

Advanced Training, Tampa

In keeping with the 20th anniversary celebration, IOIA presented an exceptional roster of speakers for 2 packed days of training that enticed a record number of members to participate.

The Mainsail Suites Hotel provided excellent lunches on the sunny veranda outside the meeting room. Thirty-six participants, most of whom attended both days, were joined by speakers and BOD members to match the largest previous AGM-associated advanced training. **Gwendolyn Wyard**, formerly of OTCO and now with OTA, kicked off the training with a marathon but top notch morning session on important processing topics. She addressed the use of flavors as ingredients in organic products including the

relevant NOSB actions; nutrient vitamins and minerals; and draft guidance on chlorine and MWO composition. Both drafts have since become final guidance. **Ken Bruce** of the Canada Organic Office joined with **Garry Lean** to give an update on the *Canadian-US Equivalency Agreement- What inspectors need to know for 2011*. **Fred Ehlert** presented *GOTS and Textile Inspection*. Last in the day, two options ran concurrently, **Kate Newkirk** facilitated a session on *How to Take Good Notes and Write Good Reports*, assisted by **Garry Lean** and **Stanley Edwards** on adapting technologies. **Harriet Behar** provided sessions at the end of Day 1 and Day 2 on *Navigating the Technical Service Provider (TSP) Process*. The NRCS hopes to expand the number of TSP's available to help farmers develop their transition plans. At the conclusion of Day 1, the participants enjoyed a bonus session with **Jake Lewin** (CCOF) and **John Foster** (Earthbound Farm and NOSB member). Lewin spoke on Unannounced Inspections. John Foster gave a brief NOSB update. The session included hearty discussion, organic pizza from Tampa's Pizza Fusion, salad, and lots of beverages, all courtesy of Earthbound Farm and CCOF.



Advanced Training Group, Speakers and BOD members, March 25-26.
Not pictured: Mary Wilson and Ely Battalen.



Ken Bruce, CFIA,

Day 2 began with a session on *Good Agricultural Practices Standard (GAP)* by **Luis Brenes**, followed by *Residue Sampling & Analysis* by Kate Newkirk of Maine and *Urban Organic Agriculture* by **Julia Govis**. **Michel Reynaud** of ECOCERT gave the *EU Regulation Update*. **Miles McEvoy** of the National Organic Program office presented the finale --an extensive NOP update with a highly interactive Q & A. He covered inspection quality, the recently released residue sampling procedures, enforcement actions, and a solid update of NOP activity. Participants expressed appreciation for his willingness to engage in frank and open exchange with inspectors, including the potential for a more meaningful inspector accreditation program. Day 2 ended with the anniversary party (see page 14).

Training evaluations were quite positive, largely due to the caliber of both the speakers and the participants. The considerable advance work of co-trainers **Patti Bursten Deutsch** and **Luis Brenes** was also a factor.

A question that usually gets asked after trainings like these is whether the materials can be available to all members. The answer

is not resolved. IOIA can and should extend the value of advanced training resources to other members. The value of web-based materials and handouts will never match the in-person networking experience. But it is not clear how the materials can best be shared while respecting those members who invest the time and money into travel to the in-person training.

No rest for the regulators and certifiers. Inspectors never run out of questions. Michel Reynaud, ECOCERT left of center, and Miles McEvoy, National Organic Program, right of center, on the sunny veranda outside the Mainsail Hotel meeting room. The weather was perfect, clear and sunny throughout the training and AGM. March 28, the day afterwards, the skies opened up and rain poured. By the end of the week, the Tampa area had experienced record rainfall, flooding, and several tornados. →



Back to Basics in Tampa

Luis Brenes (Costa Rica) and Garry Lean (Canada) taught the basic crop course April 11-15 at the Bethany Center in Lutz, Florida. Stanley Edwards taught the basic processing course next door concurrently. Bethany Center was declared by trainers and participants alike as one of the best training venues in IOIA history. Lunches were mostly organic ingredients, beautifully prepared. In keeping with the name, Bethany was truly a place of hospitality. The center was created 5 years ago from an area where gravel and soil was mined to build the nearby expressway, leaving two beautiful lakes. All classrooms and lodging rooms had lots of windows and a lake view that included wild turkeys, herons, cranes, ospreys, turtles, and the occasional alligator.

Twenty-one participants, most of whom stayed on-site, enjoyed the serene setting and opportunities beyond the classroom to network at meals, work together in cottage gathering rooms and on verandas while avoiding commutes or standard hotels.

Field trips were hosted by QCS-certified farms.



Jordan Farms (Ron and Cheri Clark) hosted Luis's group during berry season.



The 'Apple Twins' Luis Brenes and Stanley Edwards on the veranda sharing computer techniques.



Ken Der, left, of Big Bear Farms hosted Margaret's group during peak blueberry season. The primary crop was blueberries grown in containers.



Sweetwater Farm a CSA started by IOIA inspector member Rick Martinez, hosted Garry Lean's group. Angel Huerta and Owen Parker visited the Farmers' Market there on Sunday before the course started.



Luis Brenes



Garry Lean

Process Training in Tampa

By Stanley Edwards

All ready for the field trip, but no bus in sight. A black shiny stretch Hummer limo slithers in. Who would need such a vehicle at a Catholic Retreat Center, at 8:00 AM??? Black suit and tie clad, chauffeur waiting for these illusive passengers...still no bus...

Outside, Emily Scoles tells our disbelieving ears that the Stretch Hummer is for us and we need to get in or we will be late! I'm embarrassed by a vision of parading through Tampa in this gas-guzzling symbol of the greedy carefree. What will the field trip host think? My co-group leader Rick Martinez wishes for a stretch Prius...

Once the shock, elation and our bodies settle into the plush vehicle, we proceed to discuss the field trip OSP, face to face, as if gathered around a teak corporate boardroom table. How quickly one gets accustomed to this lifestyle; we do get lots done during the commute.

