation, embarrassment, ostracism and worse to stand up for their core values. Sharing stories about democracy in action helps people fill the need to "connect and affect," says Lappé.

"If we feel we are just part of some random protest action, that's very disempowering," she says, adding that people need to see themselves as part of a movement. "These are not random acts of sanity."

After Lappé's Nov. 18 talk, Dodge County residents Evan Schmeling and Lois Nash provided the standing room only audience a glimpse at what living democracy in action looks like. They presented Lappé a photograph of a group of the residents confronting a corporate agribusiness tour of the county and talked about how the community worked together to fight the mega-dairy. Schmeling, who farms in Dodge County, said facing the prospect of being next door to one of the largest livestock facilities in the state was scary for him and his neighbors, especially when large agribusiness firms such as Land O'Lakes and Monsanto, as well as Minnesota Department of Agriculture officials and pro-factory farm lawmakers, showed up in the county to support the mega-dairy. Resisting these powerful interests didn't come easily for the rural residents.

"Most of us are pretty much ordinary citizens. We don't do this everyday," he said. "When this comes knocking on your door, you need help and we found it in the Land Stewardship Project."

During the battle with the dairy, connections between neighbors became more important than ever, recalled Schmeling.

"I think when all the smoke clears and the dust settles there's only one thing that's important, and that's how we treat each other. It's what happens. And when something happens to you what do you do then? And this is where democracy comes in. It's our ability...to stand up and be heard and that's exactly what happened." ❐

For more on Frances Moore Lappé's work, see www.democracysedge.org.

To listen to Lappé's Nov. 18 LSP talk, as well as portions of an interview she did while in Minnesota, download LSP's *Ear to the Ground* podcast from www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html. Shows 1-3 focus on Lappé's work.

Reviews

The Long Emergency

Surviving the Converging Catastrophes of the Twenty-first Century

By James Howard Kunstler
2005; 320 pages; $23 (hardcover)
Grove/Atlantic
841 Broadway, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10003
www.groveatlantic.com

Reviewed by Patrick Deninger

When the original *Matrix* movie premiered in 1999, many viewers described the intense sensation of leaving the theater and seeing the world, as the main character had seen his, in disquieting new ways.

All life was an illusion. Everything presumed permanent was not. Layers of lies obscured the truth. And our own ignorance and willingness to be diverted from that truth had led us to this point.

Most alarming about the "*Matrix* effect" was the understanding that, once you had these insights, you never again could pretend everything would be fine. In fact, you now knew your very survival was in doubt.

Welcome to the first five pages of James Howard Kunstler's *The Long Emergency: Surviving the Converging Catastrophes of the Twenty First Century*. And it gets grimmer from there.

Depending on your news-watching habits, how much you love your children and your general mental health (I'm not kidding), *The Long Emergency* will be:

➔ a plausible set of energy concerns that, despite the author's pessimism, we will solve as a society;

➔ a prolonged harangue by an "over-educated elitist," "racist" and "shallow, obnoxious jerk" (as various online reviewers have described Kunstler);

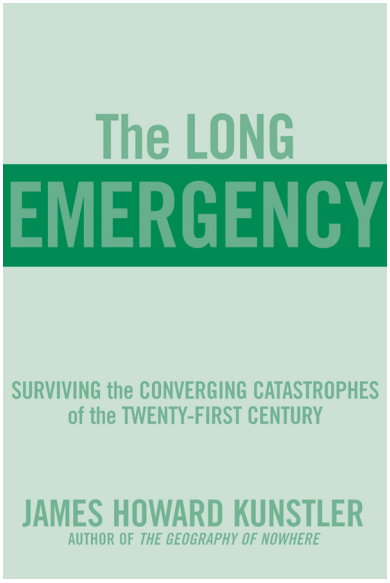
➔ a dead-serious, curl-up-in-a-ball scare whose predictions are occurring in real time on our televisions, and giving us the first foreboding glimpses of an arduous, petroleum-less future.

Kunstler's arguments are complex and lengthy, but begin with science he says proves we're past the peak of our ability to economically extract oil from the Earth. What remains we can't extract, refine or transport cheaply enough to satisfy our global growing thirst.

Kunstler builds on the anti-suburban arguments he first addressed in *The Geography of Nowhere*, and reminds us here that "half the U.S. population lives in [suburbia.] The economy of recent decades is based largely on the building and servicing of it. And the whole system will not operate without...cheap oil and natural gas."

