



PRESS RELEASE

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NOFA Vermont's Dairy and Livestock Program Helps Organic Dairy Farmers Address Economic Challenges

In recent months, the economic recession has created unprecedented challenges for Vermont's 200 certified organic dairy farmers. After years of double-digit increases in consumer demand, reliable milk prices and impressive expansion in the number of organic dairy farms in Vermont, sales of organic dairy products nationally have decreased substantially. There is now an oversupply of organic milk in most markets. The two major wholesale buyers of Vermont's organic milk, Horizon Organics and Organic Valley Cooperative have implemented mandatory milk price or production cuts to address financial and supply-demand imbalances.

For a large number of organic producers the milk check now falls well short of covering the high cost of purchased organic feeds and fixed costs of production. Especially hard hit are organic producers who are new to organic farming; many incurred significant debt in transitioning to certified organic production and are still working to refine organic grazing systems and animal management practices essential to profitable organic milk production.

To date, one of Vermont's certified dairy producers has sold the herd for financial reasons; two organic dairy producers have lost milk buyer contracts to produce organic milk. The coming months will be especially difficult for many organic producers until consumer demand for organic dairy products, and farm milk checks, recover.

In 2009, as it does every year, NOFA Vermont's Dairy and Livestock Technical Assistance Program offers services and workshops designed to help organic dairy producers improve their organic farm practices and income. On-farm consultation services include business planning, farm energy auditing and information about cost-cutting practices. NOFA Vermont's Dairy and Livestock Program provides information about available low-cost loan and cost-sharing programs. Advanced technical workshops for organic farmers are regularly offered on all aspects of organic dairying, including milk quality, animal health and nutrition, grain and forage production, farm budgeting, pasture and grazing systems, on-farm composting and herd housing. A full series of summer workshops is planned.

For more information about this summer's workshops and services offered by NOFA Vermont's Dairy and Livestock Technical Assistance Program, visit NOFA Vermont's webpage, www.nofavt.org, or call NOFA Vermont in Richmond at 802-244-6446.

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and strong communities since 1971*