The stretch Hummer was just icing on the cake. This was a stellar venue, with good food, accommodations and a very bright group of students who patiently listened and asked pointed questions about more advanced topics than could be expected in a basic processing course. I like the new IOIA, and wouldn't a stretch Prius be the ideal field trip vehicle for us? P.S. Margaret did not splurge; it turns out that a limo can be cheaper than a passenger van...go figure.



IOIA Office Manager **Kathy Bowers** was charged with finding the least expensive transportation available for the Florida Basic trainings - and, no kidding, the best deal in town turned out to be the limo service! This is just one more reminder to all, especially as regards inspections - always investigate! Because things are **NOT** always as they seem....!



UDAF Processor Inspector Training, Feb 4 2011

by Stan Edwards

One side of the room faced the other in a typical classroom U; UDAF regulatory inspectors vs staff from Central Milling Company and two independent attendees from California. Within hours though, inspection scenarios forced the factions to commingle and pretty soon, the full immersion was underway, with lively conversations of regulations, inspection protocols and report requirements. Our field trip to a flour milling operation brought all of this information together and each group was able to find the staged contamination and commingling situations set up by our host. The course would not have been the same had it not been for Pam McKinstry's teaching expertise and her invaluable perspective as a full time independent inspector.



OZ, from page 17

NOP markets for Australian producers. Although the ACO and NOP standards are similar, the ACO standards tend to be a bit more similar to European and Canadian regulations. They include specialty crop standards and retailer standards and they are much more detailed, similar to the pre-NOP standards in the US.

Next task: IOIA will get recommendations for specs on audio technology for both ends to improve the quality of the communication. Webinar quality has generally been good using VOIP, speaker phone, beaming in speakers, or having webinars with a group of people all at their own remote locations as individuals. However, the move to a group of people in one room did bring up some new challenges.

Risk Assessment Writ Large in Canada

May 02-May 06, 2011 IOIA/ACC Organic Crop Inspector course
By Lisa Pierce

Day 1 of the IOIA/Assiniboine Community College Organic Crop Inspector course, the federal Conservative party wins a majority, the New Democratic Party makes history by becoming the official opposition and a Green party member is voted in for the first time in Canada. The political landscape polarizes and shifts and the waters rise. Elizabeth May of the Green Party says ‘amateurs built The Ark and professionals built the Titanic.’ And the waters continue to rise. Day 2 of the training, the field trip host informs me that ‘I hope everyone brought their rubber boots....’ And the waters, well – they stayed about the same. But the day after we left Brandon, Manitoba, travel in the city was restricted and a week later the hotel where we were staying was closed along with other local businesses.



In the evening after class, participants would walk on the bridge over the Assiniboine River and assess the rising water levels. The only evidence of the park along the river was the roof of a picnic shelter. The tops of road signs and lamp posts were just visible above the water. The roadway leading to the bridge and the bridge itself was barricaded with ‘prairie sized’ sand bags – a wall of one ton tote bags filled with sand.



But despite the politics and the floods, our group of eleven participants put in those intense IOIA training days and stayed focused. The 4.5 day course referenced the Canada National Standard and was followed by a 0.5 day workshop on the NOP standards. And, as luck would have it, the road leading to the host farm was cleared and the day was sunny for our field trip. Pat and Larry Pollock were exceptional hosts. In addition to experiencing the fundamental aspects of conducting an organic inspection, we were given the opportunity to learn about alfalfa leafcutter bees, the real life impacts of the introduction of GMO alfalfa and the qualities of an organic inspector that are valued from the perspective of a producer.

The participant group was awesome – everyone was attentive and engaging and contributed to the class in a unique way. We all learned a lot from each other.

In the ‘old days’, many Canadians attended IOIA trainings in the United States. Since the implementation of the Canada Organic Regime and the establishment of an equivalency agreement with the United States, however, it has become imperative that organic inspectors in Canada are trained to the Canada standards. This has created a training challenge in Canada. Assiniboine Community College of Brandon, Manitoba is the only co-sponsor to offer courses in Canada that reference the Canada Organic Standard on a consistent basis, and hopefully the success of this course will provide the momentum for the expansion of many more courses in the future.

A special thank you to **Mary Peterson** of Assiniboine Community College.

Happy inspecting from, - and, yes, I did take my bathing suit - Lisa



IOIA/JOAM Basic Crop Training May 2 - 6

A Basic Crop Inspection Training was held in Eltham Training Center, St Ann, Jamaica on May 2-6, 2011. Cosponsored by the Jamaica Organic Agriculture Movement – JOAM – a long time cosponsor with IOIA, this is the fourth IOIA training organized in Jamaica since 2002.

Participants were selected from JOAM members and Rural Agricultural Development Authority – RADA – extension officers. Luis Brenes and Garry Lean shared with them through five days of intensive activities, including field trips to two mixed farms within the area.



IOIA/JOAM Basic Livestock Training May 9 – 13

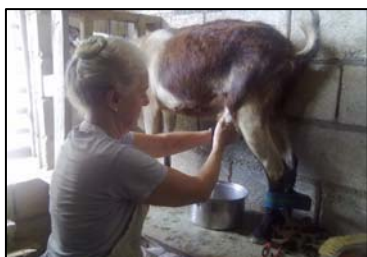
It was a second week at the Eltham Training Centre for most of the 16 participants in the Livestock course. This was a first effort in organic livestock inspector training for JOAM as it prepares for the development of the organic sector. Process training is in the works. The participants included Island farmers and RADA (Rural Agriculture Development Authority) Extension Officers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The course culminated in a trip to a goat dairy in Portland, Tamarind Hill Farm – a solid 2.5 hours away – but well worth the drive. Tamarind Hill Goat cheese is known across the Island for consistent quality and unique flavors.

This was not an organic farm but Joanna endeavors to do as many things as she can in a natural/ecological manner. The focus of the inspection was on what would have to be changed in order for the farm to achieve organic certification. It



was a first time experience for many of the participant to see a dairy goat operation in action.



