
Strengthening Our Organic Roots

A Report from the 2008 IFOAM General Assembly in Modena, Italy

By Jim Riddle and Joyce Ford, with excerpts by Elizabeth Henderson, NOFA

On June 22-24, delegates from around the world gathered at the historic Vignola Castle to determine the future of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements for the next three years.

The Modena gathering was the largest and most diverse IFOAM congress ever held with over 1200 participants from 100 countries. The IFOAM General Assembly was also the best attended yet: sixty percent of the IFOAM members were present or represented by proxies. There were 248 voting members from 69 countries with about 90 proxies.

The gathering was marked by lively debate, inspiring addresses, and sweltering heat. (Luckily, the Korean delegation had distributed promotional fans, which helped delegates cope.)

There were 27 candidates for 10 seats on the IFOAM World Board (WB). Yours truly came in 11th by one vote! Only 3 incumbents were re-elected. Katherine DiMatteo, former Executive Director of the Organic Trade Association, was re-elected, and then went on to be selected by the WB to serve as IFOAM's new president. Vice-presidents are Urs Niggli of Switzerland and Roberto Ugas of Peru. With sixteen tracks of workshops running simultaneously, there was no way to encompass them all. The International Society for Organic Agriculture Research (ISOFAAR) accounted for six of the tracks devoted to reports on the impressive amount of organic research from universities around the globe. The compilation of abstracts for the entire congress runs over 500 pages. Readers can consult the Book of Abstracts, available at www.ifoam.org.

The first two days of the Congress opened in a huge tent with plenary sessions devoted to IFOAM's four principles of organic agriculture: ecology, care, fairness and health. Jorgen E. Olesen and Vandana Shiva spoke on ecology. After reviewing the mounting evidence that organic agriculture uses less energy than conventional agriculture, Olesen, a Danish professor of agro-meteorology,

challenged IFOAM to reduce international trade. Support for organic business is fine and a source of revenue, Olesen said, but in conflict with the principle of ecology. In her usual fiery and brilliant style, Vandana proposed changing the pyramid of life to put bacteria instead of human beings at the top. Ecology means understanding the power of biodiversity: in our world "everything is something else's food." On the principle of Care, Tewelde Berhan Gebre Egziabher urged us to make soil replacement the central issue. Carlo Petrini, founder of Slow Food, punctuated with emphatic gestures his passionate summons to understand the essential connection between producers and consumers.

Much of the debate during the General Assembly (GA) focused on an unfinished proposal from the previous World Board to revise IFOAM's Organic Guarantee System, moving away from the IFOAM Basic Standard to a vague "family of standards" concept. Delegates were generally cool to the idea (despite the heat), and approved numerous motions, which re-affirmed the membership's authority over the direction of IFOAM.

Here are some of the motions approved by the General Assembly:

Motion 15.1: The GA instructed the World Board to develop a position paper on the use of organic seed and propagation materials in Organic Agriculture.

Motion 15.4: The Assembly required that the World Board formulate a clear IFOAM policy position opposing the Patenting of Living Organisms, particularly in plants and seeds in Organic Agriculture, these being a threat to biodiversity.

Motion 20.5: The General Assembly expects the "IFOAM Basic Standards" to be maintained, developed and regularly revised, as they are IFOAM's identity and protection of its integrity.

Motion 26.1: The GA confirmed that cell fusion, including protoplast, and/or cytoplasm fusion breeding techniques, do not comply with the principles of organic agriculture. Therefore, the GA urged the World Board to develop clear guidelines on how to deal with varieties derived from cell fusion including protoplast and/or cytoplasm fusion breeding techniques.

Motion 29.2: IFOAM will develop a proposal to be submitted to funding agencies for the development of a study on how to include the gender perspective in all development projects or Organic Agriculture where donor and/or government money is used.

Motion 29.6: The GA requested the WB to propose ways of giving more weight to the representation of farmers' membership organizations, thus reflecting their real weight and value and decision-making rights in the IFOAM.

Motion 29.7: IFOAM, and the World Board, will support, educate and advocate regarding Grower Group Certification in order to obtain recognized and legal status worldwide for small holders, family scale farmers and other small-scale process/handlers. If, or when other groups are considered for an ICS system, additional criteria will have to be proposed, discussed and agreed upon by the membership.

Motion 29.10: The GA instructed the World Board to develop a position paper on the primordial role of smallholders and family farmers in the context of food sovereignty. This position paper should serve as the basis for the development of internal policies, advocacy and program development.

Motion 29.11: IFOAM recognizes the potentials and dangers stemming from regenerative energy production and will thus establish a working group to specifically deal with the application of organic farming principles in renewable energy production and utilization.

The following definition of "organic agriculture" was presented:

"Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved."

The GA also discussed and adopted numerous recommendations to amend "Program 2011," which, along with the adopted motions, will guide the work of IFOAM for the next three years.

South Korea was chosen as the location for the 17th IFOAM World Congress and General Assembly in 2011. Ë

BOD Minutes Highlights for 1st half of 2008

(Please see 'Inspectors Only' section of website for complete minutes. BOD minutes are posted in final form after approval by BOD.)

Jan. 31 Conference Call Present: Catherine Cash, David Konrad, Garry Lean, Gene Prochaska, Monique Scholz, Erin Beard (alternate acting as BOD member), and Margaret Scoles (ED). Absent: Bob Durst and Maheswar Ghimire.

Treasurer Gene Prochaska presented the Dec 31 2007 letter to Colin Presizniuk (audit response), drawing attention to changes already implemented, especially the increased separation of duties (financial record keeping and signing cheques). He also presented the Draft Audit Policy options from the Finance Committee. It was decided to obtain some additional information and eventually revise option 6 for adoption by the BOD. Option 6: Enlist the services of our accountant to perform increased role in financial oversight.

