

expand and a kind of chill started in the centre of my spine and traveled upwards raising the hairs on the back of my neck. The first IOIA Organic workshop in Africa began and ended with a song and prayer. And even in the recounting, the power and simplicity of that moment still reverberates. This was my first trip to southern Africa. It was also the first IOIA organic inspection course to be held in Africa and the first time we have delivered a series of one day organic workshops for local community organizations. The IOIA training and workshops were sponsored by CARANA and funded as part of USAID's Southern Africa Global Competitiveness HUB Project. The IOIA Organic Crop Inspector training was held in Pretoria from September 13-17, 2010 and the organic workshops were held the following week.



The IOIA Organic Crop Inspection training was attended by 13 participants from various regions in South Africa and one participant from Mozambique. The range of participants included local inspectors and persons from the national cotton organization, development agencies, companies developing inputs for the organic sector and consultants. The course referenced the NOP organic standards. Currently there are about 370 certified organic farms in South Africa and 10 certification agencies in South Africa that certify to the EU and or NOP standards. South Africa plans to release the publication of its own organic standards in the next few months. From the classroom in Pretoria to the harsh beauty of the bushveld in the Northern Cape. The flight from Johannesburg to Kimberly in the Northern Cape reminded me of the flat, wide open areas of the US Midwest or the prairies in Canada. The first workshop was held near the large Kumba Iron Ore mine in the village of Manyeding that edges the Kalahari Flats. The workshop was envisioned to introduce workers for a new

agricultural project in the community, to the concepts of organic farming. The project site (160 hectares) had been used to grow rice in the past (in South Africa!) and the irrigation pipelines and dam were being repaired in preparation for the production of vegetables. There is no surface water in the region and the entire area is dependent on underground aquifers for its water supply.

Subsequent organic workshops were held near Thabazimbi and near Middelburg in the Limpopo region and Mpumalanga region north and northwest of Johannesburg. In all, the three workshops were attended by a total of 85 persons, 59 women and 26 men, from eight



different agricultural projects plus some representatives of local municipalities and community leaders. Certificates were given to each participant as part of wrap-up ceremony at the end of each workshop.

South Africa is a vast and incredibly diverse bioregion – almost any agricultural product can be produced somewhere in the country. Export crops include various fruits and vegetables; the development of an organic cotton industry is also in process. Establishment of the domestic market for organic products has begun – I spent an afternoon walking to the local Pick and Pay grocery chain and Woolworths (a whole foods kind of store) in Pretoria and verifying organic products on the shelves. After gathering several sample labels, I think I have enough organic Rooibos tea to last me for the next year or two.... The tea may last, but it remains to be seen if I will last that long away from a country that has had such an affect on me.

OR Basic Crop Course

By Sarah Costin

Since I am wrapping up the Basic Crop Training in Oregon as I prepare to leave for the Basic Crop training in Taiwan, I'll be brief out of necessity and let a few photos tell most of the story. The Basic Crop training returned to the excellent facilities of Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon on October 4 – 8, 2010. We had beautiful autumn weather- it didn't rain until the day of the field inspections! The class of 25 participants represented a wide range of organic possibilities including NOP staff, certifier staff, certified operations, current inspectors looking to expand their scope, and farmers. Their differing perspectives resulted in a lot of classroom discussion- some off topic, but most adding real-life examples to the material. Lisa Pierce contributed a great deal with her expertise, energetic presentations, and humor- and provided valuable "tutoring" outside of class for anyone who asked.



Many thanks to Oregon Tilth for help with mock inspections, to Sunbow Farm, Lost Creek Farm and Circle H Farm for hosting the mock inspections, to the OSU staff who, along with Margaret, helped things run smoothly on site, and to the IOIA staff who get it all together behind the scenes. Now for some pictures worth thousands of words...



Sarah Costin, IOIA Trainer, helps Marty Beagle, head of WSDA's organic program, with a sticky question during the basic organic crop inspection course.



IOIA Basic Course for Organic Processing Inspection

Corvallis, Oregon October 4-8, 2010

Thoughts on Basic Processing Course

From Linda Condon, WA:

IOIA went ahead with this training even after a late cancellation brought the number of students down to 9. Only 9 students but oh so many opportunities to learn from one another with our various links to the organic world: 2 current inspectors, 2 future inspectors, 2 certification reviewers, 2 certified organic processors, and 1 OMRI product review coordinator. The training was well planned and executed with varied learning styles for continued engagement. The inspection of a certified processor brought it all together with real life scenarios (*"hmm...can't seem to find that information in this new database system..."*). We all walked away with a much better understanding of the NOP regulations and improved skills for navigating through the regulations as well.



