



ADAPT Council Industry Newsletter



In This Issue:

Report on the Agriculture and Rural Life Conference Mabou, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia July 19-20

- The Voice of the Primary Producer: Who is Listening?
- Agriculture in Bay St. George South (Newfoundland)
- The Place of Small Diversified Family Farms in the Rural Countryside
- Farm Youths' Risk-Taking Behaviour and the Knowledge of Farm Safety
- Green Care: The Farm as Part of the Health Care System
- Off-Farm Work: What Value? Whose Values?
- Climate Change and Cool Crops, Challenges, Opportunities, Risks
- Grazing for Profit, Health and Environmental Benefits
- Sustainability and Capacity Building in Rural Communities: Round Table Discussion
- Excerpts from the keynote address of John Ikerd, 'Sustaining the Common Wealth of Rural People and Places.'

On August 19 and 20, 2006 approximately 50 people, mostly producers, plus academics and community leaders gathered in the small rural community of Mabou, Nova Scotia to lay the ground work for a new vision and direction for their rural community.

John Ikerd, professor emeritus University of Missouri, gave the opening key note address. What followed was mostly a celebration and acknowledgment of the accomplishments of those who have been working hard to revitalize the human side of agriculture; where family, lifestyle, social responsibility, environmental stewardship and regionalism are once again becoming mainstream; displacing globalization and many of the errant experiments, of the past forty years, which attempted to industrialize and commodify all agricultural sectors.

The following is an outline of the presentations and the lessons learned.

The Voice of the Primary Producer: Who is Listening?

Norman Goodyear; NS Agr. College

Since the 1960's the 'dominant' history of agriculture had been one of capitalization and mechanization.

Globalization has led to the marginalization of small producers.

Since the 1960's 10% of farm growth has been through government grants.

Quote: Jane Jacobs, 'The Dark Ages Ahead,' "We need more apprentices and fewer disciples."

During the discussion that followed with the audience, it was pointed out that there is a counterpoint to the conventional outlook on the history of agriculture. Since the 1960's there has been a resurgence of small, diversified and organic producers; largely ignored, by government and conventional markets. Now that organic foods and regional markets are becoming more main stream these early pioneers are gaining wider recognition.

The history of organic/alternative agriculture since the 1960's is a rich one drawing on the earlier research of Sir Albert Howard and books such as, 'Farmers of Forty Centuries,' and Edward Faulkner's 'Plowman's Folly.' The 1960' and 70's saw the rise of research by the Rodales, and the philosophical writing of Wendell Berry ('The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture,' and 'The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural,' among others). In the 1970's Wes Jackson founded the Land Institute and the secret knowledge of Rudolf Steiner's 'Biodynamic Agriculture' became publically accessible.

After the untimely, accidental deaths of Alan Chadwick and Robert Rodale people such as John Jeavons showed market gardeners 'how to grow more vegetables on less land than they ever imagined.' and the Japanese agriculture extension agent Masanobu Fukuoka started a 'one straw revolution' by defining a 'natural way of farming.'

During this time, authors and homesteaders Scott and Helen Nearing, became the gurus of the back to the land movement and trained thousands of young people to 'live the good life' by market gardening and living in harmony with the land, their neighbours and their beliefs.

And Bill Mollison founded 'Permaculture' as an ethical design system applicable to food production and land use, as well as community building.

These and other early pioneers of the back to the land movement were really signaling the need to get back to basics. They sought the creation of productive and sustainable ways of living by integrating ecology, landscape, organic gardening, architecture and philosophy.

Today, globalization advocates recognize 'organics' as a new market opportunity. This trend is good in that it may help to reduce the amounts of pesticides being introduced into our environment. However, what global marketeers fail to realize is that the revolution that began in the 60's is not merely about the elements themselves, but rather, it is about the relationships: the

careful and contemplative observation of nature and natural systems, and of recognizing universal patterns and principles, then learning to apply these 'ecological truisms' to one's own circumstances within their communities and bioregions.

Agriculture in Bay St. George South (Newfoundland)

Erin Bourgeois, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Memorial University

This region's agriculture is supported with public pastures, community vegetable storage facilities and a cooperative abattoir. Challenges persist due to relatively low income levels in the region and corresponding low education and that large population centres are far away. Trends: The majority of farms are less than 20 years old, agriculture focusing on a commodity based structure (86% root crops - Potatoes, Carrots and Rutabagas) continues to struggle, 73% of the producers sell to wholesalers, 63% moving into direct marketing, 13% have begun doing some agri-tourism including the provincial 'Open Farm Day', only 27% have a marketing plan, very few (if any) advertise their products, government is working to develop a "Newfoundland" brand (a trend similar to almost every province in the country) based on "safe, environmentally conscious, and local."