Canadian Committee Janine is currently the IOIA Canadian Committee Chair and serves many other important roles in Canada, some as a representative on behalf of IOIA and some as a representative of other bodies. The BOD feels assistance to the Canadian Committee is important. Bill Barkley has indicated an interest in chairing this committee. **Action Point:** Monique to contact Janine to see if she would like to enable Bill to have a go at this critical task.

March 1, in-person meeting in Retalhueu, Guatemala Present in person: David Konrad, Garry Lean, Gene Prochaska, Monique Scholz, Erin Beard (voting), Maheswar Ghimire, and Margaret Scoles (ED). Present via Skype: Bob Durst Absent: Catherine Cash. Monique move to approve Leanne McCormick as member of Accreditation Review Panel. Dave seconds. Motion adopted. Leanne replaces outgoing ARP member Stephen Grealy – Many thanks to Stephen!

AGM Ballot Committee was appointed, with Susan Colwell as chair, with Gabi Soto, Jean Hough and Carmela Beck as assistants. Moved by David Konrad and seconded by Maheswar Ghimire, that all checks greater than \$2000 require a second signature, from David Gardner, CPA. Motion approved. **Action Point:** Margaret to make appropriate arrangements with Gardner, including guidance on level of document review needed for each targeted transaction.

Committee Chair Policy Discussion re: Term Limits: The 2 year terms in the Bylaws for Committee chairs has no limit on it. Garry recommends following **Action Points:**

- ◆ Review by-laws to ensure that standing committees (and possibly our longstanding ad hoc committees that might not be ad hoc) are specifically listed in by-laws.
- ◆ Establish what are our actual ad hoc committees and revise the list on an annual basis.
- ◆ Figure out how committee chair terms can be renewed, overviewed etc. as per the bylaws.

Dave moves that the process of putting the Membership Committee into the Bylaws as a standing committee be activated. Erin seconds the motion. Motion adopted. **Action Point:** Dave will bring this motion to Bylaws Committee.

Certifier Involvement, Bylaws and Policies for BOD and other inspector issues: General discussion about certifier staff serving on BOD. Specific example: Dave has current involvement with QAI, a position which does involve inspector feedback. Clarified that the feedback reaches the inspector in an anonymous form. Relates to COI. Each BOD member must ensure these things are disclosed openly and if things may change during their term.

Margaret introduces Susan Colwell, specifying two potential roles:

- ◆ fundraising (volunteer)
- ◆ training management on-site on contract (paid).

Susan presented her interest in our organization's commitment to our sector. She then presented some of her fundraising ideas, which were warmly received by the BOD.

March 2, in-person meeting in Retalhueu Present: David Konrad, Garry Lean (out-going chair), Gene Prochaska, Monique Scholz, Erin Beard, Lidia Girón. Absent: Bob Durst, Stephen Bird

Informal meeting to determine composition of Executive Committee, urgent communications and date of next meeting.

It was agreed to form the Executive Committee as follows:

Chair: Bob Durst

Vice Chair: David Konrad

Secretary: Monique Scholz

Treasurer: Gene Prochaska

Director at large: Stephen Bird

March 17 Conference Call Present: Stephen Bird, Bob Durst, David Konrad, Monique Scholz, Erin Beard, Lidia Girón and Margaret Scoles, ED. Erin was present as voting alternate and Lidia as non-voting alternate, to keep abreast of BOD issues.

Moved by Monique, seconded by Stephen, to endorse Jim Riddle's candidacy for IFOAM Board seat. Motion adopted. ED will draft letter to this effect.

Training Issues Discussion: Policy for re-writing failing assignments: Margaret and Monique to draft policy, including background information. [continued on next page]

May 1 Conference Call: Present: Stephen Bird, Bob Durst, David Konrad, Monique Scholz, Gene Prochaska, Erin Beard (non-voting alternate), and Margaret Scoles, ED.

Gene presented the Financial Audit Policy. It was clarified that all cheques over \$2000 are to be signed by two persons. This is to be incorporated into the IOIA Policy Manual. **Action Point:** Margaret to set this up for next month. Moved by Stephen Bird, seconded by David Konrad, to adopt and implement the Financial Audit Policy. Motion passed.

Rita Wenzel has applied for Office manager position. BOD recommended to move forward with hiring her and juggle other staff hours as needed.

Jim Riddle and Joyce Ford will represent IOIA at IFOAM in June in Modena.

Discussion about Promotional contract work by Rebecca McClellan. Her primary job is to create updated promotional materials. She requested to work with one BOD member for oversight. Bob agreed to and will do ongoing monitoring to make sure she stays on track with IOIA purpose. Bob to provide updates to BOD.

Training in Pakistan - Four trainers expressed interest to response to Sacha's query of all Trainers, and two of those had withdrawn. No formal Trainer Request has been sent to Trainers. How does BOD feel given the security concerns? Consensus was that if we give trainers all the info and they are still willing to go then we can allow it.

May 29 Conference Call Present: Stephen Bird, Bob Durst, Monique Scholz, Gene Prochaska, Erin Beard (voting alternate), and Margaret Scoles, ED

Proposed by Erin Beard, seconded by Monique Scholz, to appoint Janine Gibson to Ethics committee. Adopted.

The BOD has reviewed the Membership committee recommendation regarding Mischa Popoff's application for membership. Moved by Bob Durst, seconded by Monique Scholz, to deny membership to Misha Popoff. Adopted.

2009 AGM location: Action Point: Monique to ask Canadians where they would like the meeting and who could help.

Guelph Conference: Moved by Erin Beard, seconded by Monique Scholz, to sign on as full sponsor of Guelph Conference 2009. Adopted.

