



ALEC-Funded Legislation: Right to Farm or Right to Harm?

Margot McMillen, Missouri Rural Crisis Center

Every year for the last 10 of 11 years, family farmers and small-town residents in Missouri have had to fight off legislation designed to take away our local control and place all lawmaking privileges in the hands of state lawmakers. Taken to the extreme, the end of local control would mean that county, city and township ordinances and laws would be void—no more zoning and no more health ordinances guaranteeing local protections against noise, air and water pollution, and so forth.

Fields of cloned livestock? China owning bigger chunks of Missouri farmland (they already own tens of thousands of acres!)? Robot tractors directed by drones to dump tons of chemicals on the land? The end of small farms and rural families?

This August, Missourians will vote on a so-called “Right to Farm” constitutional amendment, which is really a way to give corporate and industrial ag a “free pass” around democracy. If Amendment One passes, we will guarantee no barriers to any plans that big ag can devise. Industrialized agriculture could be established virtually anywhere, GMO seeds could avoid labeling, and as for labeling GMO foods—forget it!

As I write this, a month before the vote, it looks like it may be possible to beat back Amendment One. Thousands of citizens and organizations oppose this amendment because they see it for what it is—an attempt to remove any obstacles to further corporatizing, industrializing and concentrating food and ag in Missouri and the US into the hands of a few multi-national or trans-national companies (aka TNCs). These TNCs (like Monsanto and Cargill) and various organizations belong to coalitions such as Missouri Farmers Care (nice name, right?) that support these efforts.

Here’s the larger question: Where the heck did this idea of changing the constitution start? We know who it benefits—the industrial agriculture system—and we know who it hurts—ordinary citizens. Who wrote this bill, now called “right to farm,” and who financed the possibility that it would get traction?

Thanks to the magic of Google, I quickly found three states dealing with constitutional amendments similar to Missouri’s. A few more keystrokes led to the source of the language—ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council (to which Google belongs, by the way). On ALEC’s website I found the list of legislative members from Missouri. ALEC has been called a “national bill mill” that lawmakers join. It produces sample bills for pro-corporate causes for legislators to use in their states. And, per the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, taxpayers helped fund two ALEC junkets in 2014—jetting them to Salt Lake City and New Orleans.

In November 2012, North Dakota—a state besieged with fracking (ALEC has policies and sample legislation favoring that subject also)—passed a “right to farm” amendment into its constitution. (cont. p. 9)

Note from the President

Ben Burkett, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives

Recent weather has provided both sunshine and rain for Southern farmers, and we are currently engaged in growing, harvesting and post-harvest activities for cucumbers, squash, okra, watermelons [see photo, right] and more.

I have also traveled a great deal this spring. Twice I visited Washington, DC, to work with Lorette Picciano and Kathy Ozer on Farm Bill implementation and appropriations. I also attended the annual Cooperative Hall of Fame Dinner with Ralph Paige, Cornelius Blanding and others from the Federation.

In May, Cornelius and I went to Cuba to visit farms, towns and historic sites. This year marked the 55th anniversary of the Land Reform of the Cuban Revolution, and the celebration was huge! Although the Cuban economy is struggling, many farmers have adapted to cultivation with minimal inputs and no agrochemicals.

Many of you are probably aware of the recent Mississippi election between (cont. p. 3)



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Family Farm Agenda

The Family Farm Agenda is published three times annually by the National Family Farm Coalition, a nonprofit providing a voice for grassroots groups on farm, food, trade and rural economic issues to ensure fair prices for family farmers and fishers, safe and healthy food, and vibrant, environmentally sound rural communities here and around the world.

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Director's Note

Kathy Ozer, NFFC

The week following July 4th was marked by the tragic death of Charity Hicks after a random hit-and-run accident in NYC on May 31. She loved deeply and worked tirelessly for her Detroit community, but was also eager to travel the world to connect the dots for others. We first met her five years ago in her organizing role at the US Social Forum but, as our Eat4Health Policy Fellow, we worked together more intensively. Her role with NFFC was to translate her decades of community organizing into the policy arena—efforts that continued until the moment she was struck down in New York. Part of her work was dedicated to the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, particularly the 2013 Food Sovereignty Prize and Tour, the Seed Saving report, and the Mother Earth Rights committee.

Charity's vision included ensuring that farm bill programs, including the expanded Healthy Food Financing Initiative, would help low-income communities access healthy, affordable food at local stores and farmers markets. In April, she discussed this goal at several venues, including Congress. She planned to return to DC in mid June to advocate for the amendments that would increase funds for USDA's role in HFFI and to meet with USDA on their implementation plans. NFFC will continue to collaborate with the East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC) and others across the country to promote Charity's vision and dream.

