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September 1994

## Center for Sustainable Agricultural Systems Newsletter, September/October 1994

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## September-October 1994 CSAS Newsletter

The Center for Sustainable Agricultural Systems (CSAS) in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) is an interdisciplinary center formed in 1991 for the purpose of bringing together people and resources to promote an agriculture that is efficient, competitive, profitable, environmentally and socially sustainable for the indefinite future. Electronic versions of the CSAS bimonthly newsletter are sent to SANET, PENPages, and the internal IANRNEWS 10-14 days before those on our mailing list receive their hard copy. They are also available along with other sustainable ag information on the gopher: IANRVM.UNL.EDU. (Note: The electronic version is not sent to individual e-mail addresses.) To be added to the "hard copy" newsletter mailing list, or for questions or comments, contact the newsletter editor, Pam Murray, Coordinator, Center for Sustainable Agricultural Systems, 221 Keim Hall, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0949, 402-472-2056, e-mail csas001@unlvm.unl.edu.

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### NEW UNL CENTER FOR GRASSLAND STUDIES

This summer the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) established the Center for Grassland Studies (CGS). The director is Dr. Martin Massengale. Pam Murray, who continues on a half-time basis as coordinator of the Center for Sustainable Agricultural Systems (CSAS), will serve in the same capacity for the new center.

The mission of the Center for Grassland Studies is the implementation of focused, interdisciplinary research, education and service programs. Activities emphasize the role of grasslands as a natural resource, conservation, and enhanced efficiency, profitability and sustainability of grasslands and turfs. Center

programs are designed to improve understanding of the importance of grasslands to our economy, the environment, wildlife and domestic animals, water quality, soil and water conservation, and quality of life. The Center draws upon the expertise of many individuals, units and organizations within and outside of the University of Nebraska. It is developing linkages and partnerships with state and community colleges, universities in other states, and federal and state governmental agencies. The Center's clientele includes undergraduate and graduate students, farmers, ranchers, cattle producers, wildlife managers, turfgrass and recreational managers, grass seed producers, home owners, and other interested citizens.

For more information, contact the CGS office, 222 Keim Hall, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0953, 402-472-4101, email: cgl001@unlvm.unl.edu.

#### FARM BILL FOCUS OF MIDWEST GOVERNORS' CONFERENCE

The Midwestern Governors' Conference was held in Lincoln, Nebraska August 21-23. Featured speakers included Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy and Senator Bob Kerrey.

Senator Kerrey said the 1995 farm bill may face speed bumps getting through Congress, noting that the two organizations that may oppose the bill are the Congressional Budget Office and the Environmental Protection Agency. He said it is important for USDA to maintain its role as lead agency in formulating farm policy, noting that if the EPA is allowed to write the farm bill, "there will be a war." Kerrey is in favor of providing flexibility for the development of alternative crops which will lead to new market opportunities.

Espy presented the following information:

- Less than 2% of the nation's population lives on farms, down from about 25% when the first farm legislation was created in the 1930s.
- Of the 435 Congressional Districts, only 50 generate 10% or more of their income from farming. And of the 435 House members, only 160 came to Congress after the 1990 Act was passed, so they've never experienced a farm bill mark-up.
- The food and fiber system generates about \$950 billion per year in economic activity (16% of our GDP) and employs one in seven Americans.
- Conservation tillage is now used on over one-third of our total planted crop acreage -- a 35% increase in four years.
- Nearly 60% of the total USDA outlay for FY 1994 was spent on food, nutrition and consumer services programs.
- Since the mid 1980s, annual expenditures for commodity programs have gone down about 50% while total federal spending has gone up 50%.
- Farm employment today accounts for just 9% of rural employment.

The governors from 13 states approved several farm bill policy objectives including:

- assure a base level of producer income, while allowing individual producer decisions;
- continue Conservation Reserve Program in some form;
- develop a stable farm credit system;

- increase funding of programs to promote farm products in all markets;
- strengthen agricultural research and technology transfer.

The governors also passed five resolutions, including one that requests the Secretary of Agriculture to renew existing CRP contracts so they are included as part of the Office of Management and Budget's official baseline for the reauthorization of the farm bill, and that the Congressional Budget Office include full funding for a reauthorized CRP in its revised baseline recommendations.

