



Season 6, Volume 18

NEWS FROM PROVIDENT ORGANIC FARM

"Dedicated to a safe, just and sustainable food system."

www.providentfarm.com



Oct. 14 - Oct. 20, 2007

LAST MAN STANDING, PART 2

Recently there have been stories on television and in the Daily Times about the Harcum family dairy in Mardela Springs being the last dairy in Wicomico County. Chesapeake Farms in Berlin advertizes that they are the only dairy in Worcester County. These are not isolated cases; dairy farming is suffering throughout the country, along with most other sectors of the agricultural economy. The rhetoric of our elected officials is 'Save the Family Farm' while the policies enacted have exactly the reverse effect. I could easily build a case that this is intentional. Actually, organic farming is the only sector of the agricultural economy that has shown growth (average 20% per year) in recent history. Another interesting tidbit is that within the organic community of farmers more women are entering farming than men. Hallelujah! Farming back in the hands to whom it belongs.

I became curious about the condition of farming in Wicomico County (statistically speaking) and checked with the Extension Service for some information. In 1992 there were 684 farms in Wicomico County. In 2002 the number dropped to 512, a loss of 172 farms. I suspect the rate of loss has increased, but assuming it remained the same, we have lost an additional 86 farms since 2002. If we project this out 25 years at the present rate of loss there will be no farms in Wicomico County. In 1992 there were 91,254 acres of farmland in the county. In 2002 the number dropped to 88,470, a loss of 2,784 acres. The average size of Wicomico farms grew from 133 acres to 173 acres in the 10 year period. From these figures one could draw the conclusion that consolidation accounted for some of the farm loss during this period, but I suspect development accounted for the overwhelming majority. In 2002 the total value of sales for Wicomico County was \$174,594,000, poultry and egg sales were

\$147,281,000 (84%), nursery and greenhouse sales were \$13,594,000 (08%), grains and oilseeds sold for \$7,534,000 (04%). I did not see any numbers for vegetable production, but the above figures leave \$6,185,000 (04%). In my mind, that's too many eggs (and chickens) in one basket! A more diverse, balanced farm economy would have a better chance for survival in the face of such heavy-handed development pressure as we are now experiencing. The average age of a farm operator went from 52.8 years to 54.1 years. I believe the national average is somewhere near 58 years and aging more rapidly than here in Wicomico. The percentage of female operators grew from 10.5% to 13.7%. I hope these numbers demonstrate that Wicomico County has more young people coming into farming and a growing percentage of them will be women. What these statistics reveal to me is that the agricultural economy is not on life support as with most of the rest of the country but must be strengthened to withstand the onslaught of the money grubbers.

Onward,
Jay

IN YOUR SHARE

Greens
Sweet potatoes or squash
yellow, green or Tongue of Fire shell beans
peppers
And More!

LESSON AT THE WINE FESTIVAL

Look for LESSON's "Local Ladle" Soup Kitchen at the upcoming Autumn Wine Festival on October 20-21st at Pemberton Park in Salisbury. Support Delmarva's family farmers, fishermen, and independently-owned restaurants, especially those using sustainable practices that promote environmental stewardship. As a demonstration of just how delicious this can be, LESSON, the Lower Eastern Shore Sustainable Organic Network, is pleased to present: The Local Ladle.

Area farmers and fishermen have collaborated with regional culinary talents to serve us a mouthwatering variety of soups made with ingredients from within 100 miles of Salisbury, Maryland. Each bowl of soup is served with locally made, bakery fresh bread and can be followed with a cup of freshly brewed, fair trade, organic coffee.

RECIPE

Bean Soup with Kale (from USA Weekend)

1 tbsp canola or olive oil
8 lg garlic cloves, minced
1 med onion chopped
4 cups chopped raw kale
4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
2-15 oz cans white beans (cannellini or navy), undrained
4 plum tomatoes, chopped (I used canned, diced)
2 tsp dried italian seasoning
salt and pepper to taste
1 cup chopped parsley

In a large pot heat olive oil. Add garlic and onion, saute until soft. Add Kale and saute until wilted. Add 3 cups of broth, 2 cups of beans, all of the tomatoes, herbs, salt and pepper. Simmer 5 minutes. In a blender or food processor, mix remaining broth and beans until smooth. Stir into soup to thicken. Simmer 15 minutes. Ladle into bowls, sprinkle with parsley.

** I added Italian turkey sausage, casings removed (Shady Brook Farms) with the onions. I also used the fresh herbs that Jay gave us in the beginning of the season along with the dried (sage, thyme, oregano) as well as Jay's garlic. Flavors intensify overnight.

Eating locally not only helps our family farmers but also builds our local economy and reduces our environmental impact. Studies show the typical Caesar salad travels 3,000 miles to reach your dining room table, giving "Meals-on-Wheels" on a whole new meaning in terms of fossil fuel consumption. LESSON shows it can be easy and fun to lighten our carbon footprint.

It's simple, nutritious and downright delicious:

EAT LOCAL FOOD!!

CSA members: We're are still seeking volunteers to help serve soup and coffee during the festival from 10:00 to 6:00 on Saturday, and especially, 12:30 to 6:00 on Sunday. We also need to borrow some equipment, including: 4 ounce soup ladles, meat thermometers, pump style thermoses, electric hot plates, propane camping stoves, and 13-gallon trash containers.

Please contact Patti (ericksonpatti@yahoo.com 410 677-0788) if you can help us out with this exciting opportunity!



UPCOMING EVENTS

**THIS WEEKEND!!!
SEE LESSON AT THE WINE
FESTIVAL!! INFO. ABOVE.**

GLEANNING AND POTLUCK: Bring a covered dish for all to share; enjoy fellowship and food then pick what's left in the field. A great time for all. November 18th at the farm.