While the speaker pointed out that more study was required to develop and sustain agriculture in the region, it was suggested during open discussion that regions like this may benefit from permaculture/bioregional planning where zones of influence are identified; more remote zones focus on agroforestry, pasture and orchards and row crops and more perishable foods are grown closer to population centres. The move away from commodity based agriculture was viewed as a positive initiative.

The Place of Small Diversified Family Farms in the Rural Countryside

Sue Machum, St. Thomas University

This presentation focused on the plight of 'industrial vs. non-industrialized agriculture and the resulting crisis of people leaving the countryside. How can rural communities be developed if people continue to move away? What is needed to sustain our rural populations? Government policy continues to support the push for farms to get big and to mechanize (i.e. reduce labour). This has led to the demise of many small farms and rural residents. Although the overall number of farms has been drastically reduced, 25% are still small farms. This shows that there is a persistence among some to retain rural lifestyles and traditional small farm values. In the 1970's there was a mass exodus of farms and rural residents. Today, 82% of Canadians live in urban environments. However, in Atlantic Canada 52% still live in rural countryside.

A passionate and lively discussion followed. Some farmers felt that the some traditional farm organizations did not represent the interests of the new, small farmer and that the policies that they lobbied government to protect were those that protected only large farmers and/or unsustainable systems. One suggestion

was made that the required farm registration fees should include membership to ACORN as well as the Federation of Agriculture or the National Farmers Union. Others suggested that farmers who are now required, by law, to join the existing representative organizations should be encouraged to become more actively involved. It was pointed out that the president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture is a certified organic farmer.

Farm Youths' Risk-Taking Behaviour and the Knowledge of Farm Safety

Lauranne Sanderson NS Agr. College

Farming is the third most dangerous occupation.

1 in 10 farmers suffers a serious accident each year.

There is a serious and constant need to raise awareness and increase safety standards on farms.

In later discussion it was again pointed out that the emerging themes of the day which emphasized small farms and community-based agriculture also support more human scale technology with fewer environmental and/technological hazards.

It was also suggested that while safety is an important concern that legislation should not regulate to the point where children and the elderly are denied the need to feel like important contributors to the families work. However, common sense must prevail so that 10 year olds are not operating heavy equipment etc.

Green Care: The Farm as Part of the Health Care System

Tarjei Tennessen, NS Agr. College

In Norway some farms are being used to provide therapeutic environments where helping to make things grow and caring for animals is proving to provide health benefits to the infirm. It was emphasized that this realization is not new but as an official government regulated health care system, it is a new development.

It was also noted that in order for it to be therapeutic the farm needs to be a warm, caring environment. Factory style hog, chicken, cattle or dairy farms or large acreage of row crops all managed from behind the wheel of a tractor was not considered to be therapeutic.

However, the concept may offer significant diversification opportunities for small farms with free range animals and market gardens.

For more information register your interests at www.farmingforhealth.org

Off-Farm Work: What Value? Whose Values?

Elizabeth Beaton, Cape Breton University

In 1991 90% of farm income came from off-farm.

Multi-occupation has become the norm rather than the exception.

On the negative side, this draws people away from agriculture and may eventually force them to leave the farm/community to pursue full-time work in the urban areas.

On the positive side, off-farm work provides an opportunity for personal growth, development and global awareness. The increasing access to information technology is allowing more people to work from home and diversify their rural income.

“It is not what you do, but who you are.”

Climate Change and Cool Crops, Challenges, Opportunities, Risks

Jamey Coughlin NS Department of Agriculture
Allan Kwabiah, Atlantic Cool Climate Research Centre
Natasha Power, NS Agr. College

Climate change is an inevitable shift that farmers must adapt to. Increasing rain, cooler summers with intermittent hot spells, and warmer winters with occasional harsh storms will impact cultural practices. Some farmers may experiment with plastic ground covers and or season extenders for non-traditional crops. Ecological and economic costs will vary with these systems. And they may be adding to the climate change problem rather than working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Insects will be a greater problem if winters continue to be milder. Fluctuations in storms and temperatures will add new pressures on insect and disease control. New opportunities may arise as a result of being able to grow crops that previous generations could not grow (i.e. olives now being grown in the UK)

Grazing for Profit, Health and Environmental Benefits

Ralph Martin NS Agr. College

Pastures without fertilizer and pesticides will sustain soil quality, reduce fuel use, mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, reduce nutrient losses, improve nutrient and energy efficiency, increase soil C and microbial activity as indicators of soil health over time, improve water quality and improve partial profitability and productivity under grazing in contrast to confinement systems.

