



Bringing Home the Harvest

Newsletter of Rural Roots:
The Inland Northwest Community Food Systems
Association

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Fall 2000/Winter 2001

Idaho Certified Organic Eggs

By Phil Gage & Skeeter Lynch, Full Circle Farms, Princeton, Idaho

Full Circle Farm is the first egg operation to be certified organic in the State of Idaho. In the following dialogue, Phil and Skeeter tell their story...



Q. What got you started?

Listening to Michael Shuman Sunday morning on March 7, 1999. His words ignited an already active desire to support a self-reliant community where ever I am. Michael's book, *Going Local; Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age* (Free Press, 1998) brought my philosophies to summary and helped me to know it is possible, that others have and are doing this

now and it's up to me to do my part.

Q. Why did Idaho not have any Certified Organic Eggs?

Sharing my thoughts of "doing the egg thing but going Certified" and hearing, "It can't be done," "It's never been done here," "Idaho should stick to Potatoes," "Only a few people will buy them," "This community as a whole will not support local certified organic farmers," "No way to make a livin' at it for sure!"

Q. How did you start?

We paid off 80% of loans and simplified our life to be free of financial obligations that did not align with our vision and mission. The University of Idaho has one section on Poultry. I think we read every book from 1873 to current. I wanted to know what others had done before, new ideas from old ways and integrating ideas to do things better. We called every chicken referral gifted to me. Egg ladies and men from Cavendish, the local community, the Midwest, and places in between. Made

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some lasting friendships and appreciated all the wise wisdom they shared. We sent each farm a donation for their time and wisdom, then began researching potential markets, traveling a 100-mile radius querying the possibilities. After getting a bigger picture of the potential, we signed up for business classes sponsored by WA/ID Entrepreneurs Association. This helped bring a realistic perspective of our vision. Learning about budgets, start up costs, projected sales, market research, competitors, commitment level, non-debt monies available, longevity and product quality with continual improvements. We built the coops and set up management practices that supported the best care of the birds. Then we bought our first batch of blessed hens.

Q. Why certify?

Certifying was important to us because it ensures minimum standards and expectations for the customer and consistent management for the producer. An egg story was relayed to us after we had been certified about a vendor who was selling "natural/organic/free range eggs." Some of them had been returned because of odd taste and varied quality week to week. Upon the customers findings, the chickens were free ranging and feeding on meat scraps from a rendering area near by. Definitions of what is natural and organic are subjective.

Q. How many birds do you have and did you raise you own?

Currently we have 60 laying hens and are increasing our flock to 100 in May. That is the sustainable number for our land and our physical abilities. The first batch we purchased from Phinney Hatchery in Walla Walla. The second batch was purchased from Dunlap Hatchery in Caldwell Idaho. At this time we will not be raising our own until suitable hatchery is built.

Q. How much pasture/land do you have for the hens?

Our farm is a total of 40 acres. We sectioned an area of 5 acres into 5 fenced free range 1 acre ranges. All of which is certified organic pasture. Hens have a total of 435 sq.ft per bird. Idaho certification requires 1.5 sq. ft. per bird.

Q. How much time is involved?

Between 25 – 30 hours a week for one person for 60 birds. With the added birds we will allow an additional 5 - 8 hours per week. This includes management and reading eggs for market.

Q. Do sales cover costs?

Currently we are able to recover monthly feed and delivery mileage. The buildings and fence investments of \$5000.00 will not be recovered for another 4 years. Our labor is not being paid by current sales and is considered owner's investment for now. If we were to consider creating money with the eggs alone we would have to charge \$25.00 per dozen!

Q. Do you work off the farm?

Yes. Our goal is to create our income from on and off farm related businesses. For us this includes the eggs which is 20% of our income now. The other 80% comes from hay production and sales, small farm equipment repair, small farm implement fabrication, farm machinery assessment and consulting plus two other businesses that help make ends meet.

Q. What's the time frame from chicks to saleable eggs?

It has been our experience that from day old chicks to saleable egg size and quality is about 6 – 8 months depending upon a lot of things. The breed chosen and quality, the quality and constancy of care and feed, level of stress, health of birds and of course weather. The more consistent and higher the quality of care/management the higher the quality of eggs.

