



KANSAS CITY FOOD CIRCLE

The KCFC Update: Fall 2008

Keep Getting Good Food Off-Season

Oh no, the growing season is over! How am I going to get good quality locally produced organic and free range food? Well, it does get tougher, but we do have some excellent opportunities:

Winter Organic Markets. The winter farmers' market at *BADSEED*, located at 1909 McGee in downtown Kansas City, will be open on Fridays 4 - 8 PM from November through January (with the exception of Dec. 26th). The following foods will be available: lamb and sheep cheese from Green Dirt Farm; mushrooms from Beau Solais Farm; organic grass-fed beef from Wells Family Farm; winter veggies from Root Deep Urban Farm; poultry, pork & eggs from Burnett's Heritage Farms; winter veggies, baked goods, preserves, and eggs from Western Hills Produce; artisan Breads from Roaring River Bread Company; organic/fair trade coffee from Puddin' Head Coffee; and local canned delights from YUM TUM. For info, go to www.badseedfarm.com

Also, **KC Organics & Natural Market** will hold its annual holiday market on Saturday, December 13, from 9am to 2pm at Notre de Scion, 10631 Wornall Rd, ¼ mile south of I-435 in Kansas City, Mo. Stock up on fall produce and certified organic meats plus preserves and canned items, fair trade coffee, honey, organic body care products such as soaps and salves and unique gift items. For more info, call Peter Stauffacher at 816-444-3663.

Squash Blossom Local Food Buying Club
The Squash Blossom LFBC puts together bulk orders for non-perishable crops like squash, sweet potatoes, flour and pecans that are available from local and regional producers as well as value-added products like canned vegetables. The buying club also has a source

for fresh spinach, kale, carrots and other winter vegetables. Then, every month or so, the Club puts together an order for certain non-local products (like oats) available from a natural foods warehouse in Denver.

Orders are solicited via an email list. Pick-up is at Badseed Market, 1909 McGee, in downtown KCMO. Plans are under way to eventually create a formal retail COOP. The coordinator of this effort is Steve Mann. For more information, see <http://groups.google.com/group/SquashBlossomKC> or call Steve at 816-352-9213. – *Craig Volland*

KCFC offered grant to promote CSAs & Markets

The KCFC has been offered a grant to promote CSAs and organic farmers' markets. The KCFC would act as a subcontractor to Kansas State University, who was awarded the USDA grant, and we would work with KSU's Growing Growers Project. The details have not been worked out yet, but the overall goal is to attract and train more CSA farmers and encourage more production by existing CSA farmers. In turn, the KCFC would receive funds to enlarge the pool of eater participants and help match them up with farmers. We would also have some funds to better promote organic farmers markets. - CV

Farmers Expos Set for 2009

Please mark your calendar for the Kansas City Food Circle's 11th annual *Eat Local - Exhibition of Farmers*. The first event will be held on **Saturday, March 28, 2009 at the Shawnee Civic Center in Shawnee, Kansas**, and the second is set for **Saturday, April 4, 2009 at the Roger T. Sermon Community Center in Independence, Missouri**. These are the same locations used in 2008. Our farmer-members should expect to receive their registration materials around February 1st. - CV

GAO Report Slams CAFO Pollution

The Government Accountability Office (“GAO”) released a study in September saying that Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (“CAFOs”) can emit dangerous levels of airborne and waterborne pollutants. CAFOs can emit unsafe levels of ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and particulate matter. They degrade water quality with nitrogen, phosphorus, and bacteria.

The GAO said that the EPA has not adequately assessed the extent to which CAFO pollution is hurting human health and the environment. At least 15 studies have directly linked animal waste pollutants to specific health or environmental impacts and 12 other studies have made indirect links.

Indeed, this summer, **Minnesota’s Department of Health advised neighbors of a dairy CAFO to evacuate their homes because of hydrogen sulfide emissions.** Later, the US Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry confirmed that **the emissions constituted a “public health hazard.”**

The 18-month GAO study was requested by several congressional committees which are concerned by an EPA proposal to eliminate reporting requirements for significant air emissions from animal waste and to weaken water pollution rules. “This GAO study confirms that the Bush Administration’s plan to exempt industrial sized animal feeding operations from emissions reporting requirements is nothing more than a favor to Big Agribusiness at the expense of the public health and communities living near these facilities,” said Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), the Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. (Source: *News from Congress*: (A joint release of the US House Committees on Energy and Commerce and Transportation and Infrastructure). September 24, 2008) http://energycommerce.house.gov/Press_110/110_EHM_CAFOGAO.pdf

As feared, the EPA issued new Clean Water Act rules on October 31. They eliminate the need for most CAFOs to even file for a permit as long as they promise not to discharge their waste from lagoons directly to waterways. CAFOs are not

even required to make plans to control runoff when they apply the manure wastewater to fields.