July 17 Conference Call Present: Stephen Bird, Bob Durst, David Konrad, Gene Prochaska, Monique Scholz, Erin Beard, Lidia Girón and Margaret Scoles, ED. Erin was voting alternate during time that Monique was not on the call.

Margaret draws BOD members to the activity in Korea in her ED report. Important that all BOD members be more aware of Korea Organic Inspectors Association (KOIA) newly formed within about the past year and JOIA (active for many years). Through the Membership Committee and/or BOD, we need to put more effort into a true affiliate status.

Monique reports the results of her informal survey of Canadian members through the Canadian Forum. She expressed thanks to her Quebec IOIA inspector member colleagues Sylvia Welke and Christine Ouellet for responding so quickly. The results were strongly in favor of Montreal over Ontario locations.

Bob Durst reported that ED Evaluation is in progress.

Extensive fundraising discussion: with IOIA's Development Director, Susan Colwell, on the call. Susan asked the BOD for direction and priorities. Canadian standards project for training on both sides of the US-Canada border generally deemed one of the most important and timely. Dave Konrad accepted the position of BOD liaison for Fundraising. No committee at this time.

Discussion: Does doing eco-label inspector training fall within our mission? **Action Point:** If future 'eco-label' inspector trainings are requested, ED will consult with BOD liaison first before accepting. BOD liaison will determine if BOD should be informed or involved in decision making.

Committees: BOD liaisons designated.

- o Accreditation- Steve
- o CGG- Lidia
- o Canadian- Monique
- o Editorial Review Board – Steve
- o Scholarship – Gene

BOD clarified that Compensation and Working Conditions Committee was an ad hoc committee created in the past for a specific purpose. It has not been active for several years, so it is not currently an IOIA Committee.

BOD considered a proposal to amend the IOIA Policy regarding committees. One of the most significant changes is to replace current language on **Term Limits for Committee Chairs** to no more than 6 consecutive years, implementing by next AGM. Motion by Dave, seconded by Steve, that the BOD adopt as amended. **Action Point:** Send new wording as amended to BOD; BOD can amend further at next meeting if necessary. Ë

Impact of Flooding on Organic Food and Fields

By Jim Riddle

Organic Outreach Coordinator
University of Minnesota

Due to recent flooding of agricultural land throughout the United States, many reporters, farmers, inspectors, extension agents, food shoppers, and others are wondering about the impact of flooding on organic certification of affected fields and products. This article explores the immediate and long-term impacts of flooding on organic farms, foods, and fields.

By way of introduction, it is important to point out that in most instances, only low-lying portions of farms or fields are affected by floodwaters. Most farms, even when they suffer flood damage, have fields and crops that do not suffer any damage. For such fields and portions of fields, the food safety and organic status of their crops is unaffected.

Adulterated Food

For food crops, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers any crop that has been subjected to flooding to be an "adulterated" commodity that cannot be sold for human consumption. This applies to organic and non-organic food crops.

According to a State organic certification agent, the FDA suggests a 30' buffer between flooded areas of fields and areas harvested for human consumption. To prevent cross-contamination, harvest equipment should not be driven through areas that were flooded. At least 60 days should elapse between flooding and planting of the next crop. Producers also need to monitor the quality of water used for washing food crops to make sure that only safe, potable water comes into direct contact with produce.

Certification Requirements

The specific National Organic Program (NOP) requirements that may apply to flooded fields and crops are §205.400(f), General requirements for certification; §205.670, Inspection and testing of agricultural product to be sold or labeled "organic"; §205.671, Exclusion from organic sale; §205.201(a)(5), Organic plan requirements for monitoring; §205.272(a), Contact with prohibited

substances; and §205.290, Temporary variances. If land is verified as contaminated with prohibited substances and needs to undergo transition to regain eligibility for certification, §205.202 Land requirements, would apply.

Residue Analysis

Under the NOP regulation, §205.670 states that a certifying agent may require pre-harvest or post-harvest testing when there is reason to believe that an organic agricultural input or product has come in contact with a prohibited substance. According to §205.671, if a crop is tested for residues and shows over 5% of the EPA tolerance for a given residue on a given crop, the crop cannot be sold as organic.

One problem with residue analysis is identifying what to test for. You can test for most pesticides, but it is difficult to test for fertilizers, which are very quickly immobilized by microorganisms and converted to biological forms. You can narrow the search by specifying the most likely contaminants you would expect to find, based on the kinds of crops grown in the area and what inputs are normally used on those crops.

Pathogens, such as salmonella and e. coli, can also be present after floods. Food samples, taken from representative areas of fields to be harvested for human consumption, should be tested for human pathogens.

If "adulterated" food is going to be diverted as organic livestock feed; if flooded pastures are going to be grazed soon after flooding; or if stored feed, such as large round bales were subjected to flooding, the certification agency may require testing for chemical residues or other prohibited substances. In addition, a farmer may want to test feeds for pesticides, pathogens, mycotoxins, or other contaminants to protect livestock health.

Another problem with residue analysis involves the need to take numerous samples from the affected area for the tests to be statistically valid. According to Dr. Francisco Diez, University of Minnesota, "if you want to get 100% assurance of pathogen absence, the number of samples would have to be quite large and given the price of those analysis

probably not cost-effective. If you have a field with 500 to 1200 units, you would need to test approximately 80 samples to have a 95% confidence that it would be free from pathogens." Dr. Diez recommends that any directly affected produce that will not be cooked be discarded. If food is to be cooked before consumption, it should be washed and cooked to at least 165 degrees F.

Public laboratories, such as those operated by some universities and state departments of health, agriculture, or environmental quality, should be approached to provide low-cost residue, pathogen, and mycotoxin analysis of food and feed from flooded areas.