For a copy of the policy objectives and/or the resolutions, contact the CSAS office.

#### FUTURISTIC SYMPOSIUM AT ASA MEETINGS

A symposium titled "Designing a Diverse Future Agriculture" will be held at 8:00 am on November 14 during the American Society of Agronomy (ASA) meetings in Seattle. According to Dr. Charles Francis, CSAS director and co-organizer of this activity, the presentations will appear in a book to be published by the ASA in 1995. Topics include: soil micro- and macro-organism diversity; design of fields and farms; diversity in communities, markets and landscapes; and bioregional diversity. The relationships between diversity and sustainability in food systems will be a major focus. The symposium and book are partially supported with a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

#### SUSTAINABLE AG DIRECTORS WORKSHOP IN FEBRUARY

The CSAS is hosting a workshop for leaders of university centers or programs devoted to the general area of sustainable agriculture. Among the issues we will explore are funding, faculty participation, key program areas, use of outside advisory committees, and long-term planning. We will also discuss the need for networking mechanisms such as electronic bulletin boards or newsletters to share information on a continuing basis. There will be a sharing of written materials published by several sustainable agriculture centers in the U.S. The workshop will be held in Lincoln, Nebraska on February 16-17, 1995. For more information contact Pam Murray in the CSAS office.

#### NEW NSAS DIRECTOR AND NEW EXTENSION EDUCATOR

Chris Carusi is the new Executive Director of the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society (NSAS). Carusi spent three years working with small farmers in Nepal as a Peace Corps volunteer, and recently received her M.S. in International Agricultural Development from UC-Davis. One of Carusi's principle duties is to be the NSAS co-leader of the Kellogg-sponsored IMPACT project to promote integrated farming systems (see CSAS May-June 1994 newsletter).

Victoria Mundy, the Extension Educator who will be the UNL co-leader on the IMPACT project, begins in January. Mundy received her M.S. in Crop and Soil Environmental Science from Virginia

Polytechnic Institute and State University and currently teaches at a community college in Virginia.

The Center for Rural Affairs IMPACT co-leader is Wyatt Fraas. Applications for funding Nebraska farmer innovation groups will be accepted beginning in November. To learn more about eligibility and criteria, contact Chris or Wyatt at 402-254-6893.

#### WHAT HAPPENS TO PESTICIDES IN SOIL AND WATER?

The fate of commonly used pesticides in soil and water is the subject of a new circular published by the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension titled "Understanding Pesticides and Water Quality in Nebraska." Every year in Nebraska an estimated 33 million pounds of pesticides are applied. Nationally the estimate is 1.2 billion pounds, with about 70% being used in agricultural production. The publication explains and illustrates all of the processes, biological and chemical, that affect pesticide fate. Dr. Steven Comfort, one of the co-authors, points out that Nebraska has one of the largest underground water supplies in the nation, and feels the state's residents have an obligation to protect this resource. (See Resources section to order.)

#### IN THE SEMINAR SPOTLIGHT

Paul Thompson, Director of the Center for Biotechnology Policy and Ethics and Professor of Philosophy and Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University, Oct. 4.

\* \* \*

How do the philosophies of major contemporary personalities compare as they relate to holistic thinking and research? Starting with Aldo Leopold's SAND COUNTY ALMANAC as a basis, Thompson analyzed the work of four current leaders in the search for sustainability in agriculture. He contrasted their roots in game management (Alan Savory), prairie ecosystems (Wes Jackson), environmental philosophy (Baird Callicott), and farming/English teaching (Wendell Berry), yet came back to their similarities in dealing with the complexity of ecological and agricultural systems. In this analysis, Thompson introduced us to a better understanding of how systems are viewed and what can be done to better design them for the future. With prime emphasis on the issue of reductionist versus holistic world view, Thompson explored the productionism, stewardship, and economic dimensions of systems as viewed by the four authors. Savory's educational efforts focus on goal setting and the efficient use of available resources. Jackson and The Land Institute have worked with the prairie ecosystem as a model, and now are moving toward regeneration of Matfield Green, Kansas, as a model community ecosystem. Callicott argues for community-based ethics and values, and a new focus on environmentally benign approaches to development. Berry, a poet and farmer, explores the problems of specialization and the need for putting the pieces together in agricultural systems.