To a certain extent, the EPA’s hands were tied by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on this issue. Fortunately, most states require all CAFOs with the “potential to discharge” waste to waterways to obtain a permit, and state rules can be stricter than federal. It’s just a matter of time, though, before Big Ag prevails on state legislatures to weaken the law to the lowest common denominator.

The new Congress needs to act fast to strengthen the Clean Water Act to adequately deal with CAFOs. In any event, the best thing we eaters can do to fight animal factories is to eat less meat and/or ensure we buy only from free-range producers, like growers who belong to the KC Food Circle. If we reduce the market for factory meat, we reduce the pollution and animal cruelty.

For more on CAFOs, we recommend that you read <http://www.kansas.sierraclub.org/> for an excellent article by Ken Midkiff. Click on “*CAFOs Have No Science to Stand On*” in the Oct/Nov 08 Kansas Chapter Sierra Club newsletter. Ken was formerly the national director of the Sierra Club’s anti-CAFO campaign and is a leading authority on this subject. – CV

Egg Carton Labels & Animal Welfare

By a vote of more than 60%, California voters approved Proposition 2 which bans by 2015 three of the cruelest animal factory confinement systems: *laying-hen battery cages*, *veal crates* and *sow gestation crates*. According to *Farm Sanctuary*, California becomes the 5th state to outlaw sow gestation crates (joining Florida, Arizona, Oregon and Colorado) and the third to outlaw veal crates (joining Arizona and Colorado). It becomes the first state to ban battery cages holding laying hens.

We can hope that this trend will find its way to Kansas & Missouri. In the meantime, we can help by buying our free-range meats and eggs

from Kansas City Food Circle's member farmers. (see *Farmers Pledge* at www.KCFoodCircle.org)

If you get your eggs from the grocery store, look for animal welfare labels. According to the *New York Times* (Sept. 17), four such labels are in use. The best is "Animal Welfare Approved," by the Animal Welfare Institute. This certification is given only to independent family farmers with flocks up to 500 birds. Birds spend all their time on pesticide-free pasture. They must have access to dust baths and cannot be fed animal byproducts.

"Certified Humane Raised and Handled," by Humane Farm Animal Care, and "American Humane Certified," by the American Humane Society require that hens be kept "cage free" but not necessarily outdoors. They have standards for perches and nesting boxes, and say that each hen must have at least 324 and 225 square inches of living space respectively.

Watch out, though, for the "United Egg Producers Certified" label. It's clearly industry *greenwashing* because it would perpetuate battery cages and industrial techniques. This standard allows as little as 67 square inches for each hen, only about 70% of the area of an 8½" x 11" sheet of paper. - CV

Balance

I recently attended a lecture/discussion – a *GMO Awareness Day*, with Jeffrey M. Smith, speaker/author – put on by Nature's Pantry of Independence, MO. I came away with a refreshed respect for the threats inherent in the development of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and genetically engineered (GE) foods, but my own basis for supporting local organic food systems remains unchanged. Yes, read the literature and watch the films and get involved – you'll learn how GMO/GE foods *are* potentially hazardous to us as we produce them and when eat them. So fuggedaboutit – I'll find ways to remove them from my diet, somehow - but I have many other reasons to resist the use of "shotgun" genetic modification as a way of "improving" food production. My personal stance on fighting GMOs and GE food sources is based on my

understanding of the earth as a closed ecological system – there's no way out of it, really.

We are victims of our own "Progress." It may seem to be an oversimplification, but I have in mind a certain toy or educational prop which is, in fact, a microcosm – a sealed glass eco-sphere filled with living seawater, a few small shrimp and a bit of rooted seaweed or algae. You may have seen one of these in a catalog, they have been around a while and they last for years, and they serve as an almost perfect example of the *balance* that our species has been attacking for generations. In a proper setting, with not too much sun and not too little, the plant grows and the shrimp eat it and digest it and excrete byproducts and CO2 and the plant produces shrimp-food and oxygen – our water, nitrogen, carbon and oxygen cycles sealed up in a long-lasting model we can observe and reflect upon.