Processing course attendees. Contributor Linda is fourth in from right with her hand on the post. Annie is kneeling at front left. Antonin is in the center straight over the center of the Kettle sign. Trainer Garry Lean is second from left.

Annie Amos, Product Review Coordinator, OMRI, October 2010:

I attended the October 2010 IOIA Basic Processing Inspection training in Corvallis, Oregon. The information I learned in the course will be beneficial in my role as a Product Review Coordinator at OMRI. I gained a better understanding of the intricacies of organic food processing, learned ways to format inspection reports, and saw first-hand processing documentation systems. The course provided a unique opportunity for representatives from different sectors of the organic industry, including certifiers, inspectors, input material reviewers, organic producers, and retailers, to have in-depth discussions on organic food processing and learn together.

Antonin van der Lely, BC Canada:

This fall basic process training took place in Corvallis Oregon. The training was taught by experienced process inspector, Garry Lean. The group was smaller than average with only 9 participants. All coming from a varied background, the small group had many discussions from simple inspection techniques to how to conduct a mass balance taking into account water gain or loss. To top off this great training, Margaret Scoles made a few star appearances to impart her knowledge and experience to the group. All attendees were both happy and pleased to take part in this unique and fun training.

McEvoy Lists NOP Priorities at Lively NOSB Meeting

The NOP has enthusiastically entered an Age of Enforcement, as was witnessed at the recent NOSB meeting, held Oct 25-28 in Madison, Wisconsin.

NOP Deputy Administrator **Miles McEvoy** gave a presentation at the meeting, starting with an outline of NOP's list of priorities for the coming months. Included in this list were upholding and enforcing standards, implementing and enforcing the Access to Pasture final rule, implementing NOP's strategic plan, implementing NOSB recommendations, instituting a quality management system, increasing oversight of foreign operations, and improving the training and accountability of supervisors.

To review the complete PowerPoint presentation, visit <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5087263>.

Advanced Training in Oregon

By Janine Gibson

The IOIA/OTCO ADVANCED INSPECTOR TRAINING COURSE was well attended and held in Corvallis, Oregon, October 4 & 5th, 2010. It was an excellent example of team work, from the agenda to the welcome party. **Patti Bursten Deutsch** worked with **Margaret Scoles**, with help from **Mike Mountain** and **Bob Durst** and many more excellent resource personnel to develop a training targeted to expressed inspector needs. Bob and wife Sherry Clark were magnificent hosts of a gourmet vegetarian welcome feast at their beautiful home on a local mountain side.

Facilitated by trainer Janine Gibson, the participant agenda included an NOSB hot topics panel, a conversation on tricky materials & corn steep liquor that could barely be contained and informative sessions on sampling protocols by **Al Quaglino** of Primus Labs & **Steve Thun** of Portland Ag Labs.



Sean Feder, CCOF, shown here with Connie Karr of OTCO.

John Foster and **Tracy Miedema** of Earthbound Farm, currently serving on the NOSB gave, along with **Arthur Neal** of the NOP, well received updates. **Lindsay Fernandez-Salvador** presented the always topical OMRI perspective.

Starting off Day Two was *Inspecting Perennials with a Grape Focus* by **Robert Albee**, a captivating combination of inspector and grower perspectives, beautiful visuals and wine samples! *The Organic Wine Label Game* with **Connie Karr** of OTCO was a learning hoot, followed by updates on the Canadian Organic Regime and the EU. **Sean Feder** (CCOF) and **Andrew Black** (OTCO) gave an excellent presentation on Unannounced Inspections.

Processing Topics, a panel facilitated by **Dag Falck** of Nature's Path, covered Commercial Availability, Updates on lists.605 & 606, Communicating Issues Clearly and an Audit Exercise Review.

Feedback from participants indicated this was the type of exchange of perspectives and current information, that keeps IOIA in demand as the training institution it is !

NOSB Bits, from the October 25-28 meeting

Nanotech Prohibition: The board approved its Nanotechnology recommendations with some additions reflecting public comments, including the following statement: "The NOSB proposes that Engineered Nanomaterials be prohibited from certified organic products as expeditiously as possible. We respectfully request that the NOP take immediate actions to implement this document."

Labeling Organic Honey: The current recommendation outlines proposed standards, building on a) the draft apiculture standard, created 2001, that established allowed and prohibited production practices for organic apiculture operations based on the requirements of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) and b) a document prepared by the Accredited Certifiers Association Apiculture Working Group and presented to NOSB in Fall 2009. The current recommendation also attempts to harmonize certain requirements - such as the forage zone, surveillance zone, and transition period - with EU and Canadian organic apiculture standards. After making several minor revisions to the draft apiculture standard, NOSB voted unanimously (14-0) to recommend it.