Deviations from low-cost petroleum "will crush our economy and make the logistics of daily life impossible," he writes.

As *The Long Emergency* begins and advances, humanity doesn't fare well. "A lot of people will go hungry in the decades ahead and many of them will die."



Science and technology—long considered our savior—may eke out a few more miles per gallon from our vehicles, but technology runs the fuel, it isn't the fuel itself.

The same for alternative fuels powering any of our systems, the author says. Nearly all depend on petroleum to manufacture or maintain their operations. Coal and nuclear power are the exceptions, but each brings with it environmental costs.

It doesn't get better from there. Long before the oil runs out, Kunstler says, whole regions of the country artificially supported by petroleum to cool (or heat) homes and buildings and irrigate fields and yards will begin fighting for resources or will lose those battles and will wither and die. Residents of these regions will flee to more livable regions. Local, state and national governments—grossly at fault for permitting the current arrangements, he says—will have no ability to handle this crisis.

In 2005, it became almost de rigueur to talk about energy shortages. Chevron even introduced an ad campaign educating us that "the era of easy oil is over," which mirrors Kunstler's more-caustic belief that the "fiesta of cheap oil" is history.

The difference is telling: Chevron suggests we must find our way from the low-cost energy era to the more-expensive energy era, all the while (mostly) maintaining our way of life.

Kunstler says that way of life is over. The decades ahead will cost us our hyper-mortgaged wealth, our freedoms and perhaps even our lives.

I find myself believing Kunstler on many points, perhaps a bit too much, and in no small part because my anti-suburban, anti-corporate-agriculture beliefs are similar.

What sealed my belief, though, was another *Matrix*-like epiphany.

I began reading *The Long Emergency* in late spring, but put it down four-fifths complete as summer arrived. Nice weather beckoned and I no longer was interested in Kunstler's gloom and doom. I looked forward to flying to Seattle to see family and the long drive north to canoe and camp for a week in pristine wilderness—both commonplace, but petroleum-based outings.

Then came the increasing violence in Iraq, the steady rise in gas prices and a national dialogue that at first seemed confident we could continue to live wantonly. As weeks passed, though, that dialogue grew tentative, even nervous. Along the streets and highways of western Wisconsin, F-150s and Silverados began appearing with FOR SALE signs on their windshields (never a good sign when rural America begins selling its chief transportation).

Then came Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and images of people once escaping on log-jammed roads. Many vehicles were overheating or running out of gas, and drivers were resorting to pushing them to safety. Remember: technology needs fuel to run.

The stories and these images from Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi defy easy categorization, but after reading *The Long Emergency* they all seemed

Long Emergency *see page 29…*

…Long Emergency, *from page 28*

strangely—recently—foretold, in concert with one another in ways beyond the current disaster and beyond the debates about class, race or poverty.

Whether smart, savvy or just lucky in his timing, Kunstler has put together a cohesive, terrible vision of our future: We can turn on our TVs and watch it sweep over us like the outer edges of an approaching storm.

Reason for hope

So if you accept Kunstler's vision, it seems reasonable to look with dismay at what we've done to ourselves and what lies ahead.

Or perhaps not.

In the final chapters of the book, Kunstler argues that "American life in the 21st Century has the best chance of adjusting to the Long Emergency in a physical pattern of small towns surrounded by productive farmland."

That will sound familiar to Land Stewardship Project supporters, who've long believed such food systems and their supportive, progressive communities are the best local hope.

Imagine if, by the efforts of LSP and many others, but also shoved forward by our worst habits and practices of the last century, this sustainable vision becomes our best national hope? Our best (and perhaps only) national model?

What if agriculture accomplished around the edges of, and practiced in defiance of, industrial agriculture is all that's left standing after the Long Emergency?

Kunstler says we can either try to shape that future, or it simply will be foisted on us. Either way, he still retains a vestige of optimism.

He writes: "The survivors will have to cultivate a religion of hope—that is, a deep and comprehensive belief that humanity is worth carrying on. If there is any positive side to stark changes coming our way, it may be in the benefits of close communal relations, of having to really work intimately (and physically) with our neighbors, to be part of an enterprise that really matters and to be fully engaged in meaningful social enactments instead of being merely entertained to avoid boredom. Years from now, when we hear singing at all, we will hear ourselves, and we will sing with our whole hearts."

That last sentence is as beautiful as any found in a Wendell Berry poem, and they don't appear often enough here.