Q. What's the percentage of eggs laid and saleable eggs?

Today we are at 90%. There are about 10% of eggs laid that are not saleable, to small, odd shaped, cracked or broken. Having clean nests, heated coops, dry clean litter and regular collection times has been essential for our selling the most eggs laid.

Q. What's the % of total egg production and number of hens?

As of February 10 ,we are at 66% production. This will improve as weather warms and pasture be-

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What is Sustainable Agriculture?

By Colette DePhelps, Rural Roots Executive Director, Moscow, Idaho

As Rural Roots enters its second season with the 2001 Farm Fresh Buying Guide, the questions “What is sustainable agriculture?” and “How do we ensure customers the products they are buying through the Guide are produced using sustainable agriculture methods?” loom before us. To help answer these questions, we have included two articles in this edition of Rural Roots – one by the Washington Food and Farming Systems Network defining sustainable agriculture and another by the Moscow Food Coop’s produce manager explaining the meanings of organic, transitional and no spray. Rural Roots is also asking farms and ranches who want to be listed in the 2001 Farm Fresh Buying Guide to tell us about their sustainable agriculture practices in their application. These personal statements on sustainability will be on file at the Rural Roots office in the event a customer has questions about the production practices of a particular listing.

As a final note (from me) on the subject, sustainable agriculture is a long-term process which is directly related to the personal and business goals of the farm or ranch family and encompasses many different production practices, systems, and philosophies. Examples? Sustainable practices include things like cover cropping, biological control of pests, rotational grazing, and composting. Examples of sustainable systems and philosophies include holistic management, organic, biodynamic and permaculture. These are by no means exhaustive lists! But, hopefully, give a bit of perspective on where Rural Roots is coming from when we say we support sustainable agriculture in the Inland Northwest. 🌱



Call For Rural Roots Leadership Team Nominations

By Diane Green, Greentree Naturals, Sandpoint, Rural Roots Leadership Team Chair

I call myself a farmer and wear this name tag proudly. When I look at events and changes across the entire country relating to the state of small acreage farms, I have great concerns about their survival. Statistics tell us that less than 2% of the population are presently farmers. When my grandmother was farming, 40% of the population were farmers. This decrease over a relatively short period of time tells me that we are nearing extinction! With this thought, I believe that we must make every effort to save the family farms, and encourage and nurture future small acreage farmers in whatever way we can.

When I think about the reasons that I am involved with Rural Roots as a member and why I am involved on the Leadership Team, it is because I want to be a part of the solution. It is my belief that this organization offers the solutions and support for small acreage farmers like myself. Being involved with the Leadership Team has provided me with a proactive means of sharing with like-minded folks. With this thought, and the hope that it will give you reason to consider being a part of our team, we are making a call for Leadership Team nominations.

The roles and responsibilities are noted below. These are the basics of what is involved with joining the team. If you have questions, feel free to contact any one of the Leadership Team!

Leadership Team Responsibilities:

- 1) Maintain current membership in Rural Roots.
- 2) Attend local chapter meetings and at least one other chapter meeting per year.
- 3.) Assist Rural Roots Executive Director and Program Coordinators with Rural Roots organizational policy and program development.
- 4.) Participate in Rural Roots Leadership Team monthly conference calls (1 hour), RR Leaders email discussion/decision-making list, and fall and spring Leadership team retreats (1-2 days each).
- 5.) Demonstrate participation in meetings and as sorted events

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Rural Roots Leadership Team

Sandpoint Chapter

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Rural Roots Leadership Team Retreat

By Diane Green, Greentree Naturals, Sandpoint and Chair, Rural Roots Leadership Team

A retreat is defined as a period of withdrawal into privacy or seclusion. In November of FY 2000, the Rural Roots Leadership Team met in Moscow for two days of discussions in a retreat style environment. Rather than transporting ourselves to the nearest monastery, we met at Colette DePhelps home. This gave us the seclusion we needed to focus on the topics open for discussion without interruption.

Our group has grown considerably over the past few years. Our current programs and projects are something to be proud of, and we are pleased with the continued growth of our organization. The retreat provided us the time and place to talk about past and future projects, responsibilities, structure, clarifying objectives and goals, as well as rewriting our Mission Statement.

We all agreed that creating chapters in our key locations would be an accommodating way to work with the growing membership that Rural Roots is experiencing. This way, each location has the opportunity to work directly with their community. Initial Rural Roots chapters have been identified as Palouse, Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, and Sandpoint. We have at least one Leadership Team member working and living in each of these locations to be available as contact person. To contact a leadership team member from your chapter, see the list to the left.