Joanna Bulova milks Venus, the last goat of the morning milking.

Green Webinar Training for Oz

By Margaret Scoles

IOIA and Australian Certified Organic (ACO) cosponsored advanced training via 1.5 days of webinar May 10-11. The training was delivered in-house for ACO staff and inspectors. It focused on a review and update of the USDA National Organic Program standards. Fifteen participants

were together in a classroom in Queensland, Australia. Trainers were in the US. Margaret Scoles, IOIA ED, taught the segments on Crop and Livestock training from the IOIA office on Day 1, May 10. Stanley Edwards taught the 4-hour processing standards segment on Day 2 from Utah. They were assisted on-site by IOIA inspector member Raymond Yang, who distributed exercises, proctored the test, and collected evaluations. Yang had delivered Korean regulation training the day preceding the IOIA event, under separate arrangement with ACO. When the webinar was concluded, ACO continued on with another half-day training segment.



Michael Baker of ACO worked hard to manage the technology of the connection. Although there were a few hiccups in the audio quality at both ends, the NOP standards training was deemed a success by both IOIA and ACO. Participants were able to ask questions directly of the presenters; many of those were very difficult questions. Baker relayed those questions to the presenters. Skype and speaker phone were both tried; Skype was clearly the best option. This event was a major positive step for IOIA, as IOIA's first major webinar training delivered outside the US using VOIP technology. The content included a review of the NOP standards and recent NOP updates, plus introduction to how to use the NOP website and Program Handbook as resources, as well as stay current on rule changes. The webinar course included pre-course reading, exercises, and a post-assessment. Only in Australia have certifiers requested exams for advanced training participants. While on-site presentation is always better, there were huge cost and carbon savings with the webinar format. And somewhat to the surprise of the presenters, the class stayed very much awake, engaged, and attentive for the entire event.

The training was initiated through contact from Akiko Nicholls, then Managing Director of ACO, early this year. Scoles and Sacha Draine, IOIA International Training Services, visited with Nicholls in Germany at BioFach in February. They also met Michael Baker and former IOIA member Andy Monk of BFA there. Nicholls later left ACO and the training was further developed with Kellie Lewis and Michael Baker of ACO.

Most inspectors in the group had already done some NOP inspections. NOP is considered an add-on to the ACO certification, so many aspects where the ACO and NOP standards differ are not very important to inspectors. For example, sodium (Chilean) nitrate is prohibited in Australia, so none at all is used on the ACO-NOP certified farms. Beef and lamb are important [see OZ, page 15]

Fumbling Towards Complexity, Part II

By Tony Fleming

Note: This is the second in an occasional series examining the role of natural resources in the certification process, and exploring some of the practical and institutional challenges that hinder inspectors' ability to assess and interpret biodiversity management on NOP-certified farms.

Production practices ... must maintain or improve the natural resources of the operation, including soil and water quality. NOP 205.200

The NOP Rule Requires Producers To Maintain or Improve the Natural Resources of the Operation —

So What Measuring Stick Do Inspectors Use to Evaluate This Requirement?

As an organic inspector, you've made it a point to become well versed in agro-ecology and the topics that variously comprise "the natural resources of the operation". You've read all the books you can find on the subject, boned up on the latest research showing how native plants improve the efficacy of predatory and pollinator insects, and spent time learning about the natural history of the region you inspect in. You even went so far as to participate in the soil judging contest sponsored by the local 4-H organization. All this has enabled you to put together a useful list of indicators and observations to look for to help you quickly assess the quality of a farm's natural resources and how diligently they are being managed. But what to do with the results of your observations?

Into the Woods: Some Useful Sensory Indicators for Judging the Quality of Natural Resources

Soil: How moist does the soil feel about 3-4" below the surface (especially after a period of either limited rainfall or very heavy rainfall)? This is a telling indicator of organic matter content. If it feels like a damp sponge, this tells you there is a good organic matter management program. If it feels dry, or if it is clumpy and waterlogged, organic matter content is probably less than 2% (or tillage may be too aggressive, resulting in destruction of soil structure), and suggests you should look more closely at the soil management program.

Water: If there is a waterbody on the property, what does it look like? If it is turbid or has abundant algae and/or duckweed growing on the surface, there is a nutrient problem. Depending on the nature of the waterbody (i.e., stream vs. lake), you may need to see what it looks like where it enters the property in order to interpret the origin of the water quality problem.

Wetlands: Is there abundant evidence of a complex ecosystem in or around the wetland? Look and listen for different birds, insects (especially caddis- and dragonflies), amphibians, and a variety of native plants. Are areas along streams allowed to flood naturally? All of these things are signs of a healthy, functional wetland, though not all are present in every kind of wetland. Does the farmer avoid wheel traffic in the fringes of ephemeral wetlands?

Woodlands: Is there evidence of diversity? Trees of different sizes and ages? Standing dead trees for cavity nesting species? Does the understory contain a variety of native plants, or has it been allowed to become infested with non-native invasives? Are any economic uses of the woodland sustainable (sugarbush, small-scale firewood, selective harvest, mushrooms, etc)?

Wildlife: Are there obvious areas and corridors suited to wildlife cover and travel? Do non-cultivated areas contain a mix of high-wildlife-value native plant species? Are there water sources? Do you *hear* a variety of birds (most birds are seldom visible during the middle of the day when inspections occur)?

The answers aren't always obvious. While there are several references in the body of the rule to natural resources, virtually all of them specifically mention soil and/or water quality, and none mention the words "biodiversity", "wetlands", "woodlands", or "wildlife". Thus, in the absence of any other kind of guidance, a direct reading of the rule would tend to make one believe that soil and water quality are more important in the regulatory scheme of things than other natural resources, which is exactly how the first decade of farm inspections under the NOP has played out. Indeed, I believe it is safe to say that, until relatively recently, few organic system plans asked even a single question about any of these other natural resources (this statement may not be true of questionnaires for other certification programs outside of the NOP).

