

AGNOTES

Extension educators and nutrition assistants work with tight budgets that limit program abilities. This program will help them reach more consumers with accurate information about beef.

Holly Swee, director of nutrition and consumer information with the South Dakota Beef Industry Council, said for many families, knowledge of beef "beyond burger" is sometimes lacking.

"We discovered through several research projects that many people really don't have the skills needed to properly prepare beef," Swee said. "If we want consumers to understand the value of beef, we have to educate them about its nutritional aspects and basic cooking skills."

Swee added that the partnership with Extension is a common-sense way of improving diets and helping the public make smart decisions with their food budgets.

For more information on the program, call Stluka at 605-688-4038, or e-mail her at Suzanne.Stluka@sdsstate.edu.

4-H Teen Leadership Registration Open

BROOKINGS—The South Dakota 4-H Teen Leadership Conference is set for June 8-11.

Organizers are seeking registrations from youths around the state for the conference, which is the 65th annual leadership training conference in South Dakota. The 2010 conference will feature a youth-led summit. It's held on the campus of South Dakota State University in Brookings.

The cost is \$160 per participant until April 30. West River participants can purchase round-trip transportation to the event for an additional \$40.

Call South Dakota Cooperative Extension 4-H/Youth Development Specialist Kathryn Reeves at 605-394-2236 to register, or visit the South Dakota 4-H Web site at this link: <http://4h.sdsstate.edu>.

Registration forms and a schedule are available at the link. Click on the 2010 Teen Leadership Conference choice under the "What's Happening" section.

The 2010 conference's theme is "TLC: Syncing Our Futures." Reeves said the delegates will share and prioritize their views about community involvement, education, and youth development in round-table discussions, brainstorming sessions, and in the final summit meeting.

"We will have SDSU department leaders host nine different career options and delegates also can choose from sessions on a variety of topics to help them prepare for the future," Reeves said. "Participants can work on interview skills or take part in our 10-minute leadership lessons as well as topics of personal interest such as archery or jewelry design."

A complete listing of the more than 40 workshops available during the conference also is available on the South Dakota 4-H Web site.

Reeves said Gerri Eide, the conference's keynote speaker, is well known around the state.

"Many know Gerri for her support of youth leadership, and she will inspire the delegation to seek out opportunities and experiences," Reeves said. "She will challenge them to push harder, dig deeper, and reach higher."

Delegates can show off their abilities to interview, speak, adapt to new situations, and to be persons of character as they vie for the title of Mr. and Ms. TLC. The winners will be awarded a \$150 scholarship to further their education.

MARKET INSIDER

What You Should Do With That Inventory

BY BRIAN HOOPS

Yankton

One of the most popular questions we receive at our offices here at Midwest Market Solutions over the course of the winter has been, "how low are prices going?" While this may be a popular question, it doesn't necessarily mean this is the correct question to ask. The honest answer is, "no one knows with absolute certainty."

Another popular question is "what should I do with my inventory?" That question is a lot easier to answer as there are ways producers can protect themselves while maintaining upside potential.

Since making highs during the winter months of November, December and January, the grain markets, despite the fact the crude oil and the stock market

Making Sense Of Organic Choices

BY JULIE DEARDORFF
McClatchy News Service

Some consumers are more than willing to pay higher prices for organically grown food. But are organic strawberries worth the extra dollar?

The health benefits of organic food are one of the most intensely debated issues in the food industry. By definition, organically grown foods are produced without most conventional pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge. Livestock aren't given antibiotics and growth hormones. And organic farmers emphasize renewable resources and conservation of soil and water.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which runs the National Organic Program, says organic is a "production philosophy" and an organic label should not imply that a product is superior. Moreover, some say there's no need to eat organic to be healthy. Simply choose less processed food and more fruits and vegetables.

The crux of the argument often comes down to the nutritional benefits of organic foods, something that's hard to measure. To compare the nutrient density between organically and conventionally grown grapes, for example, researchers would have to have matched pairs of fields, including using the same soil, the same irrigation system, the same level of nitrogen fertilizer and the same stage of ripeness at harvest, said Charles Benbrook, chief scientist at The Organic Center, a pro-organics research institution.

Last summer, the debate came to a head after the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition published a comprehensive systemic review that concluded organic and conventional food had comparable nutrient levels.

The outraged organic community criticized the study for not addressing pesticide residues, a major reason people choose organic. The study also

did not address the impact of farming practices on the environment and personal health.