The research evaluated grazing versus confinement feeding and the comparative performance sod-seeded red clover selections with respect to plant yield, forage quality, and persistence. The experiment was conducted in summers on white clover-timothy-blue grass based paddocks on pastures at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. Sub-paddocks were divided into five groups. Lamb and cattle groups are being assessed for effects on manure decomposition and nutrient cycling, partial profitability, forage yield, meat yield and quality, stocking rate and animal health, including parasite loads. Red clover lines are being evaluated to assess yields (in particular during summer droughts), quality and persistence under aggressive rotational grazing.

Sustainability and Capacity Building in Rural Communities: Round Table Discussion

The relationships we build need to move beyond just local foods to servicing and providing local energy and local building materials; to providing for local needs.

Your life is as good as your community.

We must create a place where our children and our children's children will stay and grow.

Sustainability is more than an economic ideal. It is about shared leadership, shared responsibility, shared rewards, shared wealth, community and stewardship.

Nurture don't dominate.

The challenges ahead make for critical and exciting times.

Rural depopulation is a global phenomenon. We need culturally appropriate re-development.

Institute for Global Ethics -

Mission: Promote ethical behavior in individuals, institutions, and nations through research, public discourse, and practical action

Values

As a nonsectarian, nonpartisan, global research and educational membership organization, we strive always to be:

- * Honest and truthful in all our dealings
- * Responsible and accountable in every transaction
- * Fair and equitable in each relationship
- * Respectful and mindful of the dignity of every individual
- * Compassionate and caring in each situation

Get political. Elected representatives have the power to change policies.

Rural people need to stand up for rights.

There are no "rights" just shared responsibilities.

We can choose to be the architects of an inspiring and promising future or the defenders of our inevitable demise.

77% of conventional farmers have no successor. 35% of these farmers plan to retire by 2010.

Think like a watershed. Define zones where appropriate building, agricultural and/or business activity takes place.

Nearly 60% of all new farmers are first generation farmers.

70% of new farmers are either first or second generation.

90% of new farmers are highly diversified and over 90% of them would recommend to other farmers to become highly diversified.

90% of new farmers have off farm income (same for traditional farmers).

95.8% of new farmers sell directly from farm to consumers through farm gate, farmers markets and/or Community Supported Agriculture Projects (CSA's).

Over 50% of market farmers, in N. America, grow on five acres or less.

The survival of the family farm (and the majority of new farms) depends on increasing diversity and capturing a percentage of the sales at the retail level.

There is a strong need for government and institutional support for new, small scale farmers. If our educators and legislators continue to ignore the geometric growth of small farmers, then their programs and their advice will soon become obsolete to the majority of farmers.

Build relationships ('Value Chains') not just with people within the food sector (i.e. shippers, packers, processors, wholesalers and retailers) but look beyond the agriculture/agri-food sector and create partnerships with developers, entertainers, tour companies, chefs, health practitioners, and social service providers.

Sell knowledge, skills and an experience; think of your crop as a by-product to the information and experience you have to offer.

Agri-tourism will continue to grow in its importance. Since 2001 the majority of the world's population has been living in urban environments. For the first time in the history of civilization we will be raising a generation of children, the majority of whom have no connection to the farm nor have even seen the stars at night. The farm as an experience will be more valuable and more unique than the food it provides.

The small farm revolution has redefined how we think about our food and our environment. It is now redefining how we value wealth, knowledge, security and community.

More and more farmers and their customers are meeting through farmers markets, roadside stands, community supported agriculture organizations (CSAs), and other forms of direct marketing. A doubling of the number of farmers' markets during the 1990s and persistent growth in CSAs and other forms of direct sales attested to the growth of this new niche market. A growing number of retail food cooperatives, health food stores, and even specialty organic food stores also provide important new market outlets for locally grown and/or organic foods.

