



NEWS FROM PROVIDENT ORGANIC FARM



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

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TENSE FUTURE

Last Friday I went to the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy's annual conference at Chesapeake College. I missed the morning keynote address titled 'Planning for a Viable Food System' by Deanna Glosser, which Kate Patton said was very good.

Most of the other speakers focused on 2 topics; the emerging grape growing and winery industry in Maryland and agritourism. Both were touted as potential saviours of farms in the region. Ginger Myers noted that the term agritourism can now be found in the latest edition of Webster's Dictionary. One speaker discussed reasons farmers quit farming. Number one on the hit list was the inability to find good, reliable help. Sounds familiar!

I have no problem with grape growers and wineries. It looks like a strong, viable enterprise, if a farmer has deep enough pockets to invest for a minimum of 5 years without a return and is willing to jump through a myriad of regulatory hoops. However, I do have a few thoughts I would like to share about agritourism.

If agritourism amounts to taking disconnected folks on wagon tours across lovely pastures dotted with happily grazing sheep or cows, along fields of vegetables with smiling college students hoeing or harvesting veggies, through a greenhouse filled with lovely little geraniums, then agritourists should also take a tour of a chicken house where birds are packed in shoulder to shoulder, standing in their own excrement for their brief miserable life. Agritourists should visit farms where poorly compensated and usually illegal migrant workers toil in the hot sun and run for the woods when an unfamiliar vehicle approaches often leaving their small children in the backseat of their car 'playing' until the coast is clear. How about a visit to a farm auction where the tourists could watch a farmer's equity sold off dirt cheap? For those tourists who want to add a little risk to their farm tour, we could have them stand in a field of ripening cantaloupes while a plane flies over at a dangerously low altitude applying an equally dangerous pesticide. 'Look Mommy, the pilot is throwing up.'

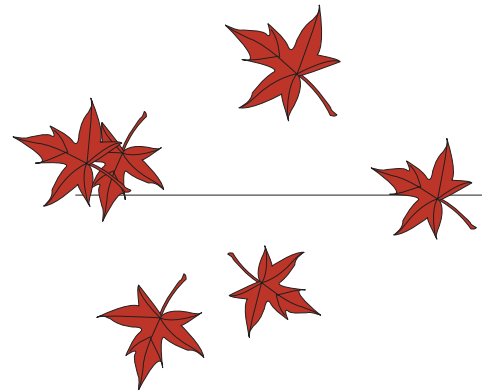
I am not opposed to agritourism, it has its place. I believe it has saved farms from bankruptcy and is a good way for the disconnected to gain some understanding of the source of their food. But if agritourism feeds the pastoral vision many people have of farming and perpetuates the notion that all is well in the countryside, I have a problem with that. All is not well in the countryside. We are losing farmland; 2 million acres a year to erosion alone. We are losing

farmers, especially the elders, those with intimate knowledge of the land. Of the 2 million Americans still farming, some 400,000, about 1/10 of 1% of the U.S. population, grew 94% of our food in 2002.

I could go on with this negative rant, but negativity serves no purpose other than to inform us that change is needed. We live out of our projections. We must find ways to turn negative information into positive action. So I will leave you with this quote by Paul Zaiter I read the other day: "There is a natural law of abundance which pervades the entire universe, but it will not flow through a doorway of belief in lack and limitation."

Onward,

Jay



**YEAR-END POTLUCK &
GLEANNING OF THE FIELDS!**

**SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 18, 2007**

2 PM

AT THE FARM IN BIVLAVE!

A great time for conversation and thoughtful food!
Please join as we close out the sixth season of the CSA.

BOOK CLUB STARTING!

Are you interested in learning more about how the food you eat affects your health, the environment, your community and local economy? Want to debate the merits of eating locally grown versus organically grown food? Looking for ways that you can reduce your "foodprint"?

***Mark your calendars for
6:00 pm on Saturday, January 26, 2008***

for our first meeting of the Sustainable Book Club and Potluck Dinner group. Our first book selection will be Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, which explores the choices we face when deciding what to eat.

Dr. Pollan, a Professor of Journalism at UC Berkeley, traces four meals to their sources. He follows a McDonald's fast food lunch, a dinner prepared from organic food purchased at Whole Foods, a meal made with produce from a small, sustainable Virginia farm, and then he forages and hunts his own dinner! His work brings a whole new dimension to the question "What should we have for dinner?"

Future book selections may include *The 100-mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating* by Alisa Smith and JB MacKinnon, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* by Barbara Kingsolver,

Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future by Bill McKibben, *Coming Home to Eat: The Pleasures and Politics of Local Foods* by Gary Paul Nabhan and others as recommended by the group.

Our first meeting will be held at Patti Erickson's house,
709 Lakeside Drive, Salisbury at
6:00 pm on Saturday, January 26.

Please contact Patti via email (ericksonpatti@yahoo.com) or phone (410 677-0788) for directions and to let her know what you'd like to bring to the potluck