Maria Rodale, a third-generation advocate for organic farming, urges consumers to look beyond nutrition to the chemicals going into our soil, our food and our bodies. "What we do to our environment, we are also doing to ourselves," said Rodale, chairwoman and CEO of Rodale Inc., which publishes health and wellness content.

Some experts also suggest consumers focus on the producers rather than the product itself. For example, Vicki Westerhoff, 54, owner of Genesis Growers in St. Anne, Ill., uses organic procedures but calls her food "natural" and "chemical-free" because she hasn't gone through the expensive certification process.

Here's a closer look at some of the factors that may influence your decision whether to buy organic products.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Farmers using conventional practices treat crops with pesticides that protect them from mold, insects and disease but can leave residues. Organic fruits and vegetables have fewer pesticide residues and lower nitrate levels than do conventional fruits and vegetables, according to a 1996 scientific summary report by the Institute of Food Technologists.

The bottom line: Experts say pesticide residues pose only a small health risk. But fetuses and children are more vulnerable to the effects of the synthetic chemicals, which are toxic to the brain and nervous system, said Dr. Philip Landrigan, director of the Children's Environmental Health Center at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. The Environmental Working Group recommends buying organically grown peaches, apples, bell peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, kale, lettuce, imported grapes and pears because they are the most heavily sprayed. Onions, avocado, sweet corn and pineapple have

some of the lowest levels of pesticides.

As for nutrition, one French study found that, in some cases, organic plant products have more minerals such as iron and magnesium and more antioxidant polyphenols. But although mounting evidence suggests that soil rich in organic matter produces more nutritious food, "we are never going to be able to say organic is always more nutrient dense; that's going beyond the science," said Benbrook of The Organic Center.

DAIRY AND MEAT

Organic dairy and meat products come from animals not treated with antibiotics or genetically engineered bovine growth hormones, which are used to stop the spread of disease and to boost milk production. Past rules on "access to pasture" were vague and didn't require that the animals actually venture into it. But a new regulation requires that animals graze for a minimum of 120 days. In addition, 30 percent of their dietary needs must come from pasture.

The bottom line: The dairy cow's diet is key. Organic milk has more vitamins, antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids and conjugated linoleic acid because the cows eat high levels of fresh grass, clover pasture and grass clover silage. Research published in the British Journal of Nutrition found organic milk can improve the quality of breast milk and may protect young children against asthma and eczema.

Though the FDA says milk from cows treated with bovine growth hormone is safe and indistinguishable from other milk, consumers are spooked. Dean Foods, the nation's largest dairy producer, no longer sells milk from those cows, and Krogers, Wal-mart, Costco, Starbucks, Dannon, Yoplait and several other companies have pledged not to use it.

As with dairy, organic meat has higher levels of omega-3s because of the higher forage content in their diet. It also has

lower fat overall than animals fed a high-corn diet, said Benbrook. Eating organic dairy or meat also can help with another issue: The use of antibiotics on farms has contributed to an increase in antibiotic-resistant genes in bacteria.

"Pushing animals to grow really fast has a cascade of effects on the environment and the health of the animal," said Benbrook. "We need to back off the accelerator and focus on the health of the plant, the health of the animal, as well as the nutrient composition of the food."

COSMETICS, PERSONAL CARE

Chemicals in personal care products have been linked to both environmental pollution and human health concerns. Of particular concern are phthalates, which have been linked to endocrine disruption.

Environmental concerns also are rising about the tiny nanoparticles now being added to cosmetics, sunscreens and other products. Notably, organic personal care products can be labeled "organic" but still contain synthetic ingredients.

The bottom line: Of the 3,000 chemicals used in high volume in personal care products, only half have been put through basic toxicity testing, according to Landrigan.

You may be paying more for "organic" products that aren't actually organic: the USDA regulates organic personal care products only if they're made of agricultural ingredients. Look for the USDA logo rather than the word "organic" on the label.

PROCESSED FOODS

Many processed foods — pasta, candy, cookies, crackers, baby food — now come in organic versions. Products made from at least 95 percent organic ingredients can carry the "USDA Organic" seal if the remaining ingredients are approved for use in organic products. Products with at least 70 percent organic ingredients may label those on the ingredient list.

The bottom line: Processed organic food hasn't been shown

to be any more nutritious than processed conventional food.

In conventionally processed products such as baby food, pesticides aren't commonly detected because the processing steps "are quite effective in breaking down trace residues of pesticides," said food toxicologist Carl Winter, director of the FoodSafe Program at the University of California at Davis and co-author of the Institute of Food Technologists scientific summary.