Temporary Variances

Under NOP §205.290, temporary variances from certain requirements may be established for: natural disasters declared by the Secretary of Agriculture (or President); or damage caused by drought, wind, flood, hail, tornado, earthquake, excessive moisture, fire, or other business interruption.

Since "flood" and "excessive moisture" are specifically listed under §205.290(a)(2), a certification agency could request a temporary variance from the AMS Administrator.

In order to receive a temporary variance, the affected operator needs to make a written request to the certifying agent. The certifying agent reviews the request and may recommend to the AMS that the temporary variance be granted. The AMS Administrator approves the variance and sets a period of time under which the variance is allowed. The Administrator may also grant an extension.

The following NOP sections are eligible for consideration when temporary variances are requested:

- ◆ Soil fertility and crop nutrient practices - §205.203;
- ◆ Seed and planting stock practices - §205.204;
- ◆ Crop rotation systems - §205.205;
- ◆ Pest, weed, and disease management - §205.206;
- ◆ Wild crop harvesting standard - §205.207;
- ◆ Origin of livestock, feed, health care, and living conditions - §205.236-239;

- ◆ Handling (processing) requirements - §205.270;
- ◆ Facility pest management - §205.271; and
- ◆ Prevention of commingling and contact w/ prohibited substances - §205.272.

In order to be certified with a temporary variance, certain sections of the NOP regulation remain mandatory. These include:

- ◆ Recordkeeping Requirements - §205.103;
- ◆ Maintain or Improve the Natural Resources of the Operation - §205.200;
- ◆ Organic System Plan - §205.201;
- ◆ No Use of Prohibited Substances - §205.105 and §205.202(a);
- ◆ No Application of a Prohibited Substance 3 Years Prior to Harvest - §205.202(b);
- ◆ Distinct, Defined Boundaries and Buffer Zones - §205.202(c);
- ◆ Labeling Requirements - §205.300-311; and
- ◆ Certification Procedures - §205.400-406.

A temporary variance could apply to management practices (e.g. pastures flooded - have to confine livestock for an extended period of time; crop destroyed - have to deviate from the planned crop rotation and grow the same crop 2 years in a row; or, if a vegetable grower has to replant flooded fields, and has no source of organic seedlings). A temporary variance cannot be used to shorten the transition period, if land loses its organic status due to high levels of contaminants in floodwaters.

Future Certification of Flooded Fields

If a residue of a prohibited substance is present thru no fault of the operator, the land would not necessarily lose its certification, even if the crop cannot be sold for human consumption or if residues exceed 5% of the EPA tolerance and the crop cannot be sold as organic. The determination regarding the future status of the affected land is made by the certification agency.

Generally speaking, low levels of contaminants from floodwater would be considered unavoidable residual environmental contaminants (UREC) under §205.671, and therefore may not affect the land's certification, according to

several organic certifiers contacted for this article. However, if there is reason to believe that a high level of contaminants may have been carried in by floodwater due to nearby pesticide manufacturing or another industry producing potential contaminants, it would be advisable to test crops grown on that land the following year to see if 5% of the EPA tolerance is exceeded.

As indicated, a farm that is downstream from a source of concentrated prohibited substances, such as a chemical or fertilizer plant or sewage treatment facility that was flooded, would be of great concern regarding prohibited residues. In that case, the land could lose its certification if contamination levels in crops continue to exceed 5% of the EPA tolerance.

Certifiers report that they would be most concerned about any areas of a farm where floodwater has collected and deposited sediments. The water that just flows over the land is less likely to leave soluble prohibited substances. Dirt that washes in may be contaminated, however.

The time of year the flooding occurred may also be considered, since application of prohibited materials to non-organic neighboring fields tends to occur in the spring and early summer and may be more likely to migrate in floodwater at that time, as compared to flooding that occurs in late summer, 3 months after the application of these substances. The length of time the floodwater was present on the organic fields may also be taken into account when deciding organic certification status and possible long-term contamination.

Contact Your Certifier

It is critical for organic producers who have experienced flooding to contact their certification agency. One certifier I contacted plans to send a letter to all affected producers in declared flood disaster areas requesting that the agency be informed of the impact on their



operations (which fields/facilities; flood duration; standing water duration) and what possible contaminants they can identify.

Some certifying agents plan to send out inspectors to operations that have been flooded in order to confirm that flooded produce is not going to market; verify which fields or portions of fields were flooded; identify possible contaminants; and confirm changes to the operation's organic system plan. Farmers may need to supply information on how they are monitoring their operation to ensure compliance with NOP requirements. The attached forms, developed and supplied by MOSA, may be used as farm monitoring tools.

Acknowledgements

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Bonnie Wideman, Midwest Organic Services Association; Sam Welsch, OneCert; anonymous State certifier; Emily Brown Rosen, Organic Research Associates; Harriet Behar, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services; Francisco Diez, University of Minnesota; Erin Silva, University of Wisconsin; Meg Moynihan, Minnesota Department of Agriculture; Kevin Elfering, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (retired).

Two mock charts are available on our website for your use. Please go to the Resources page, www.ioia.net/Resources.html and look for 'flood charts.'

Thank you to Jim for submitting this article.

Next: 'Climate Ready' Gene-Altered Crops

A handful of the world's largest agricultural biotechnology companies are seeking hundreds of patents on gene-altered crops designed to withstand drought and other environmental stresses, part of a race for dominance in the potentially lucrative market for crops that can handle global warming, according to a report released by Ottawa-based ETC Group, an activist organization that advocates for subsistence farmers.

Three companies -- BASF of Germany, Syngenta of Switzerland and Monsanto of St. Louis -- have filed applications to control nearly two-thirds of the climate-related gene families submitted to patent offices worldwide, according to the report.