We would like to have two or three LT members for each Chapter location, if possible. If you are interested in becoming more involved as a Leadership Team member, please contact your nearest local representative for finding out about what is involved or log on to our website at www.uidaho.edu/inwcfcs.

Our seven member Leadership Team has had some departures. Cindy dePaulis, our Athol representative, and Wally Adams of Coeur d'Alene Tractor. Most of what we do is on a voluntary basis. And as most of us will agree,

donating our time is one commodity that is most precious. We would like to offer a very special thank you to both of them for donating their valuable time towards the early development of our organization.

Rural Roots Staff

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Eastern Washington Foodshed Symposium sponsored by Spokane Tilth

*By Chrys Ostrander, President,
Spokane Tilth, Davenport, WA*

Don't forget to leave Saturday, April 21 open so you can attend the *Spokane Tilth Eastern Washington Foodshed Symposium* that day. Sponsored by Spokane Tilth, the Symposium will be an all-day series of panel discussions, workshops and strategy sessions exploring our local food system and how to improve our organizing efforts to protect and enhance it. There will even be workshops for kids! The Symposium will happen at the Grace Lutheran Church, 1827 E Pacific Avenue, Spokane, WA 99202 (just around the corner from the Krista Garden) from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Spokane Tilth members get in for a reduced fee! A light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The Symposium is Spokane Tilth's contribution to Spokane's Earth Day celebration. The following day, Sunday, April 22, come to Riverfront park for Earth Day and see the Spokane Tilth and Rural Roots' booths as well as other booths from local friends of the environment. Enjoy live music and camaraderie as we celebrate Earth Day, 2001.

*Contact Chrys Ostrander, President,
Spokane Tilth, 509-725-0610
or*

*Seth Williams, Symposium
Coordinator, 509-236-2265,
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for more information*

LT Team Nominations Continued

Rural Roots Leadership Team positions are 3-year terms with 1/3 of the Leadership Team rotating off each year. Each Rural Roots Chapter (Palouse, Coeur d'Alene, Spokane, and Sandpoint) holds three seats on the Leadership Team.

Leadership Team Electoral Process:

Rural Roots Leadership Team nominations are solicited from the Rural Roots membership. Leadership Team nominees are asked to prepare a 3-4 sentence statement about themselves and what they would bring to Rural Roots as a Leadership Team member. If you are nominating another Rural Roots member for the Leadership Team, we ask that you check with that person to be sure s/he is interested in and able to serve and ask them to prepare and submit the required 3-4 sentence candidate statement.

In the event the number of Leadership Team candidates is less than the number of vacant seats on the Team and a vote put to the membership would be uncontested, nominees are appointed by consensus of the acting Leadership Team. Candidate statements and an introduction of new team members is printed in the next edition of the BHH newsletter. In the event there are more Leadership Team nominees than available seats, candidate statements are placed on a Leadership Team ballot and sent to all Rural Roots members who vote by mail.

Currently, 6 Rural Roots Leadership Team seats are open: 1 Palouse Chapter seat, 2 Coeur d'Alene Chapter seats, 2 Spokane Chapter seats, and 1 Sandpoint Chapter seat. For more information about local chapters of Rural Roots, contact the Leadership Team member nearest you.

Leadership Team candidate statements can be submitted either electronically to Colette DePhelps at dephelps@earthlink.net or mailed to Rural Roots, PO Box 8925, Moscow, ID 83843. If you are interested in being nominated for the 2001 Leadership Team, please send a candidate statement to one of the above addresses. 🐾

New Rural Roots Leadership Team Members

By Colette DePhelps, Rural Roots Executive Director, Moscow, ID

Welcome to Rural Roots two new Leadership Team members, **Skeeter Lynch, Full Circle Farm, Princeton, Idaho** (Palouse Chapter) and **Stan Urmann, Riley Creek Blueberry Farm, Laclede, Idaho** (Sandpoint Chapter)! Skeeter and Stan were nominated for the Rural Roots Leadership Team in December 2000 and prepared the following candidate statements. Both were enthusiastically appointed to the Team by consensus of the acting RR LT.