I think I get it. The only clean, reliable and renewable energy input we have on Earth is the sun. All other resources - elements such as oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen (to name just a few) and molecular compounds like water and carbon-dioxide - are (in somewhat balanced quantities) still available to us. If left un-abused by us, these resources tend to remain in various life-sustaining forms and amounts which do not put us (humans) and our other environmental partners into jeopardy. It is when we allow BIG BUSINESS to promote unbalanced human population growth (a natural requirement for their corporate profits to increase) that we risk polluting the Earth with ourselves - by buying into "feed the world" and other supposedly "humane" arguments, we risk our very existence being mined and wasted as recklessly as any other natural resource.

How did we get Here? The oil-based parts of the Industrial Revolution have (largely) run amok for over 100 years. Cheap fossil fuels have resulted in interrelated development booms - long-haul transportation and petrochemical food production are among the biggest of these - and, as our fossil fuel resources dwindle, we are paying the price for reliance upon and overuse of the technologies and methodologies which are bound to and limited by these finite resources.

The major card-holders in the ongoing fossil-fuel poker game could not care less. If "progress" results in more sales of their products, they are happy.

Never mind that the use of fossil fuels pollutes our living environment in all sorts of ways, increases our risks of cancer and other diseases in all sorts of ways, encourages the overuse of natural resources in all sorts of ways, encourages overpopulation in all sorts of ways. *The oil must flow.*

GMO and GE food production (most of it, anyway) encourages continued reliance upon and overuse of petrochemical farming technology. For example, *Roundup Ready* crops are (basically) designed to thrive in a poisoned environment, made bio-resistant to artificial herbicides (agri-linked products) which kill all other types of plant life. Combine that eco-insult with the insecticides and fungicides used to "optimize" the production of these engineered crops, the soil becomes salted with the excess and is left virtually barren, needing large amounts of seasonally-applied fertilizer (usually a Monsanto-recommended type) to grow anything at all. Throughout the year, the damaged soil allows irrigation and rainwater to wash pollutants and loosened soil downstream or, in a converted flat desert environment (like much of California), agri-pollutants simply accumulate along with the soluble mineral salts brought in with the irrigation water.

Recovering our Balance - When our basic inputs are imported from far away (fossil fuels) and our outputs are shipped away from us (long-haul food distribution, downstream waste removal) how *can* we recover our balance?

Go back to the *soil*.

Our local organic and free-range food producers have, in their emulation of ancient growing methods, the means to help us reduce our carbon (and pollution) footprint in a variety of ways. Chief among these benefits are these: eliminating the use of petrochemical herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and fertilizers, and utilizing low- and no-till farming practices. Organic growers minimize the use of fossil fuels in food production, reduce the release of CO₂ and other pollutants into the atmosphere, reduce & mitigate runoff and other types of water pollution, and maximize retention and development of natural, living topsoil.

Yes, we are bonded to our soil. Admittedly, our water, oxygen and CO₂ require global ecosystems to recycle effectively, and some minerals need to be replenished from time to time, but the nitrogen and carbon in our soil can largely be retained and recycled locally. Aerobic composting of digestible waste produces fewer greenhouse gases, sequesters

carbon in a natural and reusable way, and compost replenishes the living soil so it can bind and retain minerals more effectively.

Today, with few exceptions, we move our "waste" as far downstream as possible, as if it has no value at all. The fact is, when we stop using petrochemicals and learn to remove toxins from our sewage systems, our own fecal matter will become a viable renewable resource – until then, we eaters are flushing most of our nutrients down the toilet.

Earth is not a Toy - There's a reason why the system in the glass bubble survives as long as it does, completely sealed up, with only the sun as a daily energy input – it is completely natural for it to do so. The shrimp isn't addicted to cranberries from Madagascar and it has no compulsion to flush "waste" matter into oblivion. It stays close to the food and nourishes it with byproducts of its own life. There is no waste.

If *you* find this argument compelling, please pass it on to ten more people, and encourage them to do the same.

Thanks for reading! - Dave Lawrence

P.S. Many growers have maintained sustainable, local solutions while Big Oil has made trillions of dollars promoting and creating an oil-based, global population. Show your support for balance and sustainability - vote with your feet, and visit your local organic food provider today.



This UPDATE is a KC Food Circle original publication. Past issues are archived at www.KCFoodCircle.org For more information, you are welcome to write to KC Food Circle, P.O. Box 45195, KCMO, 64171 or call our hotline at 816-374-5899.