The applications say that the new "climate ready" genes will help crops survive drought, flooding, saltwater incursions, high temperatures and increased ultraviolet radiation -- all of which are predicted to undermine food security in coming decades. Company officials dismissed the report's contention that the applications amount to an intellectual-property "grab," countering that gene-altered plants will be crucial to solving world hunger but will never be developed without patent protections.

The report [at <http://www.etcgroup.org/en/>] highlights the economic opportunities facing the biotechnology industry at a time of growing food insecurity, as well as the risks to its public image.

Many of the world's poorest countries, destined to be hit hardest by climate change, have rejected biotech crops, citing environmental and economic concerns. Importantly, gene patents generally preclude the age-old practice of saving seeds from a harvest for replanting, requiring instead that farmers purchase the high-tech seeds each year.

Gene patents allow companies to limit others from marketing those genes. The 35-page ETC report, "Patenting the 'Climate Genes' . . . and Capturing the Climate Agenda," documents about 530 applications for climate-related plant genes filed at patent offices in the past five years. A few dozen patents have been issued; hundreds of others are pending.

The ETC report concludes that biotech giants are hoping to leverage climate change as a way to get into resistant markets, and it warns that the move could undermine public-sector plant-breeding institutions such as those coordinated by the United Nations and the World Bank, which have

long made their improved varieties freely available.

Among the report's concerns is the breadth of many applications. Protective genes are usually discovered in one variety of plant, and after minimal testing they are presumed to be useful in others. In one typical case, a BASF patent claim for a gene to tolerate "environmental stress" seeks to preclude competitors from using that gene in "maize, wheat, rye, oat, triticale, rice, barley, soybean, peanut, cotton, rapeseed, canola, manihot, pepper, sunflower, tagetes, solanaceous plants, potato, tobacco, eggplant, tomato, Vicia species, pea, alfalfa, coffee, cacao, tea, Salix species, oil palm, coconut, perennial grass and a forage crop plant."

Publicly funded developers of freely accessible plant varieties could succumb to biotech's market dominance, the report warns. One of the biggest is the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, which runs 15 research centers worldwide and is funded by several international aid organizations. CGIAR has long emphasized non-biotech breeding to develop varieties ideal for subsistence farmers and their local conditions.

Facing big budget cuts from its traditional funders, CGIAR is now a central player in a Bill & Melina Gates Foundation-funded collaboration with Monsanto and BASF -- a project that a CGIAR spokesman defended as a "global public good."

Other experts said that both sides have oversimplified the pros and cons of biotech crop patents.

"I don't mind Monsanto developing these tools. I mind that we don't have an economic ecology that lets other companies compete with them," said Richard Jefferson, founder and chief executive of Cambia, a nonprofit institute based in Australia that helps companies worldwide sort through patent holdings so they can build on one another's work instead of stymieing one another.

Under the current system for patenting genes, he said, "the little guys shake out and the big guys end up in a place a lot like a cartel."

Jefferson characterized the ETC report as extreme in its anti-corporate views but praised it for drawing attention to what he said is a real problem of corporate consolidation in the seed industry. Happily, he said, patent offices are "getting a lot better" about not allowing overly broad gene patents.

Rick Weiss, Washington Post, May 13, 2008

Int'l Report States GE Not the Answer to World Food Crisis

Sixty countries backed by the World Bank and most UN bodies have called for radical changes in world farming to avert increasing regional food shortages, escalating prices and growing environmental problems.

The authors of the 2,500-page *International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development* [IAASTD] say the world produces enough food for everyone, yet more than 800 million people go hungry. "Food is cheaper and diets are better than 40 years ago, but malnutrition and food insecurity threaten millions," they write. "Rising populations and incomes will intensify food demand, especially for meat and milk which will compete for land with crops, as will biofuels. The unequal distribution of food and conflict over control of the world's dwindling natural resources presents a major political and social challenge to governments, likely to reach crisis status as climate change advances and world population expands from 6.7 billion to 9.2 billion by 2050."

The full IAASTD report is available at www.agassessment.org

ADM et al Defend Ethanol in Food vs Fuel Fight

A new group is adding its voice to the debate on using crops to produce alternative fuels such as ethanol amid rising food prices and shortages in some countries.

The Alliance for Abundant Food and Energy in Washington D.C. was created by Archer Daniels Midland Co, DuPont Co, Deere & Co, Monsanto Co and the Renewable Fuels Association (www.foodandenergy.org).

"There are critics who are trying to create an either-or decision between food and fuel," said Mark Kornblau, the alliance's executive director. "We believe this is a false choice. Today, more than 90 percent of crops in the United States and around the world are used exclusively for food."

The group believes that agricultural innovation -- such as genetically modified crops -- is the best way to address global hunger, not reducing biofuel production.

Decatur, Illinois-based ADM is one of the world's largest producers of biofuels, and Monsanto is a leading producer of GMO seeds.

Kornblau did not say exactly how much money the founding members contributed but said "the initial budget is in the multimillions."

The food versus fuel debate heated up as U.S. food prices last year saw their biggest increase in 15 years and are forecast to rise by 5 percent this year.

World food prices rose by 40 percent last year, causing food riots, hoarding and bread lines in some countries.

At the heart of the debate is to what degree the popularity of biofuels has contributed to the rapid rise in food prices.

Corn, soybean and wheat prices at the Chicago Board of Trade hit record highs this year amid increased global demand for food, rising oil prices and government mandates for biofuels.

About 34 percent of the U.S. corn crop this year will be used to make ethanol, compared with 23 percent last year, according to the USDA.

"Most credible studies say the rising price of food right now can be attributed to the high price of oil," Kornblau said. "To get your Idaho potatoes to Massachusetts or Florida, you have to have them shipped."

Crude oil prices have soared by 70 percent in the past 12 months and hit a record high of \$147.27 a barrel on July 11.