Kunstler's manner and writing style in *The Long Emergency* may not suit everyone, but his ideas shouldn't be dismissed. We may regret it if we do, and lose nothing if we do not. ❒

Patrick Deninger lives in Trempealeau Township, Wis.

Opportunities Resources

Stay current with

LIVE-WIRE

Sign up for *LIVE-WIRE* to get regular e-mail updates and news from the Land Stewardship Project. Get connected to information and activities related to land stewardship, local food and grassroots organizing.

To subscribe, call Louise Arbuckle at 651-653-0618 or e-mail lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org and put in the subject line "Subscribe LIVE-WIRE." ❒

Myth Busters online

The *Land Stewardship Letter*'s popular "Myth Busters" series (see page 4) is now on our website. These fact sheets address some of the misrepresentations circulated by supporters of corporate-controlled industrial agriculture. To download them in pdf format, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.html. ❒

LSP launches audio magazine podcast

The Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* audio magazine is now available on our website. This podcast features interviews, reviews and special features related to LSP's work. *Ear to the Ground* was launched in December with a three-part series on Frances Moore Lappé's visit (see page 26) and the idea of "living democracy."

Despite the name, you do not need an iPod to listen to a podcast such as *Ear to the Ground*. Using programs that are often available for free via the Internet, *Ear to the Ground* can be listened to through a computer or MP3 player. Programs can also be recorded onto CDs or cassette tape so they can be played later in a car or on a portable boom box.

For a step-by-step guide on how to subscribe to the free *Ear to the Ground* service, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html.

Ear to the Ground is a new endeavor for LSP, and we're looking for feedback on its content, as well as how user-friendly it is. We also welcome story ideas for the podcast. For more information, contact Brian DeVore at 612-729-6294 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

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"Diversity leads to stability."

—farmer Mike Rupprecht, speaking in *Ear to the Ground* No. 4

Opportunities Resources

Organic farm business planning help

A new Minnesota Department of Agriculture program will pay 80 percent of the cost for certified organic farmers to enroll in the statewide Farm Business Management program. Through this program, farmers work one-on-one with a Farm Business Management instructor and learn to use specialized farm financial management software called FINPACK and a benchmarking database called FINBIN.

For more information, contact Minnesota Department of Agriculture Organic and Diversification Specialist Meg Moynihan at 651-297-8916, or visit www.mda.state.mn.us. ❒

Online energy calculator

The Energy Estimator (http://ecat.sc.egov.usda.gov) is a free online tool for calculating the diesel fuel usage and costs associated with various tillage practices.

The Estimator, which was developed by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, compares potential energy savings between conventional tillage and alternative tillage systems. ❒

Milk check 'assignment' guide

Many dairy farmers have part of every milk check paid directly to their creditors through something known as "assignment."

A booklet to help dairy farmers understand their legal rights and responsibilities when they assign part of their milk check has been published by the Farmers' Legal Action Group, in cooperation with the Minnesota Family Farm Law Project. It provides information on things dairy farmers may want to consider before they agree to assign part of their milk check. The booklet also discusses options for farmers who have made an assignment and then, due to changing milk prices or variable weather conditions, find that there is not enough money left for them to run the farm and live on after the assignment is taken.

Making the Most of Your Milk Check: What Dairy Farmers Need to Know about Assignments is available at www.flaginc.org/pubs/arts/Dairy2005.pdf, or by calling 651-223-5400. Minnesota farmers may request a free copy by calling 877-860-4349. ❒

Membership Update

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

By Cathy Eberhart

As a grassroots organization, Land Stewardship Project is only as strong as the people that stand behind us, work side-by-side with us and pull us forward into important new directions.

Judging from the significant work that has been accomplished this past year, it is clear there are a lot of dedicated and committed people that make up LSP. We want to express our deepest appreciation.

First and foremost, we are extremely grateful for the faithfulness of all of our members. To all of you who have stood with us loyally for years as well as to those of you who have just recently joined: thank you. We couldn't do it without you.

We would also like to highlight here some of the many folks that over this past year served on steering committees, helped in our offices and played important leadership roles. We don't have space here to provide details about the many things that they have done, and many people could be listed under multiple headings. The point is, the work they have done is substantial and we are grateful.

Of course, because there are so many people that are involved, we are sure to have left someone off. Please know we are thankful for all of you!