New NOSB Officers for 2011

Tracy Miedema - Chair
Joe Dickson - Vice Chair
Wendy Fulwider - Secretary

Next NOSB meeting -- Seattle, Washington
Tuesday - Thursday, April 26-29, 2011
Red Lion Hotel on Fifth Avenue
1415 5th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98101-2313
<http://www.seattleredlionfifthavenue.com/>

BOARD RESIGNATION: Annette Riherd-Organic Producer.
It is still not clear how this spot will be filled.

IOIA Down Under

By Margaret Scoles

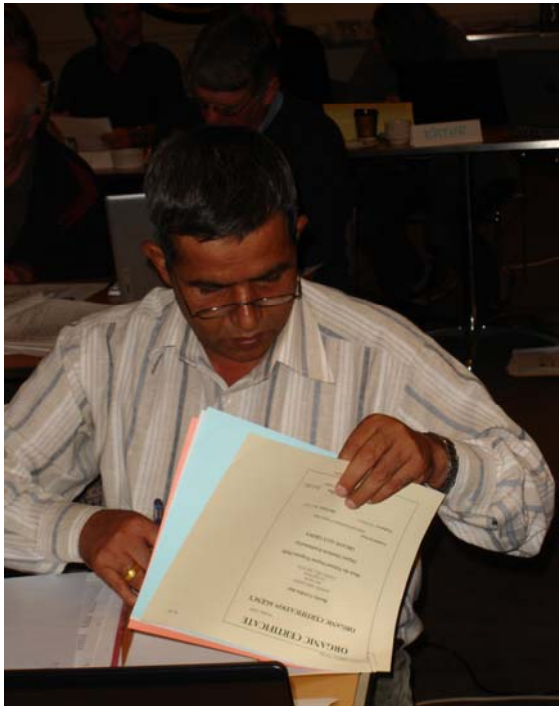
NASAA Certified Organic (NCO) and IOIA collaborated on August 17-18 to provide the first IOIA training in Australia since 2000. It was the first IOIA cosponsored advanced training in Australia. And it was the first IOIA advanced training to end with a test.

The training focused on NOP standards (crop, livestock, and handling) and ended with about two hours of audit training. It included a dinner update on developing NOP apiculture, aquaculture, and mushrooms standards. Participants took a virtual tour of a cheese plant, completed audit traceability tests and audit balance exercises, and practiced writing issues of concern from these exercises.

The course included 25 participants, of which about 20 were inspectors, some with more than 20 years of experience. Six of the group were NASAA staff, including Stephanie Goldfinch, Executive Officer of NCO. Most had some NOP training previously and many had done NOP inspections. The inspectors were independent contractors; many work for other certifiers in addition to NCO. NCO provided the training as an in-house training and managed the on-site logistics. I served as Trainer.



NCO Executive Officer Stephanie Goldfinch and Margaret Scoles celebrate a successful training.



Former BOD member Maheswar Ghimire of Nepal was among the group of inspectors.

Special thanks go to Delia Hollbach--originally of Perth, and now living in the Midwestern US. She is working through an inspector apprenticeship (I am one of her mentors). She was home visiting family at the time of the training. She met Bob and I at the airport in Melbourne and traveled with us to the training. What was the biggest laugh at the training, besides my accent? When Delia asked me if I'd like tea and how I'd like it. I answered "black tea with milk". Then I learned that tea comes two ways in Oz—with milk (white) or without milk (black).

The size of some Australian farms and stations (ranches) provide challenges most US inspectors don't often face. Planes are used to fly many of the larger pastures in the outback. One of the highlights of the training was when the formal training was all over. About a dozen of the inspectors treated my husband and I to dinner and a long visit. This conversation reinforced how inspectors all around the world have common concerns. How to keep up with standards changes? How much to charge? How to use certifiers' forms? How to be efficient with time and charge for the time it actually takes? How to have another life outside of inspecting?

NCO is accredited by the USDA NOP in crops, livestock, handling, and wild crop. Different from the US, each certifier has its own standards. The national standard is not mandatory, although AQIS organic requirements apply to all exported product. The NASAA crop and handling standards are very similar to the USDA NOP standards. However, the livestock standards are more similar to Europe and Canada. NOP livestock is important in Australia, with a significant amount of export to the USA.



Still smiling after 2 grueling days of training and a test.