Three goals:

- Support local farmers by providing them with a market for the food they raise,
- Provide customers with fresh, natural foods raised humanely, without hormones or sub-therapeutic antibiotics, and
- Raise animals and crops in a manner which protects and conserves the precious resources upon which they rely.

**Excerpts from the keynote address of John Ikerd,
'Sustaining the Common Wealth of Rural People and Places.'**

The indigenous people and the European settlers of North America lived in rural areas to realize the inherent value of natural resources located in rural areas. However, most rural communities today are the remnants of farming communities.

As agriculture has adopted the industrial strategies of specialization, standardization, and consolidation of control – agricultural productivity has increased dramatically, but rural communities have been left in decline and decay – used up, farmed out.

Once thriving rural communities have withered and died as farm families have been forced off the land by chronic production surpluses that have depressed prices for the things they sell, as costs have risen relentlessly for the things farmers must buy.

When we consider the historic purpose of rural communities, we begin to understand that the increases in unemployment, poverty, and public dependency in rural areas are all symptoms of the continued extraction of economic wealth from rural areas.

It is intuitively obvious that the continued extraction and exploitation of rural resources quite simply is not sustainable.

Farmers, consumers, rural leaders, and policy makers at all levels of government need to understand why it is critically important to sustain the wealth of rural people and places, not only for individuals but also for society as a whole.

The hope for the future of rural areas in restoring the health and vitality of the *living things* in rural communities – the wealth in the land and people of rural places. Sustainable economic and community development must mimic the processes of living, biological systems. A sustainable society clearly must be built upon the foundation of a self-renewing, regenerative, sustainable agriculture because to sustain life we must sustain food production.

Sustainable farms must be ecologically sound, socially responsible, and economically viable. A farm that degrades the productivity of the land or pollutes its natural environment cannot sustain its productivity. A farm that fails to meet the needs of a society – not only as consumers, but also as producers and citizens – cannot be sustained over time by that society. And, a farm that is not financially viable is not sustainable, no matter how ecologically and socially sound it may seem to be in the short run. Sustainable agriculture is the only known means of sustaining human society.

While the forces of industrialization are strong, the forces of sustainability are even more powerful. The forces now pulling farmers toward sustainability are the unrelenting forces of human nature. We saw these powerful forces reconnecting people with the land in the growing popularity of organic farming, but we now see them even more clearly in the movement beyond organics to sustainably and *locally* grown foods. People are being drawn toward reconnecting with farmers, toward community-based food systems, by the natural attraction of human relationships.

Increasingly, consumers want to know where their food comes from, how it is produced, and

who produced it. *Local* is becoming the *new organic*, as more people want food they can trust produced by someone they know and trust.

Sustainable farmers today have an opportunity to help create a new food production and marketing mainstream by giving these like-minded customers foods that reflect their shared values. Sustainable farmers continue to find new allies as more independent food processors, distributors, and retailers realize they face the same kinds of challenges and have the same kinds of opportunities as do independent family farmers.

Today, the sustainable/local movement stands at a critical stage of its development. If sustainable farmers can successfully restore the integrity of relationships with their customers through these higher-volume markets, they will have created a sustainable ecological and social foundation for long-run rural economic development. They will be able to sustain the natural and social wealth of rural people and rural places. Rural people again will have a purpose for living and working in rural places. It's too early to predict success, but neither is it logical to expect failure.

Regardless of our ultimate response to the challenges of sustainability, we simply cannot continue doing what we have been doing to rural areas. Industrial economic development quite simply is not sustainable because its productivity relies on extraction and exploitation; it does nothing to renew or regenerate either the natural or human resources that must sustain the future of humanity. Industrialization inevitably tends toward entropy.

As farmers build trusting, caring relationships with their customers and their neighbors, they are working against the forces of industrialization, but they are working with the irresistible urge of people to find ways to reconnect with each other, both within and across generations. As we find ways to sustain the common wealth of rural people and rural places, we are finding ways to sustain humanity.

Note:

For a complete transcript of John Ikerd's keynote address write to: jeikerd@centurytel.net or contact the PEI ADAPT Council office at: adapt@pei.aibn.com or phone (902) 368-2005 or 1-800-561-5433.

An excellent, simple to read, new resource book which supports the understanding and direction of most participants at the conference:

'Micro-Eco-Farming: Prospering from Backyard to Small Acreage In Partnership with the Earth,' by Barbara Berst Adams; New World Publishing

Also See: Alternative Farming Systems Information Centre; USDA
<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/agnic/agnic.htm>