Skeeter Lynch, Full Circle Farm. "I would like to participate with the Rural Roots Leadership Team because I know the Team and organization to be professional, creative and grounded in purpose. I could best

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On Farm Education a Valuable Experience

By Karen Osowski, Spring Creek Organic Farm, Sandpoint, ID

What a wonderful gardening experience I had last summer! It all started one fortunate day last spring at the Sandpoint Farmers Market. Of course one of my stops was at Diane Green's (Greentree Naturals) table. While chatting away about my new and upcoming garden, Diane's helper mentioned that Diane was starting an informal group to talk about different gardening activities. Diane was writing, as an official farmer consultant, a curriculum for an on-farm education program for the University of Idaho. She was interested in feedback about the topics from local experienced gardeners and beginning gardeners. I of course jumped at the chance to be involved with this summer session. I had gardened in Montana for years and had a degree in Plant and Soil Science from MSU, but I had not experienced gardening in northern Idaho. Lucky for me that I was able to attend the summer get-together. Diane is a wealth of information and has extensive hands-on knowledge of gardening. The class took years off of my learning curve for gardening in this area.

During the classes, we discussed many topics while walking around her incredible garden. The hands-on approach, I felt, was very beneficial. Diane would have a topic of the day, including such areas as plant varieties, soil preparation and amendments, transplanting, insects and diseases of north Idaho, organic plant protection, herbs, flowers, deadheading, and harvest-

ing. It seems we covered almost every topic of gardening. When a question was asked we could walk to a place in the garden and usually have it answered. Example: "What does a cutworm look like?" Each week, I went home inspired and exhausted from so much info. But with the hands-on approach, my retention (except for over-40 short-term memory loss) was very high.

I feel that the program Diane is putting together with the University will be very helpful for folks of all ages interested in learning about small farms and market gardens. The program looks to be a great outlet for the local community, outlying areas and for college students. The class will be offered with or without credits as a continuing education course. I think it will be especially helpful to college students. I have an organic sheep farm and hire a few college-age students throughout the year to help with barn cleaning, etc. My limited experience with these kids has been that they are searching for a lifestyle and need to experience different types of farming. Most have attended some college, but feel that classroom experience alone did not provide some necessary ingredients for them to decide if they really wanted to farm and what is really involved with the day to day work. Diane's class will be a fascinating and in-depth way for them to learn through experience. I think this stimulating program will be a success. 

Defining Sustainable Agriculture

By Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network, Bellingham, WA

The Network has had many discussions about how to define 'sustainable agriculture.' We have come to the conclusion that sustainable agriculture represents a long-term goal and movement in a direction rather than a specific situation or movement. Since we cannot see into the future, we must use our current best knowledge to evaluate whether our current actions are helping to move toward the goal of sustainability. However, we believe that there are critical components to sustainable agriculture, and these are embedded in the Network Principles. **The most critical pieces are economic viability, environmental soundness, and socially responsible practices as well as the concept that a truly efficient and**

healthy market must account for all costs and benefits of production to our communities and the environment.

We recognize our responsibility to make our food and farm system more sustainable, while also recognizing that sustainability goes beyond agriculture. Our success in furthering agriculture sustainability will be influenced to the extent by which our society and its production and consumption systems as a whole become more sustainable. 

Defining Organic, Transitional and No Spray

By Lahde Fesler, Produce Manager, Moscow Food Cooperative, Moscow, ID
Excerpts from "Community News" the Moscow Food Cooperative's monthly newsletter,
September 2000

I realized that there is a lot of confusion around the word "organic." Laura and I were interviewing applicants to replace Brian as our produce assistant. One of our questions for the applicants was "How would you define the word organic?"

We received a broad range of interesting answers. The best answer pertained to organic chemistry and carbon compounds. I felt like a school teacher asking a trick question as applicants grappled with answering the question. Having devoted much of my time to the study and practice of organic agriculture, it surprised me how little most people understand about what it means for food to be organic. So, when I was asked to write the cover article for this month's newsletter ["Community News," Sept. 2000], I jumped at the opportunity. This article will only brush the surface, but hopefully it will be informative to those interested in learning more about organic foods and practices.

So, what does it mean for food to be ORGANIC?

Well, first of all, it means the organic farmer must go through a certification process with their local agency. Here in Idaho, a farmer becomes certified through the Idaho Department of Agriculture. Nancy Taylor, a Rural Roots Leadership Team member and a Co-op member, has been an organic inspector in both Idaho and Washington. She inspects their farms to see that they are meeting organic crop production standards.