BOD Minute Highlights – for full minutes, please go to the inspectors only section of the IOIA website, www.ioia.net **IOIA Board of Directors Conference Call July 20, 2010**

Attendance: Bob Durst, Eric Feutz, Jennie Clifford, Bob Howe (Alternate, Voting), and Margaret Scoles, ED. Michelle Sandy arrived by 7:20 due to technical difficulties. Absent: David Konrad and Julio Perez. Minute taking: Jennie Clifford

Treasurer's Report: Discussion regarding possible market for pipeline trainings in the NE due to the natural gas industry having gained a strong foothold in PA and NY. IOIA has had no pipeline trainings this year, a significant change from past three years. Gain from last quarter. Financially IOIA is on track. Bob asks for idea of finances for webinars. ED replies that webinars are difficult to generalize. They all carry their own costs, time involved and profit margins. Currently the area for the greatest cost savings and increase in efficiency is to give \$\$ collection over to GANC. Action Point: ED to run the numbers and provide update on financial numbers for webinars in future ED Reports.

Inspector Insurance: IOIA is collecting a list of companies who offer or are willing to offer insurance policies to inspector members. IOIA is not endorsing any specific insurance company. Action Point: Michelle and ED will continue to work on preparing insurance list for members.

International Trainers in the US: How can we support trainers coming to the US to train for IOIA? IOIA has discussed options with counsel. Action Point: Bob Durst and Margaret will continue work on this item.

Certifier Survey: A handful of ACAs have already expressed willingness to participate. The focus of the survey will be the Training Institute and ACA's inspector training needs.

JOIA has asked how IOIA will participate in the **World Congress** in September, 2011 and how/if IOIA will request JOIA to participate. Basic training with KOIA may occur. A low-budget Advanced International inspector symposium would be of interest to IOIA.

ED Report: ED looking forward to fundamental office personal staying put and ED remaining stationary for a period of time annually.

IOIA Board of Directors Conference Call August 31, 2010

Attendance: Bob Durst, Jennie Clifford, Michelle Sandy (excused herself at 8:05), Julio (Alternate, Voting, excused himself at 8:25), and Margaret Scoles, ED. Absent: David Konrad, Eric Feutz, Bob Howe. Minute Taking: Jennie Clifford

Treasurer's Report: The Finance Committee recommendation that IOIA retain a cash reserve of \$42,500 was approved; and ED will notify the BOD whenever cash on hand plus accounts receivable minus accounts payable is less or equal to the cash reserve amount. Michelle moved, Jennie seconded. The board deferred to move on the treasurer guidelines until the finance committee approves or disapproves them in committee.

Promotion: At the AZ BOD meeting the board discussed updating IOIA's logo and promo materials. The BOD decided to table promo material updates until post Expo East. Logo decision, brochure and display items will be picked up at the BOD meeting in September. It is the BOD's goal to have all updated materials completed and ready for distribution by the next AGM. Margaret and Michelle are definitively and Bob and Jennie may be attending Expo East. IOIA will arrange a social gathering in Boston during the Expo.

Insurance: Michelle succeeded in locating 3 insurance companies/underwriters who would create and insure inspectors for: Business liability and Errors and Omissions for an annual fee of \$1,590. This was the same figure Margaret was given for a group. Michelle also found companies who would separate Business liability and E&O. Michelle will discover whether the aforementioned policies are available countrywide. The question remains whether these policies are sufficient for most or all ACAs. Margaret and Bob will bring this to the next IOIA/ACA telecall.

IOIA's 2011 AGM: Looks like Tampa toward the end of March(?). It is a celebratory year! The board needs to decide on dates for its 2011 Board Retreat. We discussed scheduling the retreat two months after the AGM. We decided to postpone decisions until BOD members announced their intention to be re-nominated or not.

IOIA Board of Directors Conference Call September 21, 2010

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

Secretary's Report: The August 31 minutes were approved, Eric moved, Bob D. seconded, with the following emendation: The finance committee recommendation that IOIA retain a cash reserve of \$42,500 was approved.

Membership Dues 2011: Inspector Member dues last rate change was in 2009 and will remain constant at \$150 through 2011. Supporting Individual membership dues will be increased from \$100 to \$125. Supporting Business/Organization membership dues will be increased from \$125 to \$150. Supporting Certification Agency dues will be increased from \$275 to \$350. The motion to accept these items was made by Jennie, seconded by Bob Howe, and approved by the board. General agreement to strive to increase the number of supporting certification agency members.

Certifier Survey: The board agreed the Certifier Survey could be forwarded to the ACAs.

Accreditation: The board approved Kelly O'Donnell of OTCO as the ARP Certification Representative. Eric moved and Bob H. seconded the motion.