Congress

Activity on the House and Senate floors has stalled on most issues, including their agriculture funding bills. This is not entirely negative, as the House had sought cuts and changes in nutrition programs. Last year, leadership struck a deal to debate each funding bill separately instead of passing one large bill by the end of the fiscal year (or the week before a potential government shutdown—the 'normal' process). Majority Leader Eric Cantor's (R-VA) defeat in his primary bid for re-election threw the House schedule into further disarray. Rep. Pingree (D-ME) was ready to introduce two amendments to restore rights for contract growers that will be dismantled if the House-passed committee provisions stand. The NFFC, National Farmers Union, Food and Water Watch, NSAC, and Campaign for Contract Ag Reform are working with House staff to boost support. Another concern is the bad report language for Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) included in the House bill, which would force USDA to rescind COOL immediately if the World Trade Organization declares it out of compliance with NAFTA.

President Obama has threatened to veto the House bill due to a possible opt-out waiver for schools unwilling to abide by healthier school lunch nutrition guidelines. These were implemented by the Institute of Medicine and USDA as part of the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, grating certain industry groups.

NFFC still seeks an amendment to boost funding for USDA's outreach for minority and veteran farmers (§. 2501) by \$10 million. §. 2501's increased demand and eligibility will otherwise operate with only 50 percent of its 2013 funds.

The Senate Appropriations Bill includes a provision requiring USDA to hold hearings on a new dairy pricing system. This was proposed by Senator Collins (R-ME) and resembles a Senate farm bill provision excluded from the final 2014 Farm Bill. NFFC is collaborating with allies to gain support for the inclusion of this provision when the FY 2015 appropriations bill is finalized; we hope that the Senate takes action before the August recess. Without floor amendments to increase funding or wins in the House-Senate conferenced appropriations, important issues and programs, such as GIPSA, will be defunded or dismantled.

Efforts continue to ensure that members of Congress voice opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and T-TIP (US-EU agreement) before and during the July negotiating rounds. The best way to keep them from being finalized is to make sure that the Obama Administration does not have fast-track /Trade Promotion Authority. These trade deals and fast-track could become a priority for the post-election lame duck session, so please stay tuned for updates.

Note from the President

Continued from pg. 1

Senator Thad Cochran (MS-R) and Chris McDaniels (Tea Party Candidate). A tremendous effort was extended to help re-elect Senator Cochran. We hope he hears the concerns of family farmers across Mississippi and the US.

NFFC, Friends of the Earth, Center for Food Safety, IATP and other allies released a statement on July 10 expressing concerns about the T-TIP (Trans Atlantic Partnership). We stressed the potential losses for family farmers, including a fair pricing system for dairy farmers, access to non-GE seeds and livestock, and the ability for US farmers to retain our current food procurement policies.

This summer marks the 50th Anniversary of Mississippi Freedom Summer. In the summer of 1964 people came to Mississippi from throughout the US to help African Americans register to vote; in turn, African American farmers put up their farms as property bonds to release Freedom Riders who had been jailed (for more information, visit <http://freedom50.org/>). 'Dirt & Deeds in Mississippi', a documentary highlighting these activities in Holmes County, should be released this fall.

The Federation evolved from that sort of democratic involvement and was officially established in 1967, which will be celebrated at our annual meeting in Epes, Alabama, August 14-16. We will commemorate our progress, but realize that there is still a long way to go before everyone can access equally the expansive opportunities afforded to some.

Along with Farm Aid and various member organizations, NFFC is widely known for helping family farmers; even as a vendor at the Crescent City Farmers Market I have met several people familiar with our work. As president of this great organization, I invite you to contact me with any concerns or need for assistance. I also want to thank Brad Wilson for his service to NFFC's board as our treasurer, and Rachel Nagin as our 2013 Emerson Hunger Fellow and policy assistant. We hope to continue working with them in one capacity or another in the future.

Fast Track/Free Trade Deal Threatens Local Control and Family Farms

Jim Compton, Missouri Rural Crisis Center

This year marks the 20th anniversary of NAFTA, which has been a complete failure (unless you're a multinational corporation) and put family farms out of business, off-shored U.S. jobs and triggered a race to the bottom in terms of wages resulting in pushing the U.S. middle class downward economically.

Now there is an attempt to rush through the largest trade deal in history. The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) is being widely described as "NAFTA on steroids". This new trade regime involves 11 nations (mostly in Asia) and has been negotiated entirely in secret with only leaked portions providing any insight. Citizens and most lawmakers have been locked out of the negotiation process and kept in the dark about the details of this proposed agreement.

Let's be clear—these trade deals take power away from local and state elected representatives and make us subject to a virtual undemocratic corporate, global constitution that could undermine the U.S. constitution, state constitutions, U.S. and state laws, and local control laws. Laws such as Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) would be in jeopardy—COOL is supported by the majority of farmers and consumers but opposed by corporate agribusiness.

The TPP agreement would elevate multinational corporations to the same legal status as sovereign nations. For example, corporations would be able sue a nation for enforcing their food safety standards as being "illegal trade barriers". These lawsuits would be decided before an unelected foreign tribunal where the only deciding factor would be whether a nation's standards on a product would restrict the plaintiff corporation's ability to make a profit. Taxpayer money would then be paid in the form of a fine or settlement if the country is found to be impeding the corporation's ability to make a profit. The fact that the U.S. can be sued and the issue cannot be heard by our courts or our Congress gives the American taxpayer zero influence, and it's a deal breaker.