Those standards are defined by the state of Idaho as follows: "Organic crops are produced without the use of synthetic fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides or fungicides. Organic farmers maintain soil fertility by providing organic matter to encourage biological activity in the soil. Pest control is accomplished by relying on crop rotation, biological control, and natural materials."

Okay, so what does this all mean? Basically, organic farmers must work with the natural living system on their farm, supplying their soil with the proper balance of organic matter to feed the soil critters, which in turn feeds plants that ultimately give us our

nourishment every day. There are a few organic pesticides that are relied on only when absolutely necessary. Usually the organic pesticides are plant-derived, like Pyrethrum, a spray made from an African daisy, that is used to control beetles. It is actually quite toxic at the time of application and the farmer must be very careful when using it, but it biodegrades rapidly and is most frequently used in selective locations on targeted pests.

Biological pest control is another way for organic farmers to combat pests by introducing live organisms into their farm ecosystem that prey on the offensive garden pest. Ladybugs are a well-known biological control used to suppress aphids. Another commonly used biological control is *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), a microscopic organism used to control caterpillars. It is sprayed onto the leaves where the caterpillar is feasting. The Bt invades the caterpillar's digestive tract, causing it to get a bad case of indigestion, and eventually the caterpillar's innards explode—not a pretty picture but very effective. Bt should never be used on a large scale because it kills all caterpillars that ingest it, including innocent bystanders like the beautiful monarch butterfly. For this reason farmers try to limit their use of "non-pest specific" controls, preferring to foster a balanced farm ecosystem that nurtures healthy plants with better resistance to pest attacks. Through careful observation and a lot of hard work an organic farmer is able to grow wholesome, chemical-free food for the consumer.

What does it mean for food to be TRANSITIONAL or NO SPRAY?

While we're on the subject of organic, I might as well clear up the meaning of "transitional" and "no spray." To become "certified organic" there is a waiting period of three years where the farmer must apply organic practices before achieving the status of "certified organic." This waiting period can be bypassed or shortened if the farmer can provide evidence about the last dated application of chemicals to their land. They can also have their soil tested for chemicals and if it is found to be chemical free, they can be

certified immediately. After one year in the transition period the grower can begin to market their produce as transitional. Essentially, transitional means for the consumer that their produce is not being sprayed with chemical fertilizers, insecticides, or fungicides, and that a farmer is working to improve the quality of their soil through organic practices.

“No spray,” which usually goes hand-in-hand with “locally grown,” means a gardener has brought their produce into the Co-op for sale and has assured us that no chemical sprays have been used. We do our best to screen people by asking them questions about how they maintain their soil, where they are growing the food, what they do for pests, etc. but basically it works on the honor system because their garden site has never been officially checked by an inspector.

The following “Ten Reasons to Buy Organic” was taken from literature written by the local farm-based business, Paradise Farm Organics, Inc., Moscow, Idaho. These ten reasons offer a quick look at why you may want to support organics with your dollar.

1. Prevent Soil Erosion.

Soil is eroding seven times faster than it is being built up naturally.

2. Help Small/Local Growers.

Most organic farms are small, independently owned family farms of less than 100 acres. The past decade has seen the foreclosure of 650,000 family farms to large-scale intensively managed farms.

3. Protect Farm Workers.

Field workers suffer the highest rates of occupational illness in California. Reported pesticide poisoning among farm workers have risen an average of 14% per year since 1973 and doubled between 1975 and 1985.

4. Support a True Economy.

Conventional food prices do not reflect hidden costs carried by taxpayers such as billions of dollars in annual subsidies, pesticide regulation and testing, hazardous waste

disposal and cleanup, and environmental damage.

5. Protect Future Generations.

Your children receive four times more exposure than an adult to cancer-causing pesticides in food.

6. Promote Biodiversity.

The mono-cropping practices in use since the 1950's have left the soil lacking in natural minerals and nutrients. Chemical fertilizers have been used in growing proportions to replace these nutrients.

7. Protect Water Quality.

Pesticides contaminate the drinking water in 38 states, more than half the country's population.

8. Save Energy

Modern farming uses more petroleum than any other single industry, consuming 12% of the country's total energy supply. Organic farming remains labor-intensive, practicing hand weeding, the use of green manures, and crop covers rather than synthetic fertilizers.