Insurance: A great deal of work has gone into researching Inspector Liability Insurance for our members. Philadelphia Insurance is a national primary carrier who will offer Liability and Error and Omissions Insurance to inspectors. Currently they are the only national entity offering a package satisfying the requirements set forth by IOIA. Selective Insurance is a carrier [see **BOD** page 17]

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Sansom and **Fred Ehlert**. They had attended the anti-fraud conference and gave me a highly favorable synopsis. Later that day, our group expanded as IOIA members converged on the Pho Hoa Restaurant in Chinatown for an IOIA member gathering and dinner. Joining Michelle, Maarten, Fred, and myself for dinner were **Al Johnson**, **Silke Fuchshofen**, **Lori Wyman**, **Grace Gershuny**, and **Kelly Monaghan**. The trade show opened on October 14. Our IOIA booth was supported for 3 days by an excellent cadre of volunteers: (thanks, Bob H, Silke, Al, and **Amy Leblanc!**). A few highlights of the event:

Organic Integrity from Farm to Table: a power session. Miles McEvoy, NOP, was the first speaker. He talked about compliance actions and transparency, and reiterated his earlier messages regarding 'The Age of Enforcement'. He addressed essential aspects of quality certification (thorough OSPs, quality review by qualified staff; quality inspections, sales and yield audits included; feed audits for livestock; and quality and well-trained inspectors). **Brenda Book** (WSDA Organic Certification Manager and president of NASOP) spoke on using residue testing in organic certification. She described WSDA's residue testing program. Sampling has been part of their program since the beginning. WSDA is the oldest state organic certification program. The testing program focuses on samples of the edible portion of the crop and looks primarily for organophosphates and organochlorines. Typically 5-10% of their clients have a sample pulled each year for testing. She said that they frequently find some residues of materials with no set tolerances for the crop. If residue tests are positive, a letter of non-compliance is issued. Most common reasons for residues are inadequate buffers or drift. Less common reasons are shared equipment and previous land use. However, they rarely find residues >5% EPA tolerance. **Jake Lewin** (CCOF) spoke on using unannounced inspections in organic certification. About 5% of the CCOF clients experience an unannounced visit each year. **Francis Blake** (Soil Association) spoke on the positive aspects of organic integrity, upholding organic principles and delivering what consumers expect. SA certifies 70-80% of the UK market. He urged being pro-active with the media and gave an example of an oat

fraud cause. They released the story first, and it became a 'non-story' whereas if they had tried to hide it, the press would likely have been negative. **Ken Commins** (IOAS) spoke on the anti-fraud initiative (similar to presentation at IOIA's AGM in Arizona).

OTA Annual Meeting, Oct 14: This was the start of OTA's 25th anniversary celebration.

Accredited Certifiers Association (ACA) Meeting, Oct. 15: IOIA had a requested a spot on the agenda to discuss with certifiers the Certifier Survey and our plans to expand the Training Institute. That includes creating an inspector accreditation program that is more meaningful for certifiers, inspectors, and the sector.

OTA's Annual Dinner Party, 25th anniversary celebration, Leadership Awards: Oct. 15. My good friend **Bob Quinn** of Kamut International was one of the two award recipients. Bob was a charter member of the NOSB. He was also one of the committee that reviewed my application to become an organic inspector in 1988. He and I have worked together in the founding of the Montana Organic Association. We have marched down the halls in DC together on OTA's Hill Day visiting our congressmen. I'd thought that I should attend because there would be so few Montanans. But that was before I saw the tables of his family members, including both of his parents, now in their 90's. His acceptance speech was extraordinary. **Theresa Marquez**, Chief Marketing Executive of Organic Valley, was equally honored.

IFOAM North America meeting, Oct. 16: IOIA supporting member **Brian Baker** (formerly of OMRI, now at Cornell University in New York) and **Katherine DiMatteo** (IFOAM BOD President) helped spearhead the meeting to discuss the IFOAM effort in North America. Brian has served on the IFOAM Standards Committee in the past and over the past 2 years as the informal and volunteer coordinator of the discussion. So far, the group is completely informal. More than 20 people attended the Boston meeting. Discussed goals are to improve the North American presence in IFOAM and to coordinate/communicate among the IFOAM members to try to improve voting participation, etc. No conclusions were reached about formally organizing. If an organization does form and uses

IFOAM in the name, all members must be IFOAM members on their own. General consensus was that a coordinator must be paid, also that members are reluctant or unable to pay double dues (once to IFOAM and once to IFOAM North America). So there seems to be potential for only a shoestring budget. **Amy Leblanc**, IOIA Inspector Member from Maine, attended this meeting with me. Amy has attended all four of the last IFOAM World Congresses and is making her plans for Korea.