To make matters worse, the Obama administration is pushing hard for "fast-track" authority to develop and finalize the TPP. This gives the President power to make trade deals without consulting Congress, subverting normal processes where our elected representatives can bring forth amendments and changes.

Trade is something most Americans are inclined to support as long as it's done in an equitable manner. That's not what's going on here. This type of trade agreement dramatically increases the profits of huge agribusiness corporations at the expense of U.S. farmers, our rural economies and farmers around the world.

Secret meetings, fast-track authority, pie-in-the-sky promises of prosperity and loophole-filled language aren't the way to arrive at an agreement that is fair to the American taxpayer and American citizen.



Non-Violent Agriculture and the Solidarity Economy

By Tomás Alberto Madrigal, Ph.D. Candidate, University of California

A Violent Agriculture

The vast majority of farms in Washington State, over 80 percent, are smaller than 200 acres. Small-scale farmers persist in numbers, yet their political power has diminished as agri-corporations have come to control the seed and the supply chain, turning a way of life into an industry.

Small farmers are under attack. The consolidation of the land holdings of various small farmers into the control of large agri-corporations has only served to displace small farmers and to make labor conditions on the consolidated farms more likely to be exploitative.

Like most extractive industries, this corporate agriculture has been market driven. In order to compete on a global scale, agri-corporations tend towards a dense, labor-intensive, monoculture organization of production.

This requires large amounts of temporary labor and depletes the soil of its nutrients at a much more rapid pace requiring an increase in the application of fertilizers that leech into our waterways.

Over the last decade, [Community to Community Development](#) has been documenting the violence of industrialized agriculture along the northern coast of Washington and patiently building an alternative.

The Northern Coast is a region where small-scale family farms unequivocally outnumber the larger corporate farms, however the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2012 Census of Agriculture indicates that 96 percent of the wealth generated by the sale of berries, one of the region's major crops, was concentrated in the hands of 15 percent of the growers, corporate farms.

In Whatcom and Skagit Counties large corporate growers by far have imposed the most violence upon farm workers and the earth driving a wedge between growers, farm workers, and the environment.

In the context of campaign finance reform and corporate personhood, political power has been violently stripped from the hands of small-scale growers and the rural society. Corporate Grower organizations such as the Washington Farm Bureau, the Washington Grower's League and Washington Farm Labor Association have encouraged desperate farmers to utilize a loop-hole left over from World War II to access temporary guest workers in a manner it was not intended to be used, taking all the risk, while the associations lobby congress to undo the crisis that they created by displacing workers in the first place.

In Washington State, this labor crisis was used by industry advocates to bolster the earning potential by increasing financial incentives to large-scale farmers because of the emergency. This comes at the expense of Washington's small farmers who cannot afford to use H-2A workers because of the regulations, yet must pay the equivalent of the mandated Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) in order to attract quality workers.

WAFLA's aggressive approach of marketing labor contracting as the only answer to stabilizing the agricultural labor force has also resulted in the displacement of farm workers from rural communities in particular in Lake Chelan and Wenatchee. This type of agriculture is unsustainable precisely because it breaks the fabric of our communities, communities made up of small farmers and farm workers who have built lasting relationships over generations.

Towards a Non-Violent Agriculture

It is for this reason that we have been working towards a just transition into a local solidarity economy based upon cooperative principles and domestic fair trade.

There is no sustainable future that excludes small farmers, farm workers and their families as stakeholders; this is a basic tenet of Domestic Fair Trade. Thus Community to Community's farm worker leaders have participated together with local small farmers in developing the vision and direction of the Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA).

The "Solidarity Economy framework is a grassroots approach to economic and social transformation, rooted in the belief that the best solutions come from collective knowledge and wisdom" (Transforming the Economy from the Ground Up).

We seek to continue building our relationship with small-scale farmers through the introduction of farm worker cooperative farms. We plan to shift the culture of this region by building a local solidarity economy where worker and consumer cooperatives make up at least 15 percent of the economy by 2020.

We believe that another world is not only possible, but is already here as posited by Arundhati Roy. In order for us to be stronger, small farmers, farm workers, and consumers must work together to create the change we wish to see in the industry.

Join us as we move forward with this important work.

To read more on Káráni, visit <http://wp.me/pnjLK-fz>, and to further protect farm workers from the harm caused by pesticide exposure, please submit comments to EPA at 1.usa.gov/1sTZRLD.



Farmworkers at Sakuma Brothers Farms, ca. 2004

Fighting for Water is Fighting for Life



From the MST (Landless Peoples) National Direction and Families

In our long struggle to build a better world, there are days of accomplishment and days of losses.