The new alliance faces tough opposition. Both livestock and food producers have lobbied to reduce or eliminate subsidies for ethanol. Their efforts may have succeeded to some degree.

The new U.S. farm law cuts the tax credit for corn-based ethanol by 6 cents to 45 cents a gallon beginning in 2009. The law extends the 54-cent import tariff on ethanol through 2010.

The Grocery Manufacturers' Association has criticized ethanol for driving up food prices.

Lisa Shumaker, Reuters, July 24 2008

Non-GM Crops Still Dominate World Agriculture

Non-GM crops bred using traditional plant breeding methods still provide most of the food and animal feed in the world, covering more than 97% of agricultural land compared with only 2.4% growing GM crops.

An analysis by the group GM Freeze shows that in fact over 90% of global arable land is used to cultivate non-GM crops. Even in the US, where GM crops have been widely adopted, over 85% of agricultural land is growing non-GM crops and two thirds of arable land grew non-GM crops in 2007.

For the full report, go to www.gmfreeze.org/

Monsanto Looks to Sell Posilac

After struggling to gain consumer acceptance, Monsanto on Aug 6 announced that it would try to sell its business of producing an artificial growth hormone for dairy cows.

The decision comes as more retailers, saying they are responding to consumer demand, are selling dairy products from cows not treated with the artificial hormone. Wal-Mart, Kroger and Publix are among the retailers that now sell house-brand milk from untreated cows. Almost all of the fresh milk sold by Dean Foods, the nation's largest milk bottler, also comes from cows that were not treated with the artificial hormone, a spokeswoman said. Monsanto officials said the decision was not related to the retail trend and that business for the artificial hormone, sold under the brand name Posilac, remained brisk. Monsanto, which is based in St. Louis and is the only commercial manufacturer of the hormone, declined to provide sales numbers.

The growth hormone, approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1993, was one of the first applications of genetic engineering used in food production. When the artificial hormone, which is made in genetically modified bacteria, is injected into cows, it increases milk production by about a gallon a day. A 2007 survey by the Department of Agriculture said 17 percent of the nation's dairy cows were receiving it. Despite the government's approval, many advocacy groups have long maintained that Posilac is bad for the health of cows. Some even claim it could pose a cancer risk in people, though little scientific evidence has emerged to support that view. Their concerns have been fueled by the refusal of many countries, including Canada and members of the European Union, to permit the use of the hormone.

"I think they saw the handwriting on the wall and gave up," said Andrew Kimbrell, executive director of the Center for Food Safety, a consumer advocacy group based in Washington. "It's a major victory for consumers." Mr. Kimbrell said the original idea of marketing a growth hormone for milk production was flawed because milk is so emblematic of childhood. Fear of the effects of the artificial hormone was one of the primary drivers behind the growth of the organic dairy industry, he said.

Monsanto's announcement comes after a year of pitched battles over labeling on dairy packages. A year ago, Monsanto tried unsuccessfully to persuade federal officials to crack down on labels that say the milk has been produced without the hormone, arguing that milk from treated cows was the same as that from untreated cows. In the months since, a Monsanto-backed advocacy group and a handful of dairy organizations have struggled to have similar

laws or regulations passed at the state level. In Pennsylvania, for instance, the secretary of agriculture banned the labels, only to have his order overturned by the governor amid a consumer uproar.

Monsanto will continue to sell and market the product until a buyer is found. Posilac is sold in 20 countries.

Andrew Martin & Andrew Pollack, NY Times, Aug 6, 2008

Reality Check for Biotech PR Industry

Every year or so, the prestigious journal *Nature Biotechnology* publishes editorial comments that turn heads around the world. Its latest issue contains an editorial entitled "Join the dots." Its abstract states: "Pushing biotech as the 'solution' to the world's problems is doing more harm than good."

Some excerpts –

"Biotech is now the solution to feeding developing nations...renewable supply of energy...reducing the carbon footprint and global warming. Although biotechnologies can certainly help solve these problems, ramming that message down people's throats is hardly likely to convince the doubters."

"Take a recent case in point: the Biotechnology Industry Organization's (BIO) slogan for its annual meeting in San Diego in June was 'Heal, fuel, feed the world.'"

"There are hundreds of thousands of acres of GM crops being grown around the world, but they are not at present addressing key agricultural problems for poor farmers."

The editorial goes on to say that belief that biotechnology alone is going to "Heal, fuel, feed the world" requires "...an outrageous act of faith bordering on the religious." Amen.

Source: Nature Biotechnology, Vol. 26, 2008

No Coexistence

A new report shows the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) corn has caused a drastic reduction in organic corn cultivation and is making their coexistence practically impossible in Spain. Corn production is integrated in cereal cooperatives, which cover the production chain from the sale of seeds and inputs to commercialization, including technical advice. This system makes it difficult and expensive to segregate GM from organic and conventional production. Findings from the study, conducted by Rosa Binimelis of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Institute of Environmental Science and Technology, appear in the April 2008 *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*. E

IOIA Training Scholarships Available

IOIA is accepting applications for the annual Andrew Rutherford Scholarship Award, which provides full tuition for an IOIA-sponsored organic inspector training course during the following year. Both prospective and experienced inspectors are eligible to apply. It is awarded to an individual on the basis of need and potential as judged by the IOIA Scholarship Committee. Applicants can choose to attend any IOIA-sponsored training. The Scholarship pays for tuition, room and board but does not cover transportation or other expenses.