Montevideo office

John Schmidt
Jeff Ilaug
Ardie Eckart
Sue Gilbertson & Residents of Copper Glen
Donna Krueger
Anne Borgendale
Colleen Borgendale
Judie Rosendahl
Vicki Poier
Mike and Elaine DeJesus
Phyllis Youngren

Lewiston office

Arlis Ellinghuysen
Jean Larson
Ardis Helland
Dorothy Pollema
Jennifer Peterson
Ashley Benson
Barb Nelson
Jennifer Rupprecht
Joe Morse
Roger Benrud
Vic Ormsby
Jennifer Mark

White Bear Lake office

Olivia Holter
Gina Johnson
Susan Stewart
Karly Turner
Caleb Werth
Heidi Wise

Board of Directors

JoAnne Rohricht
Jim VanDerPol
Char Brooker
Dennis Johnson

Membership, *see page 31…*

…Membership, *from page 30*

Mary Tacheney
Bruce Vondracek
Dan Guenthner
Lou Anne Kling
Jim Erkel
Sandy Olson-Loy
Bonnie Haugen

Pride of the Prairie Program
Wendy Lange
Richard Handeen
Mike Jacobs
Jeremy Lanctot
Kay Fernholz

Farm Beginnings Program
Pat Bailey
John Bedtke
Dan French
Arlene Hershey
Eric Klein
Dan Miller
Jim & Tara Scaife
Chuck Schwartau
Mark Simon
Rhys Williams
Bill McMillin
Carmene Pangrac
Bonnie Austin
Bets Reedy
Bob Petit
Dennis Rabe
Jerry Wiebusch
Prescott Bergh
Chris Blanchard
Richard Ness
Audrey Arner
Paul & Ramona Garver
Kent Goplen
Bob Padula
Don Struxness
Ed Rademacher
Lyle Kruse
Wendy Lange
Bill Rois
Mark Rekow
Jim VanDerPol
Loel Gorden
Kay & Annette Fernholz
Dennis Johnson

Policy Program
Jim & Joan Joens
Rich & Linda Smith
Dan French
Bill Gorman
Dan Specht
Jeff Klinge
Greg & Kayla Koether
Dave Serfling

Land Stewardship Letter
Jason Abraham
Patrick Deninger
Diane Kirchmann-Wood
Susan Maas
William Peterson
Joe Riemann
Sean Sheerin

If you would like to get more involved in the coming year, we welcome you to give a call to the LSP office nearest you. ❒

Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator. She can be reached at 651-653-0618 or cathye@landsteward shipproject.org.

Ina Irene Peterson: 1930-2005

Ina Irene Peterson died on Dec. 4 after a long illness. She was 75. Ina was the wife of Ken Peterson, who served on the Land Stewardship Project's Board of Directors from 1998 to 2003.

She farmed with Ken near the northeast Minnesota community of Tamarack and was an active member of the Northeast Minnesota Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association, as well as the Minnesota Farmers Union. ❒

Lawrence Peterson remembered

Land Stewardship Project member Jean Greenwood recently gave LSP a monetary gift in memory of her father, Lawrence W. Peterson, who was born in 1917 and died this summer. Some of the gift was used to purchase LSP memberships for Lawrence's three children. Jean sent us this note with her gift:

"Dad was a Minnesota farm boy from North Branch, a Swede who farmed a few years himself before moving to the city. He was a lifelong lover of the land, avidly gardening and tree planting on his acre lot in Roseville, and he was a believer in organic methods and the importance of the small family farm. He always felt a strong kinship with the earth and its creatures. In his eyes, it was God's creation. Growing things was his delight and spiritual practice, and he fed the birds to the end of his days. He died at peace, sitting in a garden on a sunny August afternoon."

Support LSP in your workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 20 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer work-place giving as an option in making our communities better places to live.
Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to

MINNESOTA Environmental Fund
www.mnenvirofund.org

- promote the sustainability of our rural communities and family farms;
- protect Minnesotans from health hazards;
- educate citizens and our youth on conservation efforts;
- preserve wilderness areas, parks, wetlands and wildlife habitat.

You can support LSP in your workplace by giving through the Minnesota Environmental Fund. Options include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project. If your employer does not provide this opportunity, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it. For more information, call 651-653-0618 or e-mail lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org.