Which brings up a "Catch-22" for inspectors: no matter how well versed you are in a topic, if it does not appear on the OSP, it can be problematic to incorporate it into actionable inspection findings. I had more than one certifier tell me that findings like the bulldozing of a woodland, the infestation of field borders with invasive plants, or the drainage of a wetland were "interesting" but "outside the scope of the rule" or "not relevant", either because the OSP asked no questions about these resources or because the operator included no answers. I don't necessarily blame this on the certifiers (and certainly, some of the ones I worked for took biodiversity seriously), but it helped to perpetuate the dichotomy we see today, wherein some farms are showplaces of biodiversity, while others exhibit obvious cases of nature deficit disorder. As I pointed out in the first part of this series, we all had other things on our minds during the implementation of the NOP. But now that most of those other issues have been settled, the question is whether the rule affords certifiers and inspectors clear, unambiguous criteria by which to assess compliance and bring reality more in line with the expectations of most organic proponents and consumers.

We...have amended the definition of organic production to require that a producer must conserve biodiversity on his or her operation. The use of “conserve” establishes that the producer must initiate practices to support biodiversity and avoid, to the extent practicable, any activities that would diminish it. Compliance with the requirement to conserve biodiversity requires that a producer incorporate practices in his or her organic system plan that are beneficial to biodiversity on his or her operation. –NOP Preamble (4) Conservation of Biodiversity.

The preamble offers some insight into the intent of the rule’s framers, stating in a rather straightforward way that producers need to initiate practices to conserve biodiversity, and that compliance with this requirement is to be assessed via the OSP. But translating this into actionable findings is muddled by the qualifier “to the extent practicable”, by the seeming focus on soil and water resources to the exclusion of the others in the body of the rule, and by the ambiguities inherent in dealing with anything left to chance (i.e., not part of the OSP). As an inspector, one could accurately describe the situation surrounding natural resources as being shrouded in uncertainty. Which, as with other ambiguous topics like “access to pasture”, created a tendency on my part to parse the sometimes inscrutable language of the rule, just to be sure I wasn’t overlooking some hidden meaning associated with the contextual usage of words like “and”, “or”, “may”, and “is”.

This exercise proved to be a zero-sum game, for it raised as many questions as it answered. Does 205.200 mean that “improving the natural resources” is optional (as opposed to simply “maintaining” them)? What is the benchmark if the natural resources were severely degraded when an operation began transitioning to organic? Does “improving the natural resources” then apply chiefly, or only, to soil? Unlike, say, the BioSuisse standards, the NOP clearly does not require producers to maintain “nature reserves” on the farm, yet it does seem to require some form of active management in this realm. It’s not hard to come up with even more site-specific questions, as my inspection experience taught me.

Ultimately, it all comes back to the operator, who has to be an active participant in the process of maintaining or improving the natural resources of the operation. In many cases, the operator knows more than the inspector or certifier about this subject when it comes to their own farm, though they may not necessarily be able to articulate that knowledge in the same terms an inspector or naturalist might use. Nevertheless, unless the operator can communicate that knowledge, the process lacks a starting point. And the operator can’t effectively communicate their knowledge (or lack of it) if the OSP does not offer the opportunity to do so. On the other hand, a well-formulated OSP logically goes beyond a basic compliance tool and can serve as an educational portal into the diverse realm of natural resources, simply by naming practices or subjects the operator has never heard of. Some operators may only be vaguely aware of “invasive plants” or “riparian corridors”, but if they are asked about them every year on the OSP, they may become motivated to learn more.

Even when the operator has provided clear and comprehensive information in the OSP, however, assessing “compliance” can be problematic in many common situations involving natural resources. This is especially true in those cases where an element of “benign neglect” (a common cultural attitude towards nature, which might also be expressed as “let nature take its course”) is involved. To cite just one example, I frequently found buffer zones that were infested with alien invasive shrubs. Seldom could these shrubs be considered invaders of farm fields, however, though they almost always were a serious problem for natural lands managers in the region. But nowhere does the rule unequivocally say that such plants have to be removed from uncultivated areas, particularly if they are not reasonably considered a “crop weed” (cf., 205.206). The situation is further confounded by the fact that dense thickets of such noxious shrubs as autumn olive and Asian honeysuckle form nearly impenetrable barriers to drift, and thus comprise highly effective buffer zones.

One can come up with many situations regarding the management (or lack of it) of natural resources in which there is no single “right” or “wrong” answer or response. This is one area of the rule where the inspector often needs to apply what might best be described as “informed judgment”, much of which stems from perceptions of the operator’s attitude and how well the operator is actually following their OSP. For the most part, there is no bright white line that, once crossed, indicates that an operator needs to be more diligent in addressing issues of natural resources and biodiversity. In this way, the regulatory situation very much parallels the resources themselves, which consist of an essentially endless variety of environmental gradients. Stated a bit differently, except in extreme cases, it is usually far easier to recognize and acknowledge varying levels of compliance with the rule than it is to identify specific noncompliances. But the lack of a bright white line has its upside: if a potential issue is not perceived to rise to the level of a noncompliance (or does not even appear as a topic on the OSP), then it also cannot be construed as a “barrier to certification”. In which case, the well informed inspector can, without reservation, serve as a valuable educational resource by way of pointing out natural features on the farm, directing the farmer towards helpful programs and technical resources, and generally promoting greater awareness of the value of increased biodiversity conservation on organic farms. Now that’s a goal everyone agrees with.

Coming In Our Next Issue:
Is Organic Kelp Required in Livestock Feed?
By Wolf, DiMatteo and Associates

Monsanto Suit Seeks Preemptive Protection for Organic Farmers

On behalf of 60 family farmers, seed businesses and organic agricultural organizations, the Public Patent Foundation (PUBPAT) filed suit on March 29 against Monsanto Company to challenge the chemical giant's patents on genetically modified (GM) seed. The organic plaintiffs are suing preemptively to protect themselves from being accused of patent infringement should they ever become contaminated by Monsanto's GM seed, something Monsanto has done to others in the past.