IOIA also offers the annual Organic Community Initiative Scholarship, which provides full tuition for an IOIA-sponsored basic organic inspector training during the following year. It is awarded to an individual on the basis of need and their potential to have a positive impact on their regional organic community. The Organic Community Initiative Scholarship is only open to applicants from outside of the US or Canada. Applicants can choose to attend any basic IOIA-sponsored training. The Scholarship pays for tuition, room and board but does not cover transportation or other expenses. For application materials and information on IOIA training programs, contact Margaret Scoles, IOIA Executive Director, IOIA, P.O. Box 6, Broadus, MT 59317-0006, Email ioia@ioia.net, or visit www.ioia.net to download application forms. The deadline for returning Scholarship applications is **October 1**. Scholarship recipients are notified by December 15. Æ

Meet Your Board

Stephen Bird – Director at Large

One of IOIA's newest board members is Stephen Bird, of Camino, California, which is located in the Sierra foothills outside the state capitol of Sacramento.

Steve grew up working on his family's farm near Modesto, located on the Tuolumne River. They raised beef cattle, grew alfalfa & walnuts. The family sold the farm when Steve was twelve and the buyer sold the lower portion of the farm to a sand and gravel company. Watching the land that his family worked and the river frontage he fished and swam along strip mined for sand and gravel had a major influence on his life, and he has been dedicated to the conservation of natural resources ever since.



Steve studied forestry at Oregon State University and

UC Berkeley, earning a B.S. in Forestry there in 1980. He worked as a silviculturalist for about five years before returning to school and earning teaching credentials in agriculture and life science in 1985. Bird taught high school biology for 5 years, after which he developed and established Celtic Gardens Organic Farm in 1999. The farm grows apples, table grapes, and pumpkins. Most crops are direct marketed. In 2007 the name of the farm was changed to Celtic Gardens Organic Farm and Learning Center to reflect the family emphasis on educational farm tours. They hosted about 500 children in 2007 and continue to grow every year. The tours teach about organic agriculture and importance of eating healthy local produce.

Bird began inspecting after taking IOIA Basic Farm Inspector training in Belmont, CA in 2001. He was convinced by neighboring farmer, Jim Zeek, longtime active CCOF member, that he could save everybody travel costs on their inspections if he got trained and did inspections nearby. He did 17 inspections in the Sierra Nevada Foothills that year. He subsequently took Advanced training in Wilsonville, Oregon in 2003 and Process training in Las Cruces, New Mexico in 2005. Today, Steve continues to increase his inspection work load, and now conducts Farmer, Handler, and Processor Inspections for domestic and international sales. He inspects to NOP, IFOAM, EU, CAAQ, and JAS standards, and expects to do about 100 inspections in 2008.

In addition to farming and inspecting, Steve also serves as a Chapter Leader for the "Going Organic" Program, organizing events, speaking on organic regulations, and mentoring farmers. "Going Organic" is a California State Water Board funded program that arranges activities that allow interaction between existing organic farmers and conventional farmers who may be considering transferring all or part of their operation to organic management.

Personal Comments from Steve: "I really like the social aspects of inspecting. Many Farmers and Processors love to tell you about their operations. It is fun to see what creative ideas people in agriculture can come up with to improve their products. I see my job as primarily communicator between the client and the certifier. I believe the client and the certifier both want the operation to be in compliance, and if I am effective in communicating the rules to the client and describing the conditions on the ground fully to the certifier then compliance should be possible."

Steve is a member of CCOF, Inc.; International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA); Sierra Gold Chapter of CCOF; El Dorado County Farm Bureau; Apple Hill Growers Association; Pleasant Valley Grange; and the Organic Consumer's Association. He also serves on the Board of Directors of CCOF, Inc. (treasurer); IOIA; Sierra Gold (treasurer); California Farmer's Market Advisory Board; Apple Hill Harvest Run; Camino School Parent Club (President); Happy Place Montessori School (President); 4-H Livestock Advisory Committee (4-H: Market Goat Advisor); Charter Home Study Academy; Chess Club Advisor, Cross Country Coach; and Snowline Little League Baseball (coach).

IOIA salutes Steve and his dedication to organic integrity – welcome to the Board, Steve, we're glad to have you! Æ

**Reminder! IOIA Accreditation application
deadline is October 1**

New Liaisons

Please note that the following BOD Committee Liaisons were established during their July 17 meeting:

Accreditation- Stephen Bird

CGG- Lidia Girón

Canadian- Monique Scholz

Editorial Review Board – Stephen Bird

Scholarship – Gene Prochaska

Fundraising- David Konrad

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIC INSPECTORS ASSOCIATION

(formerly Independent Organic Inspectors Association)

IOIA has several publications for sale. Order here or through our website, www.ioia.net.

Please add 15% for Shipping and Handling.

- " Farming with the Wild: Enhancing Biodiversity on Farms and Ranches; Written by Daniel Imhoff, Watershed Media, 182 p.; 2003; \$20.00
- " Organic Dairy Farming, Edited by Jody Padham, Community Conservation, Project coordinated by MOSES, 156 p.; 2006; \$15.00
- " Building Soils for Better Crops (2nd Edition), by Fred Magdoff and Harold Van Es. 240 pp. \$20
- " COG Organic Field Crop Handbook, 2nd Edition, Expanded and Rewritten. Published by Canadian Organic Growers. An invaluable resource. While preserving the best of the now out-of-print and no longer available first edition, this edition is updated to include info on GMO's, E. coli issues in manure, and many additions to the crop section. 222 pages, spiral bound, \$30.00.
- " Managing Cover Crops Profitably, 2nd Edition, published by Sust. Ag Network, \$19.00
- " Organic Livestock Handbook, published by Canadian Organic Growers. Edited by Anne Macey, 179 pp, spiral bound, \$30.00
- " Organic Tree Fruit Management, published by COABC, 240 pages, \$30.00
- " Steel in the Field, published by Sustainable Ag Network, 128 pages, \$18.00
- " Introduction to Certified Organic Farming. Published by REAP Canada, 200 pg. 25.00