And LOTS of other meetings. To name just a few -- We met with **Cyril Bourdarot** of ECOCERT about collaborating on training. **Michel Reynaud** of France, their ED, will be coming to the US for this training. We met with **Miles McEvoy** and **Melissa Bailey** of NOP on inspector training issues and were pleasantly surprised that we are very much on the same page.

NOSB, from page 9

Dr. Jennifer E. Taylor, a public interest representative from Tallahassee, Fla. Dr. Taylor is the Small Farms Program Coordinator at Florida A&M University. The program is designed to assist and equip underserved farming communities and their families toward sustainable development; and

Dr. Reuben C. Walker, a public interest representative from Lafayette, La. Dr. Walker is a researcher of small scale organic operations and professor and program leader at Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, La. He is currently involved in transitioning the university's pork farm to an organic production system.

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who fulfills the desired qualities though offers services exclusively in the eastern US. The BOD has decided to inform the membership of these options. Information will be posted on IOIA's website and updated regularly as more information becomes available. ED to write the draft and run it by the BOD before posting on website and to the IOIA Inspector list group.

IOIA Board of Directors

Conference Call October 19, 2010 – minutes pending approval. Next meeting: November 16.

GM Mosquitos Released in Caymans in 2009

Experts in the safety of genetically modified (GM) organisms have expressed concern over the release of GM mosquitoes into the wild on the Cayman Islands, which was publicised internationally only in October 2010 — a year after the initial release.

The trial of the OX513A strain of the dengue-carrying *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, developed by UK biotech company Oxitec, was carried out on Grand Cayman island by the Cayman Islands' Mosquito Research and Control Unit (MRCU) in 2009, followed by a bigger release between May and October this year. Together they represent the first known release of GM mosquitoes anywhere in the world.

Unpublished results of the trials, showing that the GM male mosquitoes competed with wild males, were presented at the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene annual meeting in the United States on 4 November.

The male GM mosquitoes mate with normal females to produce larvae that die unless the antibiotic tetracycline is present. In tetracycline's absence an enzyme accumulates to a toxic level, killing the larvae. The developers hope the strategy could be combined with other mosquito control methods to reduce transmission in dengue-prone areas.

Unlike malaria, which is also spread by mosquitoes, dengue outbreaks are unpredictable and bed nets are of limited use because dengue-spreading mosquitoes also bite during the day.

Ricarda Steinbrecher, a geneticist and co-director of EcoNexus — a UK-based non-profit research organisation — expressed surprise that the trials had occurred, saying that they had not been mentioned at the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety — which addresses international safety issues relating to GM organisms — in Nagoya, Japan, in October. She described the lack of publicity surrounding the trials as "worrying, both from the scientific perspective as well as public participation perspective".

Steinbrecher said that until a full, long-term environmental assessment of the Cayman trials has been carried out, the recently announced Malaysian trials of the same strain should not go ahead.

Just over three million male mosquitoes were released in the Cayman Islands this year. From May to October, scientists released batches of male mosquitoes in cages three times a week in a 40-acre (16-hectare) area. By August, mosquito numbers in that region dropped by 80 percent compared with a neighboring area where no sterile male mosquitoes were released.

Angela Harris, senior researcher at MRCU, told SciDev.Net that her unit consulted with several Cayman Islands' government departments beforehand.

"Currently there is a draft biosafety bill, and despite the fact that this bill has not yet been implemented we carried out a risk analysis and review of the trial as if this bill was already in place."

She said that there had been a newspaper article and public consultation within the Cayman Islands.

Luke Alphey, research director at Oxitec, said an extensive risk analysis was carried out and "we did lots of engagement work in Cayman, but no special effort either to spread the word internationally or not to [do so]". On the sidelines of a recent press conference in London, he said that he had not wanted to publicise the trial until the results were known. He did not know what the Nagoya meeting was, he said. An environmental assessment of the trial site is now being carried out. Alphey said that the experiment complied with the Cartagena Protocol because prior informed consent was obtained from the Cayman government.

John Marshall, of Imperial College London, who has argued that the Cartagena Protocol needs overhauling to deal with the special demands of GM insects, said: "Because the mosquitoes aren't going to spread to other countries, it's a national issue."

The next step for Oxitec, said Alphey, is to test the strategy in conjunction with other mosquito control methods.

Alphey said their GM mosquitoes can't permanently change the ecosystem because they only last for a generation. But to stamp out dengue in endemic areas like Asia and South America, billions of the special-order mosquitoes would likely be needed to stifle their wild counterparts.