This topic is discussed extensively in a chapter of Thompson's forthcoming book, THE SPIRIT OF THE SOIL: AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS. For more information on the book contact the Center for Biotechnology Policy and Ethics, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4355, 409-847-8921.

In a second seminar Thompson discussed the ethical issues involving recombinant bovine somatotropin. A tape of both seminars may be borrowed from the CSAS office.

Submitted by Charles Francis

NEXT SEMINAR: Joel Salatin presents "Profits from Pasture Raised Livestock and Value Added Marketing," on November 28, 12:00-1:30 in 327 Keim Hall. This is open to the public.

Joel Salatin of Swoope, Virginia, is becoming increasingly well known on a national basis for his profitable and environmentally sound systems approach to production agriculture. That approach includes "value added" through direct retailing to customers. In addition, utilizing value added direct marketing to consumers has allowed him to build a rapport which otherwise would not exist with many urban people.

Joel, his wife and their two children operate a farm that has no row crops but produces broilers, eggs, beef, pork and rabbits from pasture and hay as the primary inputs. Grain is not fed to any of the beef cattle.

About one-third of the net farm income is from the pastured broilers, one-third from beef cattle, and one-third from other enterprises such as firewood, egg production, rabbits, pork and a few vegetables.

Joel is able to fluently tell the story of his operation along with his reasons for the decisions he has made. If you would like to hear a message of profitable family farming with minimal financial investment that is environmentally sound, join us on November 28.

Submitted by Paul Swanson

#### SYMPOSIUM TO FOCUS ON FUTURE OF GREAT PLAINS

"Planning for a Sustainable Future: The Case of the North American Great Plains" will be held May 8-10, 1995 in Lincoln, Nebraska. It is the sixth in a symposia series jointly sponsored by Environment Canada and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) focusing on sustainable development in the context of global environmental change. This symposium will emphasize the North American Great Plains, a critical environmental zone, where the impacts of climate change are likely to be more severe and to materialize more rapidly than in environmentally stronger ecosystems.

A critical element of the program will be several sessions showcasing environmentally sound, resource-efficient projects that embellish the concept of sustainability. These projects will be showcased in a poster demonstration session and also in a plenary session illustrating a diverse set of projects as case studies. The conference organizers encourage the submission of abstracts for projects in the following areas: sustainable agricultural production, water quality and use, value-added products, natural resource management, wildlife habitat and management, community economic viability, marketing programs, solid waste management, area-wide transportation, wetlands preservation and restoration, job generation, and environmental education.

To submit an abstract (deadline January 1) or for more

information, the U.S. contact is: Dr. Donald Wilhite, Director, International Drought Information Center, PO Box 830728, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0728, phone: 402-472-6707, fax: 402-472-6614, e-mail: agme002@unlvm.unl.edu.

"SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE GREAT PLAINS"  
SATELLITE BROADCAST AVAILABLE ON TAPE

The CSAS arranged the downlink site for the satellite broadcast of the above public forum held October 5. The program highlighted the Northwest Area Foundation's multi-state three-year research project that explored the social, economic and environmental implications of sustainable agriculture. Results of this project will be contained in the forthcoming publications, "A Better Row to Hoe" and "Planting the Future." For more information contact Marty Strange at the Foundation, 332 Minnesota St, Suite E-1201, St. Paul, MN 55101-1373, 612-224-9635.

Also on the program were representatives of the International Institute for Sustainable Development who highlighted their recently published report, "Sustainable Development for the Great Plains: Policy Analysis," focusing on sustainable agriculture, which may be borrowed from the CSAS office.

UNL staff wishing to view the two-hour tape of the forum can contact Betty Castan in the ICCS office, 402-472-3035.

USDA DRAFTING NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture in 1992, has been submitting recommendations to USDA over the past few months. Based on the recommendations, USDA plans to draft regulations and circulate them for public review in early 1995. Contacts for more information: Dr. Harold Ricker, National Organic Program, AMS/TMD/USDA, Rm 4006-S, PO Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456, 202-720-2704; Michael Sligh, NOSB chairman, PO Box 727, Mauldin, SC 29662, 803-297-8562.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESERVE PROPOSED

The National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture (NCSA) supports the development of an environmental reserve as an alternative to set-aside programs in which farmers would be paid for removing land from production or producing in an ecologically friendly manner. An August 15 article in FEEDSTUFFS magazine gives details. For more information contact the NCSA, 32 N. Church St., Goshen, NY 10924, 914-294-0633.