July 08, 2014, was a day of loss. Charity's family and friends lost her joy and companionship; the social organizations and movements of the US and all of the world lost a tireless fighter; We all lost a great "compañera" with whom we share the bread, and comrade with whom we share the dream.

The Xukuru indigenous people say that when we lose a warrior, we do not bury her. We plant her. Because from her seeds will be born many other warriors.

Charity left us the seeds of her dreams and ideals. The seeds of the struggle for a better world, where the land is in the hands of the people who live and work it; where water and all natural resources are a heritage of peoples; where there is healthy food for all people; where there are no exploiters or exploited.

We now have the duty of watering that seed of struggle. Grow it, care for it. In each mobilization; in each march; in each land occupation; in every struggle, the seed and the presence of Charity will be with us. For her dreams and ideals, which are also ours, we will keep the struggle.

•••••

Charity, with muito respeito e amor, thank you and goodbye ~ NFFC

Imagine turning your faucet one morning and seeing no cool stream of water for your coffee, shower, hungry kids or thirsty garden. At least momentarily, life draws to a halt.

The sudden lack of water could be a leak somewhere—an inconvenience but fixable. Water grabs, government shutoffs, and long-term drought are different beasts.

Hydraulic fracturing companies use a mixture of water, sand and toxic chemicals to release natural gas held between layers of rock. In addition to the millions of gallons required for fracturing rock, the chemicals used can poison surface and well water—a theft of the water which living beings, not corporations, have the right to use.

As residents of rural Wisconsin, West Virginia and Montana know too well, frac sand and coal mining require huge quantities of water for extracting, washing and sometimes transporting the products. Water is used to cool steam when transforming coal into electricity in the power plant, and controls pollution from the plant. Local groundwater and rivers may be polluted for decades after these mines have closed.

Long-term drought and unmonitored withdrawals of water can lead to slowly refilled aquifers and life-threatening situations. Ranchers and farmers in the Great Plains and California—the bread basket and salad bowl of the US, respectively—have known these realities for years. The 1930s Dust Bowl led to the migration of thousands of farmers to California. Today many California farmers face crop failure and farm loss. Central Valley Hmong American farmers were considering suicide until recent meetings at which John Zippert, of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, recommended hauling water via tanks; Fresno County and USDA discussed micro-loans for drilling deeper wells.

The city of Detroit—in deep debt but staffing its Water and Sewerage Department—has turned off the water of thousands of residential accounts weekly since March for unpaid bills more than \$150 and delinquent by 60 days or more. Despite the fact that the city sits on Lake Michigan—containing one-fifth of the world's surface freshwater—the average household water bill is nearly twice the national average. The city itself owes more than \$400,000 for golf course usage, the VA hospital more than \$131,000, the Joe Louis Arena more than \$80,000. The state of Michigan owes \$5 million for water used at the state fairgrounds! Lila Cabill of the People's Water Board noted, "If they paid THEIR bills there would be no need to shut off poor folks" (bit.ly/voicesofdetroit).

Another People's Water Board champion, Charity Hicks, was harassed and jailed for three days in late April for questioning the city's actions. While in New York City over the May 30 weekend, she discussed her experiences with Brett Tolley (NAMA), Rachel Nagin (NFFC) and allies at dinner one night. The three were connecting resource grabs known by urban residential, rural farming, and fishing (another area of water injustice) communities on a panel the next day, but Charity was seriously injured that morning while waiting for a bus outside Penn Station. We were extremely sad to learn of her July 8 death.

Detroit has seen demonstrations, media attention and a declaration by UN Special Rapporteurs that households which suffered unjustified disconnections must be reconnected, all to no avail for the families lacking water, including many with children. Charity avowed that authorities see unpaid water bills as a "bad debt" to further entice private buyers.

This basic human right is being violated to humiliate a community that has seen too much disenfranchisement already, but like the farmers and ranchers out West, don't expect them to back down. Water is life, and it's worth fighting for.



(l-r) Eat4Health Fellows Charity Hicks and Diana Lopez, Senate Ag Committee staffer Katie Naessens, and Eat4Health Partners Angela Adrar and Kathy Ozer.

Photo by Tyler Mac Innis

Current Trends in Fisheries Policies

Seth Macinko and Brett Tolley, Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance

On April 8, 2009, a NY Times story quoted the administrator of NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - the federal agency in charge of managing OUR oceans) as saying that NOAA was "taking preliminary steps toward privatizing fisheries" in New England. We submit that if the director of the Forest Service, National Park Service or Bureau of Land Management was quoted as saying those agencies were taking preliminary steps towards privatizing national forests, parks or rangelands there would be an immediate outcry. Yet, there was no outcry whatsoever. Fisheries policy occupies a distinctly unique position in American environmental policy; the singular solution to fisheries management problems now embraced by the left and the right is to privatize access "rights" bestowed freely and in perpetuity to select members of industry. Why do fisheries differ from rangelands?