Kathy Jo Wetter, a researcher with the ETC Group (Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Cooperation), a Canada-based organisation that promotes the socially responsible development of technologies, said ETC was unaware of

the release. "Oxitec considers its trial 'successful' just days after the experiment has ended," she said. "But unintended impacts on the environment cannot be known, and Oxitec's unproven technology could make things worse in the long term. There is no possibility of recall if something goes wrong — who takes responsibility in that case? Extreme techno-fixes require extreme precaution," she added.

Alphey said they are waiting for approval for the release of GM mosquitoes in Brazil, Panama and the United States.

Katherine Nightingale, www.SciDev.net, 11 November 2010

Some interesting comments followed this internet news article. They are posted here anonymously as food for thought:

"Here in Hawaii there are lots of animals and vegetation that was let loose by scientists and people who thought it was a brilliant idea. Every time it's been a disaster.

"In the article a representative says the mosquito won't get to other countries. How does he know that? The mosquito did not exist in Hawaii until the Europeans brought it in their ships by accident.

"The GM companies are using islands as laboratories because they know it's dangerous to let loose their experiments. They believe an island is cut off from the rest of the world. It is a lot like the thinking of scientists in the movie 'Jurassic Park'."

"It's very possible that this EXPERIMENT could be a complete success. Monsanto, etc. wants a string of successes. Unfortunately that will lead to everyone dropping their guard then something will eventually be created that is something these biotech creators thought was impossible. Something awful will occur and their apologies won't do much to pay for the loss of a species, a food group or a portion of mankind."

"People are forgetting that these pests also feed many species of bird, amphibian, fish, and even a few carnivorous plants, as well as being the #2 pollinator, just behind bees. What will happen to our food supply as a result of not having these pollinators? Will this cause the deaths of other animals, possibly even wiping out other species? Think about it."

U.S. Talking Patent Reforms

The New York Times headline in late October seemed too good to be true: “U.S. Says Genes Should Not Be Eligible for Patents.” In a friend-of-the-court brief filed in the landmark breast cancer gene case (now in appeal), the U.S. Dept. of Justice (DOJ) said patents on human and other genes should not be awarded because they are products of nature, not human inventions, and acknowledged that this position went against current practice at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Indeed, it does.

Many in the seed world are asking, What about plant genes? While the government sides with biotechnology interests in agreeing that patents on genetically engineered plants are warranted, this brief signals a crucial opportunity for discussion on abuses of the current patent system as it pertains to plant research. For example, broad patent claims limit breeders’ access to important germplasm. According to Professor Tom Michaels at the University of Guelph, patents on seed-reproducing plants not only limit use of these varieties in breeding programs, but limit the usefulness of unrelated germplasm that duplicates a claimed characteristic.

At this point in the discussion, we need further investigation into patent claims on plant DNA naturally occurring in nature, material the DOJ explicitly describes as not eligible for patents:

... the patent laws embrace gene replacement therapies, engineered biologic drugs, methods of modifying the properties of plants or generating biofuels, and similar advanced applications of biotechnology. Crossing the threshold of section 101, however, [of patent law] requires something more than identifying and isolating what has always existed in nature, no matter how difficult or useful that discovery may be.

The time is also ripe for an investigation into the use of restrictive licensing agreements, and not just in the context of biotechnology products. Licensing agreements have been in the press lately regarding USDA and industry research. But the use of these agreements, allegedly for products absent patents, demands the attention of the U.S. DOJ.

Posted on November 1, 2010 by Kristina Hubbard, Organic Seed Alliance, Seed Broadcast blog, Oct 16-29, 2010.

Study Shows Roundup Link to Birth Defects

A major new scientific study has confirmed growing conviction that the world’s most widely used chemical herbicide, Monsanto’s Roundup, is toxic and a danger to human as well as animal organisms. The latest scientific research carried out by a multinational scientific team headed by Professor Andrés Carrasco, head of the Laboratory of Molecular Embryology at the University of Buenos Aires Medical School and member of Argentina’s National Council of Scientific and Technical Research, presents alarming demonstration that Monsanto and the GMO agribusiness industry have systematically lied about the safety of Roundup. Roundup in far lower concentrations than used in agriculture is linked to birth defects. The health implications are huge. All major GMO crops on the market today are genetically manipulated to “tolerate” Roundup. It was initially patented and sold by Monsanto under the trade name Roundup, which also contains non-disclosed added chemicals the company refuses to divulge for “trade secret” reasons. As of 2005, 87% of all US soybean fields were planted with glyphosate-resistant varieties (also mostly sold by Monsanto) of GMO soybeans and sprayed with Roundup.

