

What's in Season from the Garden State

Biweekly Highlights from Cooperative Extension, a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

July 15, 2010

New Jersey Department of
Agriculture's Jersey Fresh &
Seafood Availability Report

Arugula	Parsley
Baby Arugula &	Peaches
Baby Spinach	Peppers
Basil	Radishes
Beets	Squash
Blueberries	Sweet corn
Cabbage	Swiss Chard
Cantalopes &	Tomatoes
Melons	Turnips
Cilantro	
Collards	Forecast:
Cucumbers	Nectarines
Dandelions	White potatoes
Dill	
Eggplant	
Escarole &	
Endive	
Kale	
Leeks	
Mint	



In support of the local food effort, US Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan has launched the USDA's *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* campaign to support local farmers, strengthen rural communities, promote healthy eating, and protect natural resources.
<http://www.my.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/knowyourfarmer?navid=KNOWYOURFARMER>

It's a Sign of the Times

This nation has a long history of activism. People fought for their rights or protested unacceptable practices by bearing arms or taking to the streets. Some movements were violent – fighting with bow and arrow, cannon, musket or fire bombs. Some were bold but non-violent - dumping tea into the harbor, taking to the streets or “sitting in”. Other backlash movements were more subtle – the “back to nature” movement that was incorporated into curriculums during the industrial era or the environmental movement that followed. These movements all came about when people no longer were willing to accept the conditions that oppressed them or violated their morals or ability to live in acceptable conditions.

You say you want a revolution

A new movement is afoot. It is a non-violent movement that has infiltrated the media, and is being fought in kitchens, gardens and food establishments across the nation. It is a backlash to the food that is being processed full of trans fatty acids, high fructose corn syrup, monosodium glutamate, artificial sweeteners, artificial colors, and preservatives. It is against food that is devoid of nutrients. It is against food that is contaminated and came through channels so diverse that it cannot even be traced back to its source. It is *for* food that comes from local sources, not trucked across the country.

The rebels are already at work, plotting with shopping lists around kitchen tables or meeting with school boards in conference rooms. While they are armed with kitchen knives, they choose to use a more powerful weapon – their dollars. While the troops in the trenches appear to be mostly white and/or middle class, it is the ethnic minorities and the poor who suffer the most from the ravages of the Standard American Diet (SAD). Regardless of race, creed, color or financial status, we are all caught in the circumstance of what is available and what is cheap, and we pay dearly in the long run with our health. Clever tactics like using NFL players to visit New Jersey schools to present nutrition awards instead of pitching fast foods and soda have been used by extremist groups like New Jersey Department of Agriculture. Radical factions at Rutgers have been co-conspirators with the city of New Brunswick to establish a farm market that caters to the Hispanic population.

Taking it to the streets

Frustrated with politics, policy and practices that sacrifice the health and well being of the people, the troops actively employ tactics to fight back. They are taking to the streets and walking to their community farm markets. They are picking up shovels and digging gardens.

Let's face it – if you signed up for this newsletter you are a member of this movement. Whether you're a chef, gardener, foodie, naturalist or just a person who likes to eat real food and know where it comes from, you are a member of this movement. Keep fighting with your best ammo – shopping consciously, talking with friends, family, neighbors and schools about healthy eating and hear our rallying cry:

GIVE ME ZUCCHINI OR GIVE ME DEATH!

See next article on page 2

RUTGERS

New Jersey Agricultural
Experiment Station



Organic field corn emerging through rye cover crop to suppress weeds and conserve soil.

Gross Estimate of Organic Field & Forage Crop Supplies

- There are about 20 million bushels of organic feed grains produced annually in the US.
- That is sufficient quantity to feed about 150,000 feedlot animals to slaughter weight each year.
- There are currently about 10.5 million feedlot cattle (steers and heifers) on finishing feeds in this country.
- Thus, as a nation, we are producing enough organic feed to support 1.5% of all feedlot beef.
- If we subtract the amounts supporting organic dairy cows, then we have enough organic feeds and forages to support less than 1% of our livestock.

If hogs and poultry needs are included in these numbers, we can feed less than 0.5%. These are back of the envelope calculations, and we can probably feed less than 1/200 or even 1/500 of available animals with current organic production.

Where to find Jersey Fresh? Ask for it where you shop or dine or go to:
<http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov>

To receive these reports by e-mail:
njfarmfresh@njaes.rutgers.edu

Web: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu>
 For your county Rutgers Cooperative Extension office go to:
<http://www.njaes.rutgers.edu/county>

Why Grow and Test Organic Livestock Feeds and Forages?

Jack Rabin, Associate Director for Farm Services, Rutgers NJAES

In New Jersey agriculture, 86% of our current \$1.1 billion farm gate revenues (2008) come from crops, and only 14% from livestock, dairy, or poultry products. We have been excluding livestock and dairy animals for decades. The reasons are complex, involving factors like livestock and dairy production offering lower profitability returns on high priced urban fringe farmland, complaints from neighbors over natural things like animal odors or flies and lack of small-scale slaughterers in the region. In other words, it has been a lot easier successfully growing azaleas or peppers on New Jersey farms instead of beef cattle or lamb.

This does not serve New Jerseyans well on two levels. First, local food advocates urge us to “get in touch with our meat.” Knowing some of your meat, dairy, artisanal cheese, poultry or fowl comes locally is an important way to more closely relate to how animals serve us in many ways, food being one of them. It links us to food and farming.

Second, and equally important, agriculture scientists working with sustainable farming systems recognize we can **best** maintain sustainable farming on the land when animals are included in our production, not excluded. Without vibrant local livestock industries - animals raised and processed for feeding us – farmers purchase more petroleum based energy inputs, at greater cost (and convenience) for adding nutrients back into soils.

With fewer animals, farmers must find costly or petroleum energy input substitutes to improve soil health. With animals, there is a natural path for restoring soil organic matter and nutrients that plant-based animal wastes, manures, and composts offer. Animals eat plants that we grow, they feed us, work for us, offer recreation for us, and then their wastes re-feed the soil. Animals make it easy for society to move carbon (in plant carbohydrates) back into soils to be available in the future, and not in the atmosphere.

When it comes to organic livestock products from small farmers, local supplies of quality **organic feeds and forages, at affordable prices, are a limiting factor for expanding growing livestock in New Jersey.** Rutgers Cooperative Extension agricultural agent Dave Lee has been conducting organic livestock feed and forage trials on our research farms attacking this problem. Other Rutgers members, like soil scientist Joseph Heckman, are revitalizing the importance and community value of grazing animals on pasture grasses locally, and naturally.

How big is the problem of efficiently feeding livestock organically? Mike Westendorf, extension specialist in animal science, recently performed some ‘napkin economic analysis’ (see sidebar).

What does all this mean? Organic feeds and forages are very little relative to their potential, and a potentially solid business opportunity for farmers who make an effort to convert, produce organic feeds and forages, and find a market among organic livestock farmers for their products.

Dave Lee measuring yields from organic alfalfa fields at Rutgers NJAES research farm in Bridgeton.