When the US Congress created a 200-mile offshore zone in 1976, the fishery resources within that zone became a public asset for US citizens. Given continual concerns about overfishing certain fish stocks, fisheries economists (and others) have supported setting scientifically determined catch limits which are subdivided into individual catch assignments for each boat fishing a particular stock. But this simple tool—pre-assigned catch—is being embraced by the ideology that only private ownership can save fish stocks. The alleged problem is a lack of ownership, and the invocation of Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons is ubiquitous in the explanations of the push for privatization. Notably, the pre-assignments of catch are not lease auctions, as used for timber or offshore oil and gas resources, but simply presented as personal property of the lucky giftees—theirs to sell or lease as they wish. A public asset instantly becoming private is tolerated by the left and the right through their belief in the 'ownership promotes stewardship' theory.

US fisheries resources already have an owner—the American public. If fisheries deteriorate due to poor management, it's a management problem, not due to lack of ownership. Hardin was wrong, as he later admitted when he stated that he should have entitled his famous essay "The Tragedy of the Unmanaged Commons". The idea that private owners will automatically act as stewards to preserve their assets was proven dramatically naïve by the world financial crisis of 2008 when Alan Greenspan confessed to Congress that he was in "shocked disbelief" to learn that self-interest was not sufficient to protect financial assets. Again, fisheries policy stands out for its bizarre support of the concept that what is demonstrably bad for banks, is good for fish.

For example, in 2013, British private equity firm Lion Capital paid \$980 million to acquire Bumble Bee Foods and its subsidiary, Snow's Inc, which included the exclusive property rights to 23 percent of US clams—a quarter of the national supply. In 2010, Carlyle Group, the second-largest private equity firm in the world, acquired China Fishery Group (CFG), whose fleet covers the Arctic to the South Pacific and supplies fish across the globe. Following this, CFG released a new business strategy which included buying shares in global fisheries. The company now owns nearly 20 percent of Peru's fishing region plus North Pacific shares.

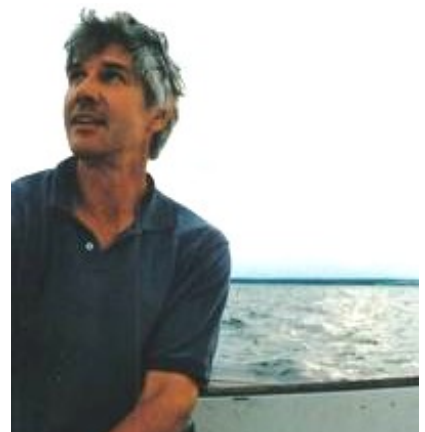
According to the Center for Investigative Reporting, catch shares have been backed by an alliance of conservative free-market advocates and environmental groups, some of which financed scientific studies promoting the system's alleged merits. The Walton Foundation, per its website, spent \$20 million in 2012 to promote Catch Share programs. The Charles Koch and the Reason Foundations aligned with Environmental Defense Fund et al in a heavily funded campaign to consolidate the fishing industry.

"Fishermen are becoming like sharecroppers and tenant farmers...Money is taken directly out of fishing communities and transferred to Wall Street," says fisherman Zeke Grader, Director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations. Impacts include losses in the number of boats, jobs, infrastructure, ecological integrity, and access to/control of food, with a lopsided impact to the smallest-scale fishers.

Fishermen and the public are being scared into accepting the privatization of their fishery resources by constant stories about overfishing. As noted above, we have a management problem, not an ownership problem. For fisheries in which pre-assigning catch makes sense, this can be done through public leasing of catch assignments with significant safeguards and oversight to ensure the greatest benefit to the ocean's health and to the nation at large. Real stewardship will come from concerted efforts to change our view of natural resources, not ideologically-infused missions to privatize public resources.



Brett Tolley of NAMA holding skate



Seth Macinko, U. of Rhode Island



NAMA's Niaz Dorry and Meri Ratzel (left, center in orange) link water access, social-economic justice and marine conservation for young visitors at the Boston Seafood Throwdown.

'Sound Science' - A Deception

Jim Goodman, Family Farm Defenders

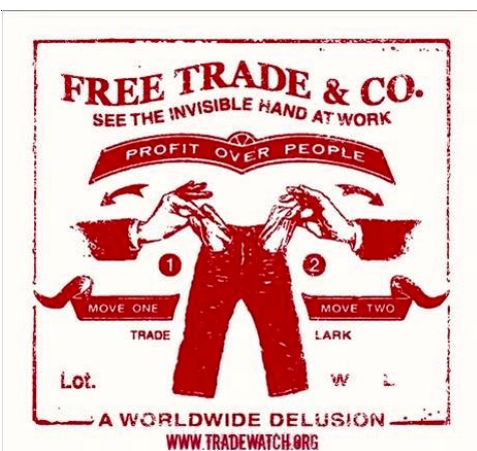
Food is big business; everyone eats. Global food production is about profit.

In the North, store shelves are always full. It's cheap, we're told it's safe, healthy and suddenly it's sustainable, because sustainable sells.