The problem with this cozy arrangement is that glyphosate has now been demonstrated to be linked to birth defects as one of the most highly toxic substances in agriculture. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) nonetheless continues to regard Roundup as “relatively low in toxicity, and without carcinogenic or teratogenic effects.”

Now a new international scientific team headed by Prof. Carrasco and including researchers from the UK, Brazil, USA, and Argentina have demonstrated that glyphosate causes malformations in frog and chicken embryos at doses far lower than those used in agricultural spraying and well below maximum residue levels in products presently approved in the European Union¹. The Carrasco group was led to research the embryonic effects of glyphosate by reports of high rates of birth defects in rural areas of Argentina where Monsanto’s GE “Roundup Ready” (RR) soybeans are grown in large

monocultures sprayed from airplanes regularly.

Carrasco presented his group’s findings at a press conference during the 6th European Conference of GMO Free Regions in the European Parliament in Brussels. He stated, “The findings in the lab are compatible with malformations observed in humans exposed to glyphosate during pregnancy.”

Widespread reports of human malformations began to be reported in Argentina beginning 2002, two years after widespread aerial spraying of Roundup and planting of RR Soybeans was begun. The test animals used by Carrasco’s group share similar developmental mechanisms with humans. The authors concluded that the results “raise concerns about the clinical findings from human offspring in populations exposed to Roundup in agricultural fields.” Carrasco added, “The toxicity classification of glyphosate is too low. In some cases this can be a powerful poison.”

The maximum residue level (MRL) allowed for glyphosate in soy in the EU was raised 200-fold from 0.1 mg/kg to 20 mg/kg in 1997 after Roundup Ready soy was commercialized in Europe. Carrasco found malformations in embryos injected with 2.03 mg/kg glyphosate. Soybeans can typically contain glyphosate residues of up to 17mg/kg.

In August 2010 an organized mob violently attacked people who gathered to hear Carrasco talk about his research in the town of La Leonesa, Chaco province. Witnesses implicated local agro-industry figures in the attack. Viviana Peralta, a housewife from San Jorge, Santa Fe, Argentina was hospitalized together with her baby after Roundup spraying from planes flying near her home. Peralta and other residents launched a lawsuit that resulted in a regional court ban on the spraying of Roundup and other agrochemicals near houses.

By F. William Engdahl, September 30, 2010. Download Chaco State Government report on the effects of agrochemical spraying on GM soy and rice on human health in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

¹ Paganelli, A., Gnazzo, V., Acosta, H., López, S.L., Carrasco, A.E. 2010. Glyphosate-based herbicides produce terato-genic effects on vertebrates by impairing retinoic acid signaling. Chem. Res. Toxicol., August 9, accessed here <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/tx1001749>



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2010 - 2011 Calendar

December 6 -10 Domestic Fair Trade Association. Hosted by Swanton Berry Farm and Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, UC Santa Cruz. Afternoon tour of Swanton Berry Farm and evening opening reception. Santa Cruz, CA.
<http://www.dftassociation.org/>

January 19 - 22, 2011 20th Annual Southern SAWG Conference, Chattanooga, TN.
<http://www.sawg.org/conference-.html>

January 23 - 26, 2011 USCC's 19th Annual Conference & Tradeshow. US Composting Council will be hosting the 19th Annual National Composting Conference and Exposition. Hyatt Regency in Santa Clara, CA.
<http://www.compostingcouncil.org/>

January 26-29, 2011 Animal, Vegetable, Mineral, e-Lectrical! 31st annual Ecological Farming Conference, Asilomar Conference Grounds, California.
www.eco-farm.org

January 27 -28, 2011 13th annual Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference, Madison, WI.
www.rivercountyrccd.org/valid.html

January 27-30, 2011 Guelph Organic Conference, Guelph, Ontario.
<http://www.guelphorganicconf.ca>

February 4-5, 2011 NPSAS Winter Conference. "Sustainability in a Changing World". Ramada Plaza Suites, Fargo, N.D. Workshops, exhibit hall, plus much more!! www.npsas.org

Feb 24-26, 2011 22nd Annual Organic Farming Conference, an educational

weekend packed with 70+ workshops, 150+ exhibitors, terrific food, foot stompin' entertainment, acres of food and farming books, and plenty of time and space to network and mingle.
www.mosesorganic.org

March 2 - 4, 2011 National Ag Ed Summit. Sponsored by The National Council for Agricultural Education and the National FFA Organization. Orlando, FL. www.naae.org/links/newsitems/

March 27, 2011 – 20th IOIA AGM, see page 1 for details

*Have a
Happy New Year,
Everyone!*

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