

Minutes of the WCC-67, Western Coordinating Committee for Sustainable Agriculture,
2001 Planning Meeting:

“ Organic Farming Research and Education in the West”

Albuquerque Convention Center
East Complex, Dona Ana Room

Thursday August 9, 2001
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Chairman Sean L. Swezey (University of California) and Vice-Chairman Steve Guldan (New Mexico State University) convened the WCC-67 for Sustainable Agriculture at 8:30 am. The chair asked for all members to sign in. The following members signed in:

Frank Cruz, University of Guam, fcruz@uog.edu
Aurora G. Del Rosario, Palau Community College/Micronesia, aderose@palaunet.com
Jim Dyer, Colorado Organic Producers Assoc. & NCAT, jadyer@frontier.net
Adriane Elliot, Colorado State University, aelliott@holly.colostate.edu
Brad Geary, University of Idaho, bgeary@uidaho.edu
Hudson Glimp, University of Nevada-Reno, hglimp@cabnr.unr.edu
David Granatstein, Washington State University CSANR, granats@wsu.edu
Alan Gray, University of Wyoming, alangray@uwyo.edu
Steve Guldan, New Mexico State University, sguldan@nmsu.edu
Adrian Hinton, Utah State University, adrianh@ext.usu.edu
Jim Jacobs, University of Wyoming, jjj@uwyo.edu
Del Jimenez, New Mexico State University, djimenez@nmsu.edu
Milt McGiffen, University of California, milt@citrus.ocr.edu
Phil Rasmussen, Western SARE, wsare@mendel.usu.edu
Pam Roy, Friends of the Farmers' Markets, pamelaroy@aol.com
Alex Stone, Oregon State University, stonea@bcc.orst.edu
Sean L. Swezey, University of California, findit@cats.ucsc.edu
Laura Tourte, University of California Cooperative Extension, ljtourte@ucdavis.edu
Ron Walser, New Mexico State University, rwalser@nmsu.edu
Deborah Young, University of Arizona, djyoung@ag.arizona.edu

Vice Chair Guldan assembled agendas and committee packets which included the 2000 petition (ratified from October 1, 2000 – September 30, 2005), two survey reports concerning organic farming research priorities and activities, (published by the Organic Farming Research Foundation) and the following agenda:

8:30 Coffee and welcome

9-9:20 Sean L. Swezey and Steve Guldan, Chair and Vice Chair (convening petitioners):

“WCC-67: Petition goals and opportunities for collaborative work in the West”

9:20-9:50 Laura Tourte---University of California Cooperative Extension, Santa Cruz Co, California

"Growth of Organic Production in California"

9:50-10:15 David Granatstein---Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources, Washington State University

"Growth of Organic Tree Fruit Production in the West"

10:15-10:45 Break and discussion

10:45-11:15 Jill Auburn, Director, USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program

"National SARE program and policy focus on organic farming research: past, present, and future"

11:15-12:00 Discussion with Jill and Phil Rasmussen, Western Region –SARE Program

“Organic farming research and education needs in the Western Region”

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:00-1:30 Milt McGiffen, Specialist, University of California, Riverside

"Organic farming in the Sonoran Desert"

1:30-2:00 Pam Roy---New Mexico Friends of the Farmers’ Markets

"Overview of Farmers and Direct Marketing in New Mexico"

2:00-2:45 Invited State reports (10 minutes each)

2:45-3:00 Break

3:00-4:30 Discussion of survey data from organic growers and land grants; do we have an adequate assessment of needs? Establishment of committee goals and potential coordinating activities. Planning for future committee meeting and possible regional conference

4:30 Adjourn

Chair Swezey explained the process of the new petition and objectives and expected outcomes of the committee:

Objectives:

- 1) Stimulate multi-state projects, encourage on-farm research
- 2) Collate state reports on activities
- 3) Assist WSARE in priority setting and review of programs and proposals
- 4) Hold an annual meeting with an “action” theme for presentations, tours, and coordinated projects
- 5) Build partnerships among diverse sustainable agriculture stakeholders

Outcomes:

- 1) Coordinate successful multi-state sustainable agriculture projects
- 2) Annual meeting, minutes, and reports
- 3) create outreach media (websites, extension publications, etc.)
- 4) key research issues statements or findings

A Chair, Vice-chair, and Secretary will constitute the WCC-67 officers. Positions will be filled by rotation. The Chair is responsible for the program, the Vice-chair for meeting locale and logistics, and the Secretary for the minutes and reports.