EPA AND USDA AGREEMENT ON PEST MANAGEMENT

On August 15 Secretaries Browner (EPA) and Espy (USDA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding that commits their agencies to providing the agricultural community with pest management techniques and tools that reduce pesticide risks. The agreement states that within six months a list will be developed of pesticides for which regulatory action might affect farmers' ability to fight pests (Browner expects 30-40 pesticides to be on

the initial list), and that USDA will work to identify and develop alternative methods of pest control. Also stated is the intention to establish a competitive grants program at USDA for research and development of safer alternatives.

#### AG WASTE DATABASE

The Ag Waste Database system provides an up-to-date, exhaustive listing of research-based published works on the management, disposal and productive use of agricultural wastes, and on the use of industrial and municipal wastes in agriculture. It was developed by Auburn University College of Agriculture and the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service, with support from the Tennessee Valley Authority. The service is available to anyone seeking information on scientific, economic, practical, environmental, or legal aspects of agriculture-related wastes. To access this database via gopher select:

USDA Extension Service  
Information Servers -- Cooperative Extension System (CES)  
Alabama CES (Auburn U.)  
Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Agricultural Waste Database

If you have any questions or comments, email James Murray (jmmurray) or Jeff Hibbert (jhibbert) @acenet.auburn.edu.

#### BIONET BULLETIN BOARD

The Bionet system is a new computerized bulletin board that is used primarily as a source of information on production, properties, uses and environmental effects of organic materials (biosolids, composts). To learn more about this service, which is currently free, contact Jon Bagby at the University of Washington, 206-685-7270.

#### CONGRESS APPROVES FUNDING FOR SUSTAINABLE AG AND RELATED PROGRAMS

According to the October issue of "Alternative Agriculture News," the final appropriation figures for key sustainable agricultural programs in Fiscal Year 1995, which began October 1, are:

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) ~ \$8.1 million

Sustainable Agriculture Technology Development and Transfer Program (SATDTP) ~ \$3.5 million

Wetlands Reserve Program ~ \$93.2 million

Water Quality Incentive Program ~ \$15 million

#### PRESIDENT CLINTON'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

Nominations are sought for a Presidential awards program recognizing significant contributions to sustainable development. Awards will spotlight the successful integration of economic development, environmental protection and social equity. To apply or to nominate others, contact the office of White & White, phone: 410-225-3212, ext. 222; fax: 410-225-3424; or send email to Internet address: bw001@epfl2lepflbalto.org (refer to box 222 in your message). Applications must be post marked no later than

December 15, 1994.

DID YOU KNOW...

The number of U.S. farms dropped 1% last year, leaving 2.04 million in operation. Farms that sold more than \$100,000 worth of ag products rose from 339,500 to 342,700, while those with sales between \$1,000 and \$9,999 dropped from 992,600 to 976,810. During 1987-1992 Nebraska lost 7,579 farms (12.5% decline), while the size of the average farm grew by 90 acres (12%).

At least 35% of Nebraska's corn acreage is rotated to soybeans, reducing the need for insecticides to control corn rootworms. Use of crop rotation has resulted in a reduction of over one million lbs. of active ingredient per year, and an annual savings in production costs of at least \$10 million.

The major surface water contaminants, in order of their impact, are sediments, nutrients, toxic chemicals, and pesticides.

One acre of cropland dumps 400 lbs. sediment/yr. into Chesapeake Bay; an acre of forest contributes only 18 lbs.

A WALL STREET JOURNAL article notes that one in three shoppers now seeks chemical-free fruit and vegetables.

According to an article in the October FARM JOURNAL, sustainable agriculture is one of the top careers in agriculture today.

A child born in the U.S. has a "consumption impact" on the environment 30 times greater than a child born in India.

Paul Ehrlich of Stanford U. and Gretchen Daily of the U. of California-Berkeley have concluded that the Earth's maximum "carrying capacity" is about 1.5 to 2 billion people. Current world population is 5.5 billion, and growing at a rate of 94 million people every year.