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

➔ *JAN. 9-FEB. 10*—**"Family Farms & Rural Communities: A Tribute" art show**, Northfield, Minn. (see page 5)

➔ *JAN. 11-12*— **2nd Annual Illinois Organic Production Conference**, Bloomington, Ill.; Contact: **www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/orgconf**

➔ *JAN. 13-14*—**Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference—Growing our Future: Tools & Inspiration for Beginning & Transitioning Farmers (featuring LSP's Kate Twohig speaking on Farm Beginnings™)**, Des Moines, Iowa; Contact: www.practicalfarmers.org; 515-232-5661 (ext. 108)

➔ *JAN. 17-18*— **Illinois Specialty Crop Conference, featuring LSP's Ray Kirsch speaking on Food Alliance Midwest**, Springfield, Ill.; Contact: www.specialtygrowers.org

➔ *JAN. 20*—**Twin Cities opening of the film *The Real Dirt on Farmer John***, Minneapolis (see page 5)

➔ *JAN. 20-21*— **Minnesota Organic Conference**, St. Cloud Civic Center; Contact: 651-296-7686

➔ *JAN. 20-22*— **Wisconsin School for Beginning Market Growers**, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Contact: 608-262-5200 or www.cias.wisc.edu/marketgrower.php

➔ *JAN. 25-28*— **Ecological Farming Conference with the theme, "Savoring Connections from Seed to Table"**; Pacific Grove, Cal.; Contact: www.eco-farm.org; 831-763-2111

➔ *JAN. 27-28*—**8th Annual Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference,** Eau Claire, Wis.; Contact: 715-834-9672; www.rivercountryrcd.org/valad.htm

➔ *JAN. 28*—**Sustainable Farming Association of Northeastern Minnesota Annual Meeting**, Duluth; Contact: www.harvestfest.cjb.net or 218-393-3276

➔ *JAN. 30*— **"What is the future of family farms?" League of Women Voters panel discussion**, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.; Northfield (Minn.) Arts Guild, 304 Division Street South; Contact: 507-645-8877

➔ *JAN. 31*— **Signup deadline for Minnesota Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**; Contact: www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

➔ *JAN. 31-FEB. 1*—**Beginning Produce Grower Workshop**, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: 763-434-0400; www.mfvga.org

➔ *FEBRUARY*—**Food Alliance Midwest 5th Annual Meeting** (details to be announced), Twin Cities, Minn.; Contact: Jim Ennis, 651-265-3684; jim@foodalliance.org

➔ *FEB. 2-3*—**Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference**, St. Cloud, Minn.; Contact: 763-434-0400; www.mfvga.org

➔ *FEB. 4* —**Wetlands Summit, Normandale College**, 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Bloomington, Minn.; Contact: 651-221-0215; ikes@minnesotaikes.org

➔ *FEB. 5* —**Showing/Discussion of the LSP programs *Planting in the Dust* & *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women***, Prospect Park United Methodist Church, 22 Orlin Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: Dana Jackson, LSP, 651-653-0618; www.prospectparkchurch.org

➔ *FEB. 8* — **LSP's Dana Jackson will be on a panel discussing the use of local foods at colleges**, Haehn Campus Center, College of St. Benedict, Collegeville, Minn.; Contact 320-363-3364.

➔ *FEB. 10-11*—**Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society's 27th Annual Winter Conference, featuring keynotes by Nina Leopold-Bradley & Winona LaDuke**, Fargo, N. Dak.; Contact: 701-883-4304; www.npsas.org

➔ *FEB. 18*—**15th Annual Meeting of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, with the theme, "Cultivating Common Ground: Linking Health & Sustainable Agriculture,"** Little Falls, Minn.; Contact: 866-760-8732; www.sfamn.org

➔ *FEB. 23*—**Organic University**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: www.moses organic.org; 715-772-3153

➔ *FEB. 24-25*—**Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference**, LaCrosse, Wis.; Contact: 715-772-3153; www.moses organic.org (see page 9)

➔ *MARCH 1*—**Biennial session of Minnesota Legislature begins** (see page 11)

➔ *MARCH 5-6*—**LSP's Dana Jackson will speak at the Annual Conference of the Wildflower Association of Michigan**, Michigan State University, East Lansing; Contact: www.wildflowersmich.org

➔ *MARCH 14*—**Minnesota Environmental Partnership's 5th Annual Citizens' Day at the Capitol**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: 651-290-0154; www.mepartnership.org

➔ *APRIL 22*—**Second Annual Ducks, Wetlands & Clean Water Rally, Minnesota State Capitol**, St. Paul; Contact: 651-221-0215

➔ *MAY 6-7*—**2006 Living Green Expo/ Community Food & Farm Festival**, Minnesota State Fair Grounds Grandstand, St. Paul; Contact: www.livinggreen expo.org or www.landstewardship project.org/cfff/cfff.html

Check **www.landstewardshipproject.org** for the latest on upcoming events.

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