"Pesticides are rarely used on crops grown for baby foods since the ultimate appearance of the crop is less important due to the processing before the product is ultimately sold," Winter said.

Some consumers may decide to choose organic because those products are not supposed to contain genetically modified organisms.

COTTON, COFFEE

Cotton and coffee are two of the most pesticide-intensive crops in the world. Pesticide residues have been detected in the cottonseed hull, a secondary crop sold as a food commodity. It's estimated that as much as 65 percent of cotton production ends up in our food chain, whether directly through food or indirectly through the milk or meat of animals, according to a report by the Environmental Justice Foundation. Conventional coffee production also has contributed to the deforestation of the world's rainforests.

The bottom line:

Pesticide residues are generally removed during the processing but the chemicals can have a huge impact on the local land, biodiversity and the health of the workers involved. Though buying organic can help preserve environmental health and support farmers who use ecological methods, "it's more important to focus on the circumstances of growers and farms versus the product itself," said food writer Corby Kummer, the author of "The Joy of Coffee."

Watch For Moldy Grain

BROOKINGS—As temperatures rise this spring, so too does the likelihood of increased mold growth on grain stored in bins over the winter.

South Dakota Cooperative Extension Swine Specialist Bob Thaler reminds producers who stored grain to check it thoroughly before using it as livestock feed.

"Last fall, most producers faced concerns with weather-damaged corn, and much of the corn was high in moisture, lower in test weight, and some even contained the black mold, penicillium," Thaler said. "But we had some good luck, and the black mold produced no detrimental mycotoxins. Most producers were able to dry their grain down to some extent and get it into bins for winter storage."

Thaler said that while winter cold temporarily stopped much of the mold growth, spring-like temperatures can bring back conditions that make black mold, and others, more likely to start growing, and in turn, producing the mycotoxins that are detrimental to livestock.

"We have received several reports in South Dakota of corn coming to elevators this spring containing detectable levels of the mycotoxin zearalenone," said Thaler. "Zearalenone is of special concern to livestock producers since it has estrogen-like effects, and at high enough concentrations, it can cause abortions in pregnant females."

COOPS

From Page 1B

business cooperative. And today, its store is housed in 10,000 square feet and is supported by 3,200 members.

Case Study #2: A Main Street Cooperative

Acadia Cinema, located in Nova Scotia, became a cooperative as a means of survival at a time when most small towns are lucky to keep their vital services such as banks, grocery stores, convenience shops, schools, and churches.

The effort began in 2002 when the theater's owner retired. By 2003, the community knew it needed to raise \$600,000 for building renovations and continued operations. The goal was to sell 3,500 shares at \$100 each — but the effort fell short as only \$250,000 was raised between 600 shareholders.

What happened is that Acadia Cinema ended up partnering with other businesses for the space — a coffee shop, a live theatre, and a conference center — and the money raised went toward renovating the movie theater with 160 seats.

Case Study #3: A Worker Cooperative

Cooperative Care provides home care to the elderly and disabled in four rural Wisconsin counties. The cooperative began

in 2001 to provide support and fair earnings to area home care workers. In addition to their hourly pay, the workers receive dividends based on Cooperative Care's project at the end of the year.

Today, Cooperative Care has 85 members giving 3,000 hours of personal home care per month.

Case Study #4: A Distribution Cooperative

The Nebraska Food Coop, a local foods network connecting producers to consumers through a virtual marketplace, was started in 2006 and was based off an Oklahoma project. This Nebraska cooperative has been so successful that many states have since replicated the Nebraska model.

The Nebraska Food Coop offers two tiers of membership: voting members pay a one-time fee of \$100 with a \$20-per-year renewal; nonvoting members pay only a \$40 annual fee. Annual operating costs, which includes salary for one part-time staff member and food transportation expenses, are paid from 10 percent of each sales transaction. Most of the labor is volunteer hours from members.

"This helps the farmer get his products out without having to drive to each (consumer) location," Cranford said. The Nebraska Food Coop is unique also in that it provides insurance coverage for producers, which is required for working with most institutions like the University.

Today, the Nebraska Food Coop has 100 members, only 20 of which are producers and the remaining are consumers.

Farm Bureau: Big Is Necessary

BY LISA ABRAHAM

McClatchy News Service

In the ever-expanding world of organic, locally grown, pesticide-, hormone- and antibiotic-free meat and produce, the Farm Bureau may seem a bit like a dinosaur.