A recent survey revealed about 74% of acreage in Illinois showed acceptable soil loss (loss does not exceed natural replenishment), compared to 57% in 1982.

#### RESOURCES

"Understanding Pesticides and Water Quality in Nebraska," by S.D. Comfort et. al., available for \$1 at local Nebraska extension offices, or send \$1.55 to 105 ACB, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0918.

FARMS (Farm and Research Center Matching System), computer program that given correct input data, will match any semi-arid farm or ranch with the most similar research center in North America. Developed with SARE funding, the software accelerates sustainable agriculture technology transfers over the Great Plains through a linkage of site-specific information and research centers. \$30 from Jeff Jacobsen, Dept. of Plant and Soil Science, Montana State U., Bozeman, MT 59717, 406-994-5684.

"Integrated Pest Management: The Path of a Paradigm" by James Cate and Maureen Hinkle, \$5, National Audubon Society, 666 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, #200, Washington, DC 20003, 202-547-9009.

Proceedings of the Science and Sustainability Conference held in Bellevue, WA Oct. 1993. Selected papers in Vol. 9 of AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE. Topics include issues relating to land-grant institutions and a series of case studies of various approaches to whole-systems research and education. Call 301-441-8777.

"What Americans Think About Agrichemicals" by Patricia McGrath Morris, et. al., \$15 + \$2 s&h, Public Voice for Food and Health Policy, 1101 14th St. NW, Suite 710, Washington, DC 20005, 202-371-1840.

Proceedings of the Environmentally Sound Agriculture Conference held in Orlando, FL April 1994, \$42, Amer. Society of Ag. Engineers, 2950 Niles Road, St. Joseph, MI 49085-9659, 616-429-0300.

"Organic Farming Research Foundation's 1993 Annual Report," "1994 Goals and Objectives," and "Guidelines and Deadlines for Grant Applications," send self-addressed stamped envelope to: OFRF, PO Box 440, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. (Note: OFRF expects to increase the number of grants awarded to on-farm research and education projects, and establish a set of policy objectives designed to increase academic and government support for on-farm, organic research.)

Proceedings of the National Integrated Pest Management Forum held in June 1992, \$10, American Farmland Trust, Center for Ag. in the Environment, PO Box 987, DeKalb, IL 60115, 815-753-9347.

Proceedings of Symposium on the Sustainability of Range Livestock Production Systems in the West held in Billings, MT Sept. 1994. Call Genice Garner at Montana State U. 406-994-3511.

Proceedings of 1994 Leopold Center conference, "Sustainable Agriculture: People, Products, and Profits," held in Aug., \$5; quarterly newsletter is available free, Fall 1994 has articles on a sustainable model for swine production, the pesticide industry and sustainable agriculture, and research on biological control of crop pests. Leopold Center, 126 Soil Tilth Bldg., Iowa State U., Ames, IA 50011-3120, 515-294-3711.

Conservation Tillage Series on Video. Five VHS videos, taped from a series of live satellite broadcasts from Jan. 10 through Feb. 7, 1994, offer a comprehensive overview of conservation tillage. Videos cost \$30.00 for one, or \$130.00 for the set. Contact: Conservation Technology Information Center, (317) 494-9555.

## COMING EVENTS

Contact the CSAS office for more information:

Nov. 1-3 - North Central Biological Control of Insects Conference, Lincoln, NE.

Nov. 2 -- Annual meeting of Holistic Resource Management Nebraska Branch, North Platte, NE.

Nov. 13-18 -- American Society of Agronomy (incl. several sessions related to sustainable ag. and memorial symposium dedicated to Dr. James Bushnell), Seattle, WA.

Nov. 18 -- Ag at the Crossroads annual conference, Lincoln, NE.

Nov. 28 -- Joel Salatin seminar, Lincoln, NE.

Nov. 30-Dec. 2 -- Nebraska Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Workshop, Kearney, NE.

Dec. 1 -- Assessing Rangeland Health: Science and Policy, Washington, DC.

Dec. 6-7 -- Soil Health: The Basis of Current and Future Production, Decatur, IL.

May 8-10 - Planning for a Sustainable Future: The Case of the North American Great Plains, Lincoln, NE.



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