The case, *Organic Seed Growers & Trade Association, et al. v. Monsanto*, was filed in federal district court in Manhattan and assigned to Judge Naomi Buchwald. Plaintiffs in the suit represent a broad array of family farmers, small businesses and organizations from within the organic agriculture community who are increasingly threatened by GM seed contamination despite using their best efforts to avoid it. The plaintiff organizations have over 270,000 members, including thousands of certified organic family farmers.

In the case, PUBPAT is asking Judge Buchwald to declare that if organic farmers are ever contaminated by Monsanto's GM seed, they need not fear also being accused of patent infringement. One reason justifying this result is that Monsanto's patents on GM seed are invalid because they don't meet the "usefulness" requirement of patent law, according to Dan Ravicher, PUBPAT's Executive Director and Lecturer of Law at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law in New York, and the plaintiffs' lead attorney in the case. Evidence cited by PUBPAT in its opening filing proves that GM seed has negative economic and health effects, while the promised benefits of GM seed – increased production and decreased herbicide use – are false.

"This case asks whether Monsanto has the right to sue organic farmers for patent infringement if Monsanto's transgenic seed should land on their property," said Ravicher, "It seems quite perverse that an organic farmer contaminated by transgenic seed could be accused of patent

infringement, but Monsanto has made such accusations before and is notorious for having sued hundreds of farmers for patent infringement, so we had to act to protect the interests of our clients."

Once released into the environment, GM seed contaminates and destroys organic seed for the same crop. For example, soon after Monsanto introduced GM seed for canola, organic canola became virtually extinct as a result of contamination. Organic corn, soybeans, cotton, sugar beets and alfalfa now face the same fate, as Monsanto has released GM seed for each of those crops. GM contamination will limit anyone's ability to guarantee a GM-free product. Monsanto is developing GM seed for many other crops, thus putting the future of all food, and indeed all agriculture, at stake.

Monsanto can sue even if the crops were contaminated through natural cross pollination from neighboring GM crops or if GM seeds were spread by contaminated agricultural machinery, for example.

"Some say transgenic seed can coexist with organic seed, but history tells us that's not possible, and it's actually in Monsanto's financial interest to eliminate organic seed so that they can have a total monopoly over our food supply," said Ravicher. "Monsanto is the same chemical company that previously brought us Agent Orange, DDT, PCB's and other toxins, which they said were safe, but we know are not. Now Monsanto says transgenic seed is safe, but evidence clearly shows it is not."

This lawsuit questions Monsanto's very right to claim a patent. For a patent to apply it must prove its usefulness under law. Yet despite all the hype, the truth is that GM is a failing and increasingly costly technology. After billions of dollars of investment, many of the original claims and promises made by the GM industry over the years have either failed to materialize or have been exposed as nothing more than lies. There is no scientific consensus that GM crops have delivered a general, sustained or reliable increase in yield; there is no consensus that GM crops have offered a sustained reduction in costs to farmers adopting GM crops; nor is there any consensus that GM crops have resulted in a sustainable reduction in pesticide use. Indeed, the

amount of glyphosate usage in the U.S. has increased 15-fold since 1994. Despite claims that GM crops are safe, the biotech industry uses the very same intellectual property rights laws to prevent any independent scientific testing of its GM products. That's not to mention the increasing economic impact of GM contamination on organic and non-GM markets.

As a result, the organic community is taking a stand against the uncontrollable threat of GM contamination. And they are not alone - U.S. consumers are finally waking up to the harmful effects of GM crops on their environment and their health. Demand for organic and "GM-free" labeled food is growing exponentially – "GM-free" was the fastest growing retail label claim in 2009. But the disturbing fact is that unless GM farmers and the biotech industry are held accountable for polluting the environment, the opportunity to grow organically will be lost forever. The fact is that Monsanto doesn't want people to have the right to choose non-GM food on the supermarket shelves, and they are refusing to take any responsibility for the GM pollution they are causing out in the fields.

On the IOIA Forum, Margaret Scoles, ED for IOIA, commented, "This is a very exciting case with a good attorney and sound legal arguments. IOIA members might be interested to know how IOIA is and isn't involved in the suit. Especially for those who were at the AGM when this was discussed.

"IOIA has been involved in conference calls with the Public Patent Foundation since November 2010. Bob Howe participated most fully and reported to the BOD. I was also on a few of those calls. Although we all supported the action in principle, it was harder to see how IOIA as an organization actually fit as a plaintiff. Legal counsel also had questions about this.

"On March 27, at their morning BOD meeting, the BOD decided to present the issue of IOIA signing on as a plaintiff to the membership for discussion. Later that day, during the AGM, there was overwhelming (although not unanimous) support for IOIA to sign on as a plaintiff. "On March 28, several BOD members and I participated in the last pre-filing conference call for plaintiffs while we

were still in Florida. The Letter of Engagement with the Public Patent Foundation was signed by BOD Chair, Michelle Sandy, and Margaret Scoles, ED, on behalf of IOIA. We faxed it to PubPat in NY.

“Even though the letter was signed and IOIA intended to become a plaintiff, Dan Ravicher decided that IOIA might fit better as expert witness or *amici* to the case. We will also help with press about the event. So IOIA will continue to support the case but not as a plaintiff.”