First, there's its size — the Farm Bureau is large and powerful, lobbying at the national, state and local levels on behalf of farmers.

Then there's its philosophy — Farm Bureau members are unapologetic about their support of traditional farming methods, which include pesticides, growth hormones and antibiotics. Without them, members say, there would be a lot of hungry people.

I sat down recently with a few members of the Summit County, Ohio, Farm Bureau, who were hosting a farmer's share breakfast. Over pancakes, eggs and sausages, members explained that their mission is fairly simple: They want to get people interested in farming.

While the ongoing movement to encourage small organic farming isn't a bad one, it's not a practical one, they say. Plenty of people will never have the time, the ability or the desire to grow their own food, and small organic farms won't be enough to feed an ever-growing world, they contend.

Big farming is needed to keep grocery stores filled, and big farming doesn't necessarily mean corporate farming, they say.

Lisa Graf, who with her family operates Copley Township, Ohio's Graf Growers, said most Farm Bureau members are family farmers, working the land the way their families have for generations.

Gale Betterly, a retired dairy farmer from Richfield, Ohio, sported a T-shirt that read, "Every day is Earth Day to a farmer." She said to suggest that farmers aren't good stewards of the land is to suggest that they don't care about their businesses or their own survival.

Betterly, who is a retired member of the state

Farm Bureau's board of directors, said bureau members feel compelled to speak out now because urge a food crisis could be looming as the world's population grows.

The phrases "food safety" and "food security" in the past meant issues of contamination. Now food security "means, will there be enough?" she said.

Betterly said the population is growing, but the world's landmass isn't. Without ways to farm more efficiently and get greater yields, there may come a day when there won't be enough for all, she contends.

Farmers don't want to get to the point where people are going hungry before they speak out, she said. The bureau wants to encourage residents to start cultivating their backyards as gardens or even consider small farming operations to raise crops or livestock.

Graf said local farmers are all in favor of the "eat local" trend, which encourages people to purchase, as much as possible, food produced within a 50- to 100-mile radius of their homes.

Graf, an officer for the county Farm Bureau, said Ohio farmers want to feed Ohioans, and the eat-local trend only helps agriculture in Ohio, which, Betterly pointed out, is the state's No. 1 industry. These farmers not only feed Ohio, but help to feed America and the world as well.

Farm bureau members want the public to know that farming is a realistic and attainable profession, a great side business for adults or even students, and a great way to build a retirement.

Betterly likes to tell how she and her two brothers "went to college on a pumpkin." Each year the trio would grow pumpkins and sell them in the fall, raising enough money to help put themselves through college.

While land and equipment costs make it difficult to start a large farming operation from scratch, Graf noted that small growing operations on just a few acres can provide side businesses for working people, which grow into retirement careers.

has rallied to the old highs and even above them, have faded to test the winter lows.

A higher U.S. dollar has limited the buying interest of the grains as a higher U.S. dollar weakens the export markets for the U.S. Until a weather event emerges, prices appear headed for further price weakness. How quickly will the grains find a bottom that is meaningful and maintainable is a question asked by the traders, hedgers and end users.

Since no one knows with certainty if the grain markets have bottomed or when they will bottom, producers should consider liquidating their remaining inventory and replace ownership with futures or options.

If producers want to be "bullish" of corn, soybeans or wheat; they can use the money they will save in storage and interest costs to "re-own" with call

options. For example, July corn call options have approximately 87 days of time value until expiration on June 25. Producer can buy a "near the money" July call option for approximately 22 cents. (This is about 8 cents cheaper than this time a year ago.) Thus, producers can sell their inventory and use only approximately 10 percent of the proceeds to enable themselves to have upside potential through June 26. The producers who follow this strategy will have the following scenario: no downside risk, unlimited upside potential, 90 percent of the cash proceeds to pay expenses and have eliminated all storage and interest charges.

Since the cash inventory is sold, there is no downside price risk. Producers pay the cost of the option when they purchase the option and have no other costs involved with managing

that option. From the selected strike price of the option, producers have the opportunity to add value to their cash sales if prices move above this price level. Since producers have only used 10 percent of the sale proceeds, they are able to use the remaining 90 percent to pay debt, stop interest or for general cash flow purchases. With the inventory now sold, there are no charges for storage and interest charges will also stop once any loans securing the crop have been repaid.

The best reason to follow this strategy is peace of mind. Once the crop is sold, there is no reason to worry about the condition of the crop or the fluctuating markets.

Producers can use this same strategy on new crop strategies as well.

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