Sustainable agriculture used to be defined by peasant farmers, by organic farmers—farmers who avoided using pesticides on their crops, farmers who avoided using antibiotics and hormones on their livestock, farmers who relied on integrated farming practices to make their farms regenerative—sustainable.

Now, Monsanto bills itself as a leader and innovator in sustainable agriculture. Elanco tells us technology yields sustainability and Elanco president Jeff Simmons tells us that “access to safe, proven, efficiency-enhancing technologies ensures the three rights”—food as a basic human right; choice as a consumer right; and sustainability as an environmental right.

What? Biotechnology giants are standing up for the rights of people and the environment? The same corporations who for decades have ridiculed consumer protests and environmental concerns because their technology, their GMO's (genetically modified organisms), their crop protection chemicals, their seed patents were all based on “sound science”?



But, “sound science” has no scientific definition. It does not mean peer-reviewed, or well documented research. “Sound science” is only a term, an ideological term, used to support a particular point of view, policy statement or a technology. “Sound science” is little more than the opinions of so-called “experts” representing corporate interests.

For example, if the public has concerns about the environment, our health or the safety of our food after having been forced to accept scientific advancements like agricultural biotechnology, highly toxic pesticides, or fracking, our concerns are blown off because they are not based on ‘sound science.’

Without doubt, these practices are inherently unsafe, and in the case of GMOs, [ineffective](#) as well. In the end, they are of benefit only to the industries that own the technology. And because our society is so afraid of doing anything that might anger industry, or give industry a reason to outsource more jobs, science that does not support industry is not “sound science.”

Simply put, “sound science” always supports the position of industry over people, corporate profit over food safety, the environment and public health. So when someone says something is based on “sound science,” get ready to be duped.

“Sound science” is really all about deception. It paints a picture that is hard to resist, a story we want to believe. We wanted to believe that smoking was good for us, that nuclear energy was completely safe, that dioxin was not a problem—all stories backed by “sound science.”

Farmers wanted to believe that if they bought into the GMO system, they would actually make money, but the dream turned on [them](#). Patented seeds, the cost of fertilizer and chemicals pushed the small farmers out of business, their farms gobbled up by the corn/soy monoculture that made Monsanto, Cargill and all the other multi-national agri-business corporations rich.

Peasant farmers in the global South were pushed off their [land](#), rain forests were cleared to grow more corn and soy and rural communities could no longer feed themselves.

Simmons also tells us that hunger should not be happening in the United States. He is dedicating his life to ensure that everyone has food security. “There is no issue more important in the next seven years than food security. A healthier, more sustainable, more peaceful world is possible. We’ve talked enough. We have enough technology. Now is the time to act.”

So, people are hungry because there is not enough food. “Sound science” and technology are needed to grow more food and the owners of the seed patents, proprietary chemicals, the grain processors and meat packers will give the technology and food to those who need it? Sure.

People are hungry because they are [poor](#) and they are poor because the corporate system has outsourced their jobs, ruined their local economy and taken their land away.

Farmers cannot feed people when seeds are patented and cost more than they are worth.

Farmers cannot feed people when the crop protection chemicals they must use poison the [water](#) and the [air](#).

Farmers cannot feed people when local markets are destroyed by a global food system and when the “sound science” they are told will make them profitable and help them feed the hungry turns out to be a lie.

GMOs are safe and they hold the promise of feeding the world. Really? On very rare occasions the “sound science” gets debunked by those behind the science.

GMOs will not feed the world. “If anyone tells you that GM is going to feed the world, tell them that it is not... To feed the world takes political and financial will.” — Steve Smith, head of GM company Novartis Seeds UK, now Syngenta, at a public meeting on proposed local GM farm-scale trial, Tittleshall, Norfolk, UK, March 29, 2000.

Vermont's GMO Labeling and Raw Milk Access Gain Legal Status

Andrea Stander, Rural Vermont

On May 8, Governor Peter Shumlin signed Vermont's "no-strings-attached" GMO Food Labeling bill into law (Act 120), which is also first in the nation. This is a huge victory for everyone who eats and wouldn't have been possible without the enormous support of not only Vermont citizens and dedicated activists but many from around the country these past three legislative sessions. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to achieve this important step in protecting our right to choose the food that supports our values.

You can see a slide show of photos from the GMO Labeling Bill Signing Ceremony [here](#).

The [VT Right to Know Coalition](#), of which Rural Vermont is a founding member, will continue its work in several areas:

- We are assembling all the lessons we learned and resources we gathered during the campaign to share with other states working GMO labeling bills and ballot initiatives.
- We will develop materials to help Vermont citizens participate in the Attorney General's rule-making process to implement the GMO Labeling law.
- We are supporting the effort to raise money to support implementation and defense of the new law through the Vermont Food Fight Fund that Governor Shumlin announced when he signed the bill. If you or your organization can help spread the word about the [fund](#) it will be greatly appreciated. We need to show the corporate bullies that there is broad and deep support for the right to know what is in our food.