Chair Swezey explained the adoption of the program theme: “Organic Farming Research and Education in the West” and possible activities around this and other petition themes in the future. Future meetings would more formal reporting on state activities and also include a tour, adding an extra day to the program. Chair Swezey and Vice-chair Guldan volunteered to plan the agenda and tour and host the next meeting in September 2002 as part of the National Small Farms Conference in Albuquerque. The Chairs noted that the Committee does not have a Secretary. The Chair agreed to summarize the planning meeting as 2001 minutes.

Laura Tourte (University of California) then gave a presentation entitled:

“Growth of Organic Production in California (1995-1998).

A handout was provided. She reported a 20-50% growth in California organic produce declared value (1998= \$158 million). She noted a bifurcation of income levels in organic production in California, and a general increase in size of operations. The website www.AIC.ucdavis.edu can be accessed for the California organic production data publications.

David Granatstein (Washington State University) then gave a presentation entitled:

“Growth of Organic Tree Fruit Production in the West”

A handout was provided. Organic product consumption trends are encouraging for a number of reasons (more research support, more regulatory certainty, GMO-free) He reported an increase in organic apple acreage to a total of possibly 15-20,000 acres in the region (trends in other fruit are not as accelerated). An oversupply and price/variety crisis in apples exists. A series of research models and needs and thoughtful questions on what constitutes organic farming research priorities were discussed. The website <http://www.tfrec.wsu.edu> (organic page) can be accessed for organic production information.

Jill Auburn (USDA-SARE Director, Washington, D.C) then gave a presentation entitled:

"National SARE Program and policy focus on organic farming research: past present, and future"

A handout was provided (see attached file) with SARE and SARE-related websites. Organic production has always been a subset of sustainable agriculture. A sea change of interest was created around the public comments around the new national rules. The USDA Economic Research Service website has a page on 1997 state-by-state organic crop statistics, and the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service website has National Organic Program and Rule information. A preliminary analysis of the SARE grants portfolio indicated that 12% of total SARE granting was "strongly organic." The Western Region was determined to have the lowest percentage of "strongly organic." More outreach, education, and training projects are needed (certifiers will not be allowed to give recommendations). Priority shifting away from performance comparisons to methods research. Other regions have prioritized organic research themes.

Phil Rasmussen, Director of the Western Region -SARE Program
Utah State University, then gave a presentation on:

"Organic farming research and education needs in the Western Region"

WCC-67 was originally formed as a technical committee to WSARE, but in later years, needed to stand on its own as a project coordinating committee, core technical reviewers, source, and an advisory group. If a WCC-67 member would like to serve as a WSARE reviewer, that member should send an e-mail to Phil at the e-mail address listed above in the members sign-up. WCC-67 needs to be sustainable, with topics that will attract new members from the states. WSARE may be able to fund committee activities via solicited (competitive) or unsolicited (discretionary) sources. WSARE website should be consulted for grant and information resources. October dates for submission were noted. A Southern Region SARE conference will be held Oct. 23-26 in North Carolina (similar concept to WSARE Portland Conference in March 2000). The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) will hold its international meeting in Victoria, BC in August 2002.

Milt McGiffen, Specialist, University of California, Riverside then gave a presentation entitled:

"Organic Farming in the Sonoran Desert"

Sonoran desert organic production has a fall (vegetables) and a winter (melons) season, with summer cover crops now an integral part of organic production (instead of summer fallow). Cowpea/compost and other rotations show organic matter and weed control effects.