9. Keep Chemicals Off Your Plate.

The EPA considers that 60% of all herbicides, 90% of all fungicides, and 30% of all insecticides are carcinogenic. Pesticides are poisons designed to kill living organisms and can also be harmful to humans.

10. It Feels Good!

Organically grown food tastes great! It feels so good to make a choice with so many simple nurturing effects on the land and people we love.



Get listed...in the Rural Roots 2001 FARM FRESH BUYING GUIDE!!

The Rural Roots Farm Fresh Buying Guide is a listing of Inland Northwest farms, ranches and farmers' markets that direct market agricultural products produced using sustainable farming and ranching practices. Sustainable farm and ranch practices...

- ◆ Enhance the economic viability of farm/ranch families,
- ◆ Are environmentally sound; and
- ◆ Foster a high quality of life for farm/ranch families, their employees and their communities.

To assure customers that the farm products listed in Rural Roots' Farm Fresh Buying Guide are produced using sustainable farm and ranch practices, we are asking each farm or ranch listed in the guide to provide us with a short statement describing the sustainable practices used in their operation. Rural Roots is also asking farmers' markets to include a statement describing their commitment to providing community members an opportunity to purchase local food and their commitment to supporting local farms, ranches and food-based businesses.

The Guide is published in early May and distributed to participating farmers, market managers and other regional outlets mid to late May.

To be listed in the 2001 guide, please:

1. Complete the Buying Guide application on this following page.
2. Enclose a check or money order for:\$12.00 Rural Roots members (farm, ranch, value-added business or farmer's market) \$18.00 non-member farm, ranch or value- added business; \$25.00 non-member farmer's market
3. Mail to: Rural Roots Leadership Team member, Cathy Weston, 12550 N Three Fork Road, Post Falls, ID 83854.

Rates for listing in the Buying Guide reflect the cost of production – we will print as many copies of the Buying Guide as applicant income allows. Rates for non-

member farmers' markets are higher than rates for non-member farms, ranches or value-added businesses as the listing serves all market members, not an individual business.

If you have questions about the guides or the application, please contact Rural Roots at 208-883-3462 or dephelps@earthlink.net. Thank you.

Buying Guide applications are due to Cathy no later than April 30, 2001.

RURAL ROOTS FARM, RANCH AND VALUE-ADDED BUSINESS 2001 FARM DIRECT BUYING GUIDE APPLICATION FORM (USE ADDITIONAL PAPER AS NECESSARY)

Farm Name

Contact person

Address

City, State, Zip

Phone number

Fax Number

Web site address

E-mail address

1. Please list the farm/ranch products and/or services you offer (e.g. organic vegetables, cut flowers, jams, peaches, greenhouse plants, sheep, pastured poultry, natural beef, custom bakery, apple cider.). In your description, please be sure to indicate breeds of livestock and indicate what type of production system you use i.e. certified organic (please identify certifying organization and your certification number), grass fed beef, no antibiotics uses, etc.

2. In 1-2 sentences, please indicate your preferred

method(s) of marketing and/or how and when customers can contact you (e.g. months/days of the week/hours of operation, CSA May to September, take orders from February on, on farm sales Tuesdays and Wednesdays, call to place order, closed Sundays and all Christian holidays, Spokane Farmers' Market May to October, etc.

Fax Number

Web site address

E-mail address

1. Market location:

2. Months of operation (e.g. May to October):

3. Please provide a short statement describing your commitment to sustainability including specific sustainable practices used in your operation.

3. Market days and times (e.g. Saturdays, 8 to 1):

4. Please provide a short statement describing the farmer's market commitment to providing community members an opportunity to purchase local food and the market's commitment to supporting local farms, ranches and food-based businesses.

**RURAL ROOTS
FARMERS' MARKET
2001 FARM DIRECT BUYING GUIDE APPLICATION FORM**

Market Name

Contact person

Address

City, State, Zip

Phone number

Northwest Graziers Network

By Maurice Robinette, Lazy R Ranch, Cheney, WA

On Jan 12, 2001, some seventy graziers met in Spokane to establish the foundation for the Northwest Livestock Graziers Network. After two days of information presentations and a group effort using consensus techniques, the groundwork was laid, several committees established, an interim steering committee was established and a group chairman was elected. The committees represent those proposed in an USDA sustainable agriculture research and education grant submitted earlier this fall and are described below.