About PubPat

The Public Patent Foundation (PUBPAT) is a not-for-profit legal services organization affiliated with the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. PUBPAT protects freedom in the patent system by representing the public interest against undeserved patents and unsound patent policy. More info on PUBPAT is available from www.pubpat.org.
<http://www.pubpat.org/assets/files/seed/OSGA-TA-v-Monsanto-Complaint.pdf>
<http://www.animalwelfareapproved.org/2011/04/01/awa-supports-public-patent-foundations-suit-against-monsanto/>

Farmers and Consumer Groups File Lawsuit Over GE Alfalfa Approval

On March 18, attorneys for the Center for Food Safety (CFS) and Earthjustice filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), arguing that the agency’s recent unrestricted approval of genetically engineered (GE), “Roundup Ready” Alfalfa was unlawful. The GE crop is engineered to be immune to the herbicide glyphosate, which Monsanto markets as Roundup. USDA data show that 93% of all the alfalfa planted by farmers in the U.S. is grown without the use of any herbicides. With the full deregulation of GE alfalfa, USDA estimates that up to 23 million more pounds of toxic herbicides will be released into the environment each year.

“USDA has once again failed to provide adequate oversight of a biotech crop,” said Andrew Kimbrell, Executive Director of the Center for Food Safety. “This reckless approval flies in the face of overwhelming evidence that GE alfalfa threatens the rights of farmers and consumers, as well as significant harm to the environment. APHIS has refused to apply and enforce the law and instead has chosen to bow to the wishes of the biotech industry.”

This is the second case challenging the legality of USDA’s handling of GE alfalfa. In 2007, in another case brought by CFS, a federal court ruled that the USDA’s approval of the engineered crop violated environmental laws by failing to analyze risks such as the contamination of conventional and organic alfalfa, the evolution of glyphosate-resistant weeds, and increased use of Roundup. The case resulted in USDA undertaking a court-ordered four-year study of GE alfalfa’s impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Remarkably, it marked the first time USDA had ever undertaken such a study, known as an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), in over 15 years of approving GE crops for commercial production. While USDA worked on the EIS, GE alfalfa remained unlawful to plant or sell, a ban that remained in place despite Monsanto appealing the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Earthjustice attorney Paul Achitoff commented: “We expect Monsanto to force-feed people genetically engineered crops—that’s its business model. We hoped for better from the USDA, which has much broader responsibilities. GE alfalfa will greatly increase use of toxic chemicals from coast to coast, threatens the organic dairy industry, and will have farmers going back to Monsanto every year to buy its patented seed and Roundup.”

The plaintiffs include a diverse coalition of conventional and organic farmers, dairies and agricultural associations, and environmental and consumer groups: CFS, Beyond Pesticides, Cornucopia Institute, California Farmers Union, Dakota Resources Council, Geertson Seed Farms, National Family Farm Coalition, Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, Sierra Club, Trask Family Seeds and Western Organization of Resource Councils.

Known as the “queen of forages,” alfalfa is the key feedstock for the dairy industry. Organic dairies stand to lose their source of organic feed, a requirement for organic dairy, including milk and yogurt products. The organic sector is the most vibrant part of U.S. agriculture, now a 26 billion dollar a year industry and growing 20% annually.

“Approving the unrestricted planting of GE alfalfa is a blatant case of the USDA serving one form of agriculture at the expense of all others,” says plaintiff Ed Maltby, Executive Director of the Northeast Alliance of Organic Dairy Producers. “If this decision is not remedied, the result will be lost livelihoods for organic dairy farmers, loss of choice for farmers and consumers, and no transparency about GE contamination of our foods.”

Because alfalfa is pollinated by bees that can fly and cross-pollinate between fields and feral sources many miles apart, the engineered crop will contaminate natural alfalfa varieties. Roundup Ready alfalfa is the first engineered perennial crop, meaning it remains in the ground for 3-6 years and is widely prevalent in wild or feral form throughout America, further increasing the likelihood and extent of transgenic contamination.

Approval of Roundup Ready alfalfa will spur the glyphosate-resistant epidemic that is already regarded as one of the most serious challenges facing U.S. agriculture. Weeds evolve resistance to glyphosate just as bacteria evolve immunity to overused antibiotics. While other Roundup Ready crops spawned the epidemic, Roundup Ready alfalfa will exacerbate it by increasing the frequency and intensity of glyphosate use on millions of acres of cropland. Farmers respond to resistant weeds by applying more and more herbicides, soil-eroding tillage operations, and even hand-weeding on hundreds of thousands of acres. Such “superweeds” have expanded four-fold to infest over 10 million acres since just 2008, with some projecting 38 million acres by 2013. Alfalfa, the fourth most prevalent crop in the U.S., is grown on over 20 million acres, across every state.

“Alfalfa grows in dense stands that naturally suppress weeds, and so has traditionally been the one crop in farmers’ rotations that provides a much-needed break from the onslaught of toxic herbicides. Roundup Ready alfalfa will only foster still more resistant weeds, and thereby increase the pesticide dependence of U.S. agriculture beyond already unsustainable levels,” said Bill Freese, CFS Science Policy Analyst.

IOIA BOD Conference Call Minutes – January 18, 2011

Attendance: Bob Durst, Eric Feutz, Michelle Sandy, Bob Howe (Voting Alternate), Jennie Clifford, and Margaret Scoles, ED.

Absent: David Konrad and Alternate, Julio Perez. **Minute Taking:** Jennie Clifford

Preliminary Budget: The January 18th, 2011 Budget was accepted with approved emendations; Michelle moved, Jennie seconded.

2011 AGM: A hearty note of appreciation to the nominating committee for their diligence and hard work! A BOD meeting will be held Sunday morning 9-10 AM prior to the 2PM AGM meeting. All BOD candidates will be invited to the Sunday morning meeting. The BOD will meet in the evening of the 27th and Monday through the day. Bob D. offered to be present at the Monday morning BOD meeting. The incumbent BOD members gratefully accepted.

PubPat Lawsuit: Bob Howe will be part of two conference calls this week in support of Public Patent Foundation's efforts (regarding GMO seed patenting) as a formal representative of IOIA.

IOIA BOD Conference Call February 23

Attendance: Bob Durst, Eric Feutz, David Konrad, Michelle Sandy, Bob Howe (Alternate), Julio Perez (Alternate), Jennie Clifford, and Margaret Scoles, ED. **Minute Taking:** Jennie Clifford.