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IOIA Membership Application

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- " Inspector - \$150
- " Supporting Individual - \$100
- " Business/Organization \$125
- " Certifying Agency - \$275
- " Patron - \$500
- " Sustainer - \$1000

" The Inspectors' Report – 4 issues/yr - \$30

" 2008 IOIA Membership Directory:

" \$15 members " \$25 non-members

IFOAM/IOIA Int'l Organic Inspection Manual:

" \$45 members " \$60 non-members

2008 Calendar

Ongoing through November 30 Michael Fields Agricultural Institute's 2008 Workshop Series, offering over 40 individual workshops presented by farmers and other agricultural professionals. East Troy, Wisconsin. www.michaelfieldsaginst.org

Ongoing through October 18 PASA is pleased to provide a series of Farm Based Education (FBE) events that promote and demonstrate sustainable farming methods as well as technical instruction on many related topics. Topics include biocontrols in the greenhouse, greenhouse growing, disease and insect management, and value-added agriculture. Multiple Locations, Pennsylvania. www.pasafarming.org/programs/farm_based.htm

August 29 - September 1 Slow Food Nation, the largest celebration of American food in history, will bring together tens of thousands to experience an extraordinary range of activities highlighting the connection between plate and planet. The majority of Slow Food Nation's events will be free and open to the public. San Francisco, California. www.slowfoodnation.org/

September 1 Ohio Green Living Fayre
Join us for a day of workshops, exhibits, demonstrations, old-fashioned family games, horse drawn wagon rides, the OEFFA organic farm tour, fishing, music and more. The cost to attend is only \$5 per person and the event will go from 11 am to 6 pm. Johnstown (just east of Columbus), Ohio. www.ohiogreenliving.org

September 5 - 6 Taste Iowa, A Local Food Festival including: vendor's market; producer, consumer, and children's workshops; celebrity chef demonstration; recipe contest; Iron Chef contest; an 'All-Iowa' meal; live entertainment, and more! Conrad, Iowa. www.gnbbank.com/gnb_conrad.asp

September 18 - 19 Women in Agriculture & Small Business Conference. Oklahoma's Fifth Annual Conference will be held at the Moore Norman Technology Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. www.greatplainsrcd.org

September 19 - 21 Common Ground Fair. MOFGA celebrates its 32nd Common Ground Country Fair in Unity, Maine. The Fair allows

fairgoers to make connections with a rapidly expanding base of organic farms in the state of Maine. www.mofga.org/TheFair/tabid/135/Default.aspx

September 21 6th Annual Southwest Michigan Community Harvest Fest. The beauty of fall makes this a special celebration of local foods, farming and sustainability. Purchase pumpkins, sorghum syrup and much more from 50-plus vendors. Keynote speaker is Will Allen of Growing Power, an urban agriculture and education program in Milwaukee. Scotts, Michigan www.fairfoodmatters.org/harvestfest/index.php or www.tillers.org/index.html

September 22 - 24 ELP Food Tour Conference 2008. The Environmental Leadership Program invites you to "The Politics of Food," a conference on how America grows, distributes, buys, and eats its food. Raleigh, North Carolina. www.elpnet.org/foodtour/conference.php

October 4 - 8 Restoring Our Urban and Rural Communities with Healthy Food. The Community Food Security Coalition's annual conference is back bigger and better than ever! Cherry Hill, New Jersey. www.healthyfoodconference.com/

October 4 - 9 Joint Annual Meeting: Geological Society of America-Soil Science Society of America-American Society of Agronomy-Crop Science Society of America-Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies More than 10,000 scientists, professionals, and students will gather to discuss the latest research and current trends in energy, water resources, science education, earth systems, and related sciences. Houston, Texas. <http://www.acsmeetings.org>

October 15 - 17 9th GLOBALGAP Conference. Good Agricultural Practices are becoming more and more widely adopted with consumers demand for healthy safe and sustainably produced food driving their expansion. Cologne/Germany. www.globalgap.org www.avantel.de/globalgap2008

October 20 - 22 SWCS Farming With Grass Call for Papers. The Soil and Water

Conservation Society will convene a conference to address the factors driving change in mixed agricultural systems. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. www.swcs.org/fwg

October 22 - 25 Holistic Management Conference. Come learn about "Paradigm Shifting for the Future" at the Holistic Management Conference in Brandon, Manitoba Canada. www.holisticmanagement.org/n7/nat_Gath/canada_conference.html

October 31 - November 2 The 23rd Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference. Keynote speakers include sustainable ag legends Wes Jackson and Joel Salatin, and we'll be debuting extended, hands-on workshop formats. Anderson, South Carolina. www.carolinafarmstewards.org/events.shtml

Nov 12 - Growing US Organic Agriculture: Accessing the 2008 Farm Bill. Farmers, State Departments of Agriculture, Extension Service agents, certifiers, farm associations, land grant colleges, and others will learn how to access the new organic provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill, including crop insurance, data collection, research funding, certification cost share, funding for the National Organic Program, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. University of Chicago's Graduate School of Business. Presented by OTA, more info at www.ota.com, or contact Marissa Potter (mpotter@ota.com).

Nov 17 - 19 USDA's National Organic Standards Board will meet at the Savoy Suites Hotel at 2505 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20007, phone: (202) 337-9700. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/>

December 4 - 6 The 2008 Acres U.S.A. Conference. The annual Acres U.S.A. conference sets the standards for innovation and learning. It is where you find farmers and consultants from every side of eco-farming who come together to share their experience and expertise. St. Louis, Missouri. www.acresusa.com/events/events.htm

For upcoming IOIA training schedule, please see page 3 of this issue.

Keep IOIA Strong - Lend Your Strength And Get Involved!



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