Grocery Manufacturers' Association, et. al., file suit

Late in the afternoon of Thursday, June 12, the Grocery Manufacturers' Association and industrial food allies the Snack Food Association, International Dairy Foods Association and National Association of Manufacturers, filed a lawsuit in federal district court to strike down Vermont's law.

Although the lawsuit does not raise any unexpected issues, it does mark the beginning of what will likely be a landmark legal battle over the people's right to know vs. corporate right to hide.

This summer Rural Vermont's Board and staff will be developing plans for our next steps in addressing the broader concerns related to genetically engineered food and corporate control of our food system.

For more information, write andrea@ruralvermont.org or call 802-522-3284.

Raw Milk Bill Becomes Law: Farmers' Markets Delivery Began July 1!

On Tuesday, May 27, Governor Peter Shumlin signed S.70, now Act 149, into law. The new law makes modest improvements to the statute governing the production and sale of raw milk in Vermont.

After hearing testimony on opposing sides from state and national experts, the Legislature made improvements to the current raw milk law, including authorizing the delivery of raw milk to farmers' markets for Tier 2 producers. Although Act 149 makes only modest improvements in providing greater access to raw milk, taking testimony and debating the bill significantly raised the profile of raw milk among legislators and increased the level of respect for the farmers who provide this esteemed product.

Act 149 will provide the following improvements in access to raw milk:

- As of July 1, 2014, Tier 2 raw milk producers are able to deliver raw milk to existing customers at farmers' markets where they sell. (Existing customer means someone who previously made a visit to the farm to make their initial purchase of raw milk.)
- Act 149 changes the daily sales limit to an aggregate weekly limit for both Tier 1 and Tier 2 producers, providing greater flexibility for farmers and convenience for customers. There are some additional requirements regarding cold storage capacity and protection of shelf life.
- Act 149 also clarifies that raw milk producers need only provide the "opportunity" for customers to take a tour of their farm.

For more details about these changes to the law, please read Rural Vermont's Fact Sheet on [Act 149](#). You may also read our updated "[cheat sheet](#)" on the requirements for Tier 1 and Tier 2 producers.

Rural Vermont will reach out to raw milk producers and customers about opportunities offered by the new law. We will also continue our campaign for commonsense, scale-appropriate regulation of raw dairy and all other farm fresh food.

For more information, write shelby@ruralvermont.org or call the office at 802-223-7222.

Animal Health Concerns

Gilles Stockton (NPRC/WORC) serves on the Secretary of Agriculture's Advisory Committee on Animal Health (SACAH), which advises USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Their mid-June meeting focused on the country's state of preparedness should FMD (foot-and-mouth disease) be introduced into our domestic livestock. Early diagnosis is key but stopping FMD's entry will be more difficult if the US starts importing fresh meat, as large meat companies (such as Brazil's JBS) advocate. Our level of integration with Mexican and Canadian hog and beef industries exposes us to extra risk, should FMD infect their national herds. USDA is negotiating a 'compact' with their Canadian counterpart to further integrate our livestock industries. Our lack of preparedness is largely based on insufficient funds to keep the FMD vaccine on hand.

Also addressed was the routine feeding of antibiotics to livestock in confinement, as MRSA is a major threat to human health.

Congress (and candidates) MUST hear that importing meat from countries with endemic FMD is a bad idea but supporting COOL is good!

Right to Farm or Right to Harm?

Continued from pg. 1

Its language is eerily like the proposal in Missouri: "The right of farmers and ranchers to engage in *modern* farming and ranching practices shall be forever *guaranteed* in this state. No *law* shall be enacted which abridges the right of farmers and ranchers to employ *agricultural* technology, *modern* livestock production and ranching practices." Fortunately in Missouri, we were able to remove "agricultural technology" and "modern livestock production" from the language and to add some possible protections.

Today, no North Dakota county, township, parish, city or other governmental body can pass a law or ordinance to protect themselves from chemicals, GMOs, CAFOs or any other kind of industrial farming scheme.

Not only will farmers be affected; this amendment can have serious repercussions for consumers. As a chief wheat-raising state, North Dakota cannot refuse any untested (and untrusted) GMO wheat under this Constitutional clause. And, yes, GMO wheat has again reared its ugly head.

Similar language is being considered in Montana, another primary wheat-raising state, and in Indiana, a buckle on the corn belt. The Hoosier experience, summed up at Indiana's TribStar.com, reads like this:

House Joint Resolution 5 and Senate Joint Resolution 27, identical pieces of legislation making their way through the two chambers, seek to amend the Indiana Constitution to prevent any legislative body from adopting *any* rules regulating farming... The amendment, apparently, would prevent any rules regulating large industrial agricultural businesses such as confined animal feeding operations. It would also prevent any laws that protect public health and private property rights for Hoosiers who are not farmers.

These dangerous laws could spell the end of rural life with the appearance of pastures of cloned livestock, drones spraying Agent Orange over fields of untested GMO crops, and families experiencing serious health consequences. It's important to find out if Right-to-Farm is active in your state, and who supports it. Then call your friends and neighbors and work to defeat it.