Pam Roy, Director, New Mexico Friends of the Farmers' Markets, then gave a presentation entitled:

"Overview of Farmers and Direct Marketing in New Mexico"

New Mexico has 28 certified farmers markets with 5,000 customers in the Santa Fe market on Saturdays. The Santa Fe market grosses \$1.5 million and is the largest in the state. The 3,000 markets in the United States represent a doubling in the last five years. These markets have been the major support vehicles for small, organic, and part-time farming viability. They fulfill an important obligation to the consumer to increase the quality and local origin of food, and the preservation of agriculture. Can we keep local, direct-marketed farming viable in the face of the \$82 billion fast-food industry? Consumers are looking for "an experience" and direct farmer contact/information. New Mexico has formed a New Mexico organic wheat products and livestock (lamb) cooperative. Farm-to school programs, gardens, and school field trips can increase food literacy in younger generation. Nutritional programs for at-risk consumers can serve specific public health needs. Farmers markets keep New Mexico beautiful!

The following state representatives then gave invited short state reports:

David Granatstein: Washington (see attached file)

Activities and items noted: certified land at several research stations
Organic raspberry, dryland crops, fruit research
Faculty survey has been done (needs and activities assessment)
Sustainable agriculture workgroup formed
statewide organic compliance trainings

Steve Guldan: New Mexico

activities and items noted: green manure/chile/ sweet corn rotations at Alcalde
introduction of legumes in rotations
herbs/medicinal plants research
biological control of rangeland weeds program
drip irrigation/livestock extension efforts
acreage to be certified at Alcalde-grapes/understory covercrops research

Jim Dyer, Adriane Elliot: Colorado

Activities and items noted: Jim Dyer provided a handout
Colorado has over 200 organic growers, 45,000 non-pasture acres, large acreage of organic pasture

enlightened and sophisticated producers and consumers organizations
producer-researcher dialogue has started-would not take a lot of effort to expand; data gaps still exist that could be overcome
NCAT, SAN, and ATTRA websites have organic information
Studies on long-term covercrop/manure treatments exist
Rogers Mesa organic fruit production project
student organic vegetable production project at CSU
vermicomposting project for vegetable production; large tonnage of food waste managed—on-campus student vegetable trial/market on campus; K runoff evaluation of manure, compost, vermicompost

Deborah Young: Arizona

activities and items noted: Organic Beef Producers Roundtable
need for assistance in research and organic marketing

Alex Stone: Oregon

activities and items noted: OSU student organic farming club on 3 acres-e-mail sales; symphytan, compost tea, SAR, manures-cover crops/disease suppression projects

Alan Gray: Wyoming

activities and issues noted: R&E Centers do not have certified acreage, interest from dairy industry in organic alfalfa hay and in trainings for organic farming regulations, natural beef an important possibility, organic crop production course in UW Plant Sciences Department; sub-surface drip irrigation projects.

Brad Geary: Idaho

Activities and issues noted: green manure projects, organic hay production waste management/composting enterprises, mint oil use, green manure/onions project

Adrian Hinton: Utah

Issues noted:

A general discussion followed in which a number of committee issues and project possibilities were discussed. The Chair and Vice-Chair suggested Albuquerque again for the next meeting venue, in concert with the National Small Farm Conference in September 2002. The Chair agreed to make contact with program directors to create a common small farm-organic farming research and education needs meeting for both WCC-67 members and Small Farm Conference attendees. David Granatstein and Sean Swezey discussed the possibilities of securing WSARE funds for regional trainings on organic certification, rules, materials, and methods. Nearly all state representatives expressed an interest in developing specific trainings

in their states. Granatstein and Swezey agreed to bring a proposal to committee members. In general, committee members were encouraged to evaluate organic farming research and education needs in their states for possible follow-up by the Chair in preparation for a project(s). The survey reports from the Organic Farming Research Foundation, included in the meeting packet, could serve as a starting reference point.

The following websites were listed by committee members as relevant to organic farming research and education issues and needs:

www.ANRcatalog.ucdavis.edu (California organic apple manual and other publications)

www.AIC.ucdavis.edu (California organic production trends publications)

www.usda.ers (1997 national organic crop acreage)

www.ATTR.org (ATTR organic technical information)

www.tfrec.wsu.edu (organic and integrated fruit production)

www.sarep.ucdavis.edu (University of California-SAREP)

www.ofrf.org (Organic Farming Research Foundation)

www.wsare.usu.edu (Western SARE)

www.cog.ca/ifoam2002 (IFOAM conference information)

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.