In response to producer interest in creating and employing profitable, sustainable livestock and poultry grazing systems, this project will develop a graziers' network to facilitate learning, adoption of sustainable grazing management, on-farm research, and new market and product development. The network will be an Internet, Web-based, "virtual community" for livestock and poultry graziers. It will bridge barriers of time and space separating Washington State's graziers.

Washington State's grazing lands are in challenged ecological condition. Almost 70 percent are producing less than 50 percent of their forage potential. The climate and growing conditions of the Pacific Northwest are relatively unique. The majority of precipitation comes outside the growing season during the winter months. Consequently, knowledge of grazing management and grazing systems developed under different climatic conditions requires interpretation and modification for use within Washington, and some is just not applicable.

The Pacific Northwest Chapter of the Society for Range Management is active in the state and advocates for proper range use, wise management, and stewardship of rangelands. Its focuses more on stewardship of the grazing land resource than on stewardship of the people and communities dependant on it. Currently, there is no similar organization focusing on improved pasture and producers who operate on it. Furthermore, there is a great interest among graziers to produce value-added livestock and poultry products for emerging niche markets throughout the

Pacific Northwest.

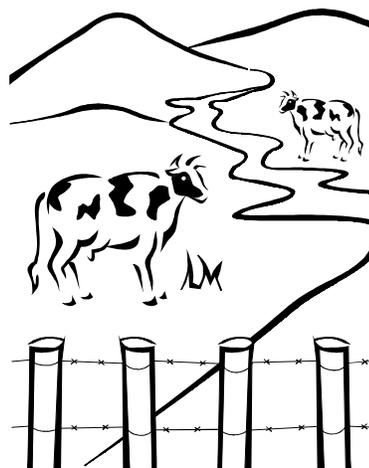
Consequently, we propose addressing these needs through a graziers network—an Internet, Web-based, "virtual community" for graziers. The network will be a coalition of producers, university faculty, and members of stewardship organizations and government agencies. Its objectives are to: 1) provide a clearing-house for grazing information, 2) provide educational opportunities, 3) identify research needs and promote appropriate on-farm research methodology, 4) develop marketing strategies and incubate ideas for product development, 5) link graziers for business, educational, and social support, and 6) promote stewardship of grazing land, the people who manage it, their farms and ranches, and their rural communities

The network will develop a committee structure to address each of its objectives. The committees will be interdependent; the network's success will be dependent upon the success of its committees and their collaboration. Committees will conduct six workshops, two per year for three years addressing the network's objectives. Fact sheets will be developed from each workshop and published electronically and in print. On-going evaluation of the network's activities will be conducted on its Web site.

The Northwest Graziers Network looks forward to collaborative efforts with Rural Roots and the other groups interested in the future of agriculture, both large and small, within the Pacific Northwest. 🐾

For further information contact:

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Rural Roots Joins SAWG

By Nancy Taylor, Rural Roots Direct Marketing Research Program
Coordinator, Potlatch, ID

Bringing Home the Harvest is a quarterly newsletter of Rural Roots: The Inland Northwest Community Food Systems Association.

Bringing Home the Harvest shares the knowledge and experience of people working in community food systems and the opportunities and challenges facing small acreage farmers and market gardeners in the Inland Northwest. In addition to sharing information and resources, **Bringing Home the Harvest** helps make connections between producers and consumers in northern Idaho and eastern Washington. It encourages sustainably produced foods, and works to enhance the economic viability of small scale producers and the communities where they live.

Articles for publication and letters to the editors are welcome and must include the name and address of the author. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of Rural Roots.

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Rural Roots recently became a member of Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SAWG). I've been involved with the Western SAWG since its inception in 1992. I am currently serving as the Treasurer for the western SAWG Board of Directors and Rural Root representative to the western SAWG, which is comprised of over 30 organizations working on Ag and Food issues in the West and Canada. The following information will help you become more familiar with western SAWG.

Western SAWG'S mission statement:

The Western SAWG is a collaborative network of diverse groups and individuals committed to the development of sustainable agricultural and food systems in the West. Western SAWG envisions a Western landscape dotted with farmers and ranchers protecting and enhancing the environment, while capturing a greater share of the consumer food dollar, thereby contributing to the vitality of rural communities.