Local Farmer Takes Time for Organizing

Wink Davis, Western Colorado Congress

As I drove out the farm gate at 4:00 am on a recent Friday and turned toward Grand Junction, I was seized by doubt about the wisdom of the trip I was about to take. I'd be away for three days, the longest I'd been off the farm, except for family visits, in nine years. Lambing would begin any day, a cold front was on its way, and I had a new crew pruning peaches.

I hoped that the group of folks I was about to spend the weekend with would provide an outlet for the dismay and anger I have been feeling at the way family farms and our food system are being trampled by corporate Big Ag. I was tired of feeling like a voice in the wilderness and my wife Max was tired of being my sole audience. It was time to get serious and throw my lot in with these folks who I know to be effective in getting the job done.

I have, for many years, been a relatively passive member of Western Colorado Congress (WCC) and other member organizations of Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC). About the most I have done is to respond to Pat Sweeney's calls for letters to Congress and signatures on petitions. He and his staff have long been heroes of mine for their dedication to democratic, grassroots community organizing and savvy strategizing, as effective means for giving a voice to 'just plain folks' like me against big, faceless, powerful, exploitive forces.

And here I was, on my way to Billings as a member of the team representing WCC on the WORC Ag and Food Campaign Team.

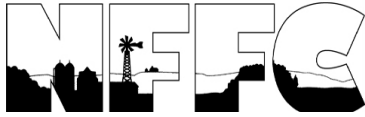
We went right to work Friday afternoon. Far from the usual dry, them-talking-at-us exercise in staying awake, the meeting was dynamic and engaging. We staged a highly realistic mock press conference on issues facing independent livestock producers with activists from Oregon, Idaho, and Wyoming presenting the findings of recent research and others of us as correspondents. I played the role of a Fox "News" reporter. It was fun, informative, and an important rehearsal for the real thing soon to come.

When I boarded the airplane Sunday evening, I knew I had been treated to community organizing at its best and examples of how WORC helps make WCC an effective grassroots organization. As we went our separate ways, we were galvanized as a cohesive regional working group, heading home energized and armed with knowledge and tools to make a difference for the future of family farm agriculture.

Back at the farmstead, I fired up the frost fans at 2:00 am Monday, and our first lambs came along that afternoon. So, other than lack of sleep, there was no harm, only gain, in taking the weekend away.



(l-r) Austin Saunders (ORA), Matthew Liebel (DRC), Wink Davis (WCC), and Jean Dahlman (NPRC) in a mock press conference. Photo by Jerry Neri (WCC)



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FIRST CLASS

Support Family Farmers, Ranchers,
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Olivier De Schutter Finishes UN Term

Rachel Nagin, NFFC

On April 30, Olivier De Schutter completed his 6-year term as the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. Throughout his tenure he criticized many UN proceedings, including the Millennium Development Goals, for their lack of consistency—the UN claimed to engage in human rights-based language and approaches while advancing a neoliberal economic agenda.

In April 2009, Ben Burkett and other NFFC representatives participated in a thematic dialogue of the U.N. General Assembly on the global food crisis and the right to food. In his prepared statement, De Schutter wrote:

"Today, trade is mostly done not between States, but between transnational corporations. ...The expansion of global supply chains only works in favor of human development if this does not pressure States to lower their social and environmental standards to become 'competitive States', attractive to foreign investors and buyers. ... The daily and massive denial of the right to food has its source, not in an insufficient quantity of food produced, but in a system of production whose limits have now become clear."

Throughout his term, De Schutter argued that climate change and the resulting societal implications exemplify neoliberalism's limitations. He consistently highlighted the need to address the stark realities of the world's agricultural workers and small holder farmers through laws and policies that help them, and everyone, realize the right to food.



Nagin and De Schutter in DC in May

-- Calendar --

- July 18-20** - Praxis Project: Roots & Remedies 3: *Connect. Plot. Build. A National Gathering*, Detroit, MI
- July 23-26** - WORC: *Principles of Community Organizing Workshop*, Billings, MT
- July 30-31** - *Empowering Youth, Veterans, Ranchers and Farmers Conference*, MFSI and the Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, Inc., Okmulgee, OK
- August 14-16** - Federation of Southern Cooperatives' 47th Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner, Epes, AL
- August 18** - Deadline for comments to EPA on proposed new safety rules for farmworkers. Submit [here](#).
- September 13** - Farm Aid (site TBA)
- September 21-22** - NFAF's Round Table Discussion and Field Tour, Albemarle, NC
- October 10-12** - AGRAWatch strategy meeting with African allies opposing GMO proliferation, Seattle, WA
- October 15-19** - USFSA Food Sovereignty Prize Events and Tour, Des Moines and Detroit
- October 16** - World Food Day/National Day of Actions

**3rd Tuesday of every month, 1pm Eastern/10am Pacific -
NFFC Board Calls. Write lisa@nffc.net for details.**