Senior Staff Position: The Search Committee met Jan. 19th for an informal discussion. They will meet again Feb. 25th and during the Tampa Trainings/AGM with intentions to complete the job description.

BioFach Report: It was a good but long trip. ED found personal meetings with Sacha Draine with organization representatives and international members highly successful.

Mischa Popoff: Mr. Popoff has written a book, which includes allegations and inaccuracies about IOIA and many of our members. The BOD has no intention of engaging with Mr. Popoff or formally responding to him. ED will develop a standard letter in response to queries regarding this subject. This response is intended to be forwarded, posted to the IOIA website and will be available via various on line search engines.

Bob Howe Public Patent Foundation Report: The Foundation is managing a class action lawsuit against Monsanto. They have offered to include IOIA. The BOD is considering a meeting w/a Foundation representative to discuss.

ACA-NASOP-NOP Meeting Report: Bob D. attended and reported.

IOIA BOD Meeting, Tampa, Florida March 28

Attendance: Deb Bunn, Bob Durst (past BOD Chair), Eric Feutz, Silke Fuchshofen, Ib Hagsten, Michelle Sandy, Jennie Clifford and Margaret Scoles - ED. **Absent:** Helene Bouvier. Bob chaired the meeting. **Minute Taking:** Jennie Clifford

Elect officers: Plan A: Michelle Sandy – Chair, Jennie Clifford – Vice Chair, Helene Bouvier – Secretary, Eric Feutz – Treasurer, Silke Fuchshofen – Facilitator. BOD duties were read as written in IOIA's bylaws. Michelle accepted the position of Chair and Eric accepted the Treasurer's position. We discussed adding the Facilitator position. Currently the Facilitator's role is to keep time and may be expanded over time. Jennie remained secretary and the Vice Chair position will remain open until confirmation from Helene is formalized which will be the next regular BOD meeting.

Decision Making and BOD meeting schedule: The BOD will make decisions by consensus. In the event a decision cannot be reached by consensus, a vote will be called. We discussed how our BOD meetings would proceed. The IOIA BOD will meet monthly for 2 hours on the second Tues. of each month from 9-11 EDT.

GMO Lawsuit with PPF: The BOD is signing on to the PPF lawsuit against Monsanto as a plaintiff. The Public Patent Foundation expects the wrongful patent suit against Monsanto will be a 3-5 year process. The discussion that ensued brought the question of IOIA's identity in relation to actions and issues in the organic community to the fore. This question was slated for discussion at the (expected) upcoming BOD retreat. Based on the overwhelming support of IOIA's members at the AGM for the organization to file as plaintiff in the suit, the BOD felt a quorum of our members had spoken. Michelle made a motion to sign PUBPAT's letter of engagement, Eric seconded. The BOD agreed with one abstention and one absent BOD member.

Facilitator's Role: Keeping BOD meetings on track, agenda and time. The facilitator will be in touch with the chair and ED prior to meetings to prepare.

Additional Staff Position Update: The Search Committee intends to have a press release out for the position in the next month. There was discussion of the history of this issue and setting plans, missions, and goals for the future of the organization. It was suggested the position and output is built as the person develops into the role. It was noted that the educational dimension of this position is the most poignant.

Note: Silke, Bob D., Margaret, Michelle and Jennie reconvened in the evening to attend a Pubpat conference call. This was the last call prior to the suit that was filed against Monsanto. IOIA sent the Letter of Engagement to join the PUBPAT suit after the call. Michelle as Chair and Margaret as ED both signed the document.

IOIA BOD Conference Call April 12

Attendance: Deb Bunn, Helene Bouvier, Jennie Clifford, Eric Feutz, Silke Fuchshofen, Ib Hagsten, Michelle Sandy, and Margaret Scoles - ED. **Minute Taking:** Jennie Clifford

Elect Officers and Clarify BOD Roles: Jennie accepted the Vice Chair position, Helene accepted the Secretary's position, Deb accepted the Executive Member at Large. [see **Minutes**, page 4]

Resources

GOTS Version 3.0 now available

The International Working Group on the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) has released Version 3.0 of its organic fiber processing standard. The document is available by visiting the [GOTS website www.global-standard.org](http://www.global-standard.org) and visiting the Info Centre.

Organic Seed Alliance releases State of Organic Seed report

The Organic Seed Alliance (OSA) has released a survey-based report, "State of Organic Seed: Advancing the Viability and Integrity of Organic Seed Systems," downloadable from the [Internet](http://www.organicseedalliance.org). The report is the first comprehensive analysis of the organic seed sector. It shows that although the National Organic Program requires the use of organic seeds when commercially available, the organic seed industry has not caught up to meet the increased demand for organic seed.

New Features on NOC site The National Organic Coalition now offers 3 new features on their website covering NOSB Decisions and Recommendations from 1992 through 2001. Follow these links or go to www.nationalorganiccoalition.org

Toward Organic Integrity -- A Guide to the Development of U.S. Organic Standards, with NOSB Recommendations 1992-1997

Database on NOSB Recommendations for Materials Considered for Use in Organic Agricultural Production and Handling , 1994-2001

National Organic Standards Board Recommendations 1998 - 2000

NanoNano A useful site on nanotechnology is www.nanotech-now.com, click the news link. Thanks to Luis Brenes for finding this site!

But you won't find this article on the Nanotech-Now site....

Nanoparticles Bioaccumulate Up the Food Chain

Scientists at the University of Kentucky found that gold nanoparticles are taken up from the soil by tobacco plants, and then bioaccumulate in caterpillars feeding on the tobacco plants.

Levels in the caterpillars were 10-fold higher than in the plants, the first evidence that nanoparticles can bioaccumulate up food chains.