Western SAWG helps its members:

- ◆ Increase the profitability of farmers and ranchers committed to using sustainable agricultural practices and approaches.
- ◆ Create real choices for food consumers.
- ◆ Understand and act on policies and programs that may help or hinder a transition to a more sustainable agriculture and food system.
- ◆ Build capacity for further sustainable agriculture and food system research and development.

Western SAWG addresses issues that no one of its members can completely and effectively tackle on its own here in the West. Western SAWG serves as a clearinghouse for agricultural policy, program models and analysis. We are working to provide a range of other networking and support services for our members, such as region-wide action task forces, staff services for joint collaborative projects and conference planning, project evaluation and project endorsements for member initiatives.

Intermediate Directions

Realizing the needs of its members, the Western SAWG will be addressing these major issues over the next five years:

1. **Funding for Sustainable Agriculture.** The Western SAWG members will work together to plan approaches for obtaining increased public and private sector funding for our particular and joint efforts. We will build a well-heard collective voice, share resources and work together to sustain our work.

2. Food and Production Systems-Sharing Market Successes, Confronting Market Challenges.

What's working and not working for sustainable farmers and ranchers in the Western region that are seeking to improve the value of their products? How do we close the gap between agricultural producers and consumers by such methods as cooperative marketing, direct marketing, institutional sales, Internet commerce and expanded specialty markets? Can we translate quality sustainable production into increased return and expanded markets?

3. Biotechnology and Sustainable Agriculture.

This issue presents a defining moment and critical challenge to the future of sustainable agriculture. Will the engineering of entirely new life forms and their release into the environment improve the quality of food we eat, boost the economic viability of food producers, protect human and animal health and reduce or eliminate inputs of toxic substances into that environment? Does the introduction and control of these entirely new life forms by corporations with near monopolistic control of agricultural inputs and food markets further limit or expand the choices farmers and ranchers have to sustain their livelihoods, communities and stewardship of the land?

4. **Grass-fed Livestock Production.** The concentration of livestock production (beef, pork, lamb, chicken, eggs and perhaps fish) in factory farms and feedlots has not only created serious health and environmental problems but also supports concentrated agricultural input, food processing and distribution markets. An alternative is to produce livestock products with as few off-farm or ranch inputs as possible and more directly link support of these more environmentally sound production systems by offering them as part of the choices consumers make in their purchases. "Salad-bar" or grass-fed beef, pastured-raised chicken and pork are viable systems for the production of quality livestock products that offer economic opportunities for farmers and ranchers and limit environmental damage and promote humane treatment of life and health.

5. **New Organic Regulations.** Now that there is a national organic standard, what can we do so the United States Department of Agriculture and the land grant system will provide more funding for research on organic production and marketing research?

Project Assistant Introduction

By Brooke Davidson, RR/FDP Project Assistant,
Pullman, WA

Hello! If you haven't heard from me already, I wanted to take this chance to introduce myself as the new project assistant for Rural Roots and the Funding Diversity Partnership project. Although I've only been on the project for a couple of months now, I can already see how the knowledge and connections I gain from these projects will be of great value in both my professional and personal life.

Not only am I new to Rural Roots, but I'm newcomer to the Northwest as well. Three months ago I graduated from Ball State University, located in Indiana, with a B.S. degree in *Natural Resources and Environmental Management*. Two weeks after I received my diploma, I traveled to Pullman, Washington, to join my fiancé, a graduate student at Washington State University.

Soon after my arrival, I landed a job as a recycling educator at WSU. It only being a part-time position, I applied for a part-time nanny position to fill in the extra hours. The employer turned out to be Colette DePhelps. As I cared for her beautiful son, Forest, during weekday afternoons, I learned more about Rural Roots, and soon became project assistant. To my delight, I've been able to balance all my jobs and continue spending my afternoons with Forest.

The focus of my B.A. degree was environmental communication, and this position has allowed me to test many of the skills I practiced in the classroom. It has also enabled me to meet some incredible people, and has opened my eyes to the world of sustainable agriculture. I'm excited to see where this new knowledge will lead me.

Brooke Davidson
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Farm to School Program

By Peggy Adams, Project Director, Farm to School Program, UEPI, Los Angeles, CA

School children are at an increasing risk of diet related chronic diseases while those who grow the fresh, healthy food that can save them are struggling to survive. By linking small-scale local farmers directly to school lunch programs we can create a