Source: "Nanoparticles Accumulate in Food Chain," *Chemical and Engineering News*, December 20, 2010

NOP's target pesticide list for residue testing. It's in the NOP handbook at the end of the certification section. Go to: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5088987>

From the IOIA Forum

TOC Launches "Generations of Organic" Website To meet the growing needs for consumer friendly information about all things organic, The Organic Center has launched the new "Generations of Organic" website (www.generationsoforganic.org). It serves as a "sister" site to their existing website, www.organic-center.org. "Generations of Organic" provides insight, information, and inspiration for generations of health-conscious people seeking deeper understanding of how organic food and farming promotes human health and animal well being, while also enhancing our natural environment. Explore the site for news, easy-to-make recipes, organic food trends, interviews with organic luminaries, shopping tips, farmer profiles, and condensed information from the Center's technical reports on pesticide risks, nutrition, organic farming and the environment.

Durable work pants for women

Redantspants offers durable work pants that fit women's figures.

www.redantspants.com

Thanks to Margaret Weigelt for sharing!

Boots for Girls, too Thanks to Kelly Monaghan for sharing this link for steel toed boots and wow, they're PINK!

<http://www.safetygirl.com/safety-girl-boots.html>

News Bites

Global organic area continues to expand Land managed organically in 2009 totaled 37.2 million hectares, up 2 million hectares—six percent—from 2008, according to *The World of Organic Agriculture: Statistics & Emerging Trends 2011* released in February at BioFach. The global market for organic products in 2009 was estimated to have reached \$55 billion (40 billion euros), roughly five percent more than in 2008. The book is available for purchase from IFOAM, www.ifoam.org

Beyond Organic... U.S. trade policy undermining global food security US President Barack Obama's *Feed the Future* initiative pledges to support food production by small-scale farmers in developing countries. But U.S. trade policy aims to expand exports into developing countries, undercutting small-scale farmers. In a [new paper](#), Institute for Agriculture Trade Policy's Karen Hansen-Kuhn identifies much needed reforms for U.S. trade policy that better respond to global food insecurity and climate disruptions. Read the [entire paper](#) or learn more on IATP's [Think Forward blog](#). Go to: www.iatp.org

Prenatal OP Insecticide Exposure Impairs Attention Among Children

A study of farm worker families in California has shown that by age 3.5, children born to mothers exposed to OP insecticides have lessened attention spans and are more vulnerable to attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Male children were more likely to be impacted.

Source: Marks, A.R., et al., "Organophosphate Pesticide Exposure and Attention in Young Mexican-American Children: The CHAMACOS Study," *Env't'l Health Perspectives*, Vol. 118, No. 12, December 2010

MSNBC Poll – Should GMO foods be labeled?

As of March 22, 2011:
Total of 45,584 votes -
96.1% Yes. It's an ethical issue -- consumers should be informed so they can make a choice. 43,818 votes
3.1% No. The U.S. government says they are safe and that's good enough for me. 1,403 votes
0.8% Not sure. It all tastes the same to me. 363 votes



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Keep IOIA Strong - Lend Your Strength And Get Involved!

2011 Calendar

May 28-29 Heartland Festival: A Celebration of Food, Farming, & Healthy Living in the Central Valley. **Stevenson, California** <http://www.eco-farm.org/>

June 4 GrazeFest Minnesota, **Minneapolis, Minnesota** <http://www.sfa-mn.org/grazefest/>

June 9 - 12 Food and Agriculture Under the Big Sky Missoula, MT.
<http://www.cas.umt.edu/evst/foodconference>

June 13 Current Research in Organic Farming, WSU Mount Vernon. **Mt. Vernon, Washington.** The event is presented in Spanish and English.
<http://www.tilthproducers.org/programs/farm-walks-2/2010-farm-walks/>

June 16 - 17 Food for Thought: Food System Literacy in Classrooms, Cafeterias and Communities, Simsbury, CT
<https://www.nais.org/environmental/index.cfm?ItemNumber=153585&sn.ItemNumber=153587>

June 18 OEFFA Farm Tour: Hirzel Farms. **Luckey, Ohio.** This event is part of OEFFA's 2011 farm tour series. This fifth-generation family farm manages over 2,000 acres of land, 700 of which are

certified organic.
<http://www.oeffa.org/events.php?start=16&cn=>

June 18 Rotational Grazing and Fencing Field Day. **Jacksonville, Illinois.** Learn about the production of certified organic beef and poultry.
<http://cisfn.org/about/field-days/>

June 22 MOSES Field Day: Organic Dairy Pasture Walk. **Lansing, Iowa.** Hosted by Mark & Marcia Kruse, on their family's organic dairy farm. Topics covered will include cropland to pasture conversion, grazing management, manure management, organic herd health and organic certification.
<http://www.mosesorganic.org/events.html#june>

June 20-26 Pollinator Week. Pollinator Week has now grown to be an international celebration of the valuable ecosystem services provided by bees, birds, butterflies, bats and beetles. A list of events in states across the country is posted online.
http://pollinator.org/pollinator_week_2011.htm

July 10 - 23 Annual International Agroecology Shortcourse

Annual International Agroecology Shortcourse Sustainable Living Center, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA
<http://www.agroecology.org>

July 17 - 20 Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) Annual Conference Washington, DC, DC.
http://www.swcs.org/en/conferences/2011_annual_conference/

August 4 - 5 The 4th National Conference on Facilitating Sustainable Agriculture, University of Kentucky – Lexington, KY.
<http://www.sustainableaged.org/>

September 26 – 29 5th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture
The conference will provide a forum for scientists and practitioners to discuss current and future developments in sustainable agriculture. Brisbane, Australia.
<http://www.wcca.org/index.htm>

October 3 – 5 IFOAM Organic World Conference, Gyeonggi Paldang, South Korea. www.ifoam.org

Nov 29 – Dec 2 Fall NOSB meeting, Hilton Savannah DeSoto, Savannah, GA.

*For a complete listing of upcoming IOIA trainings,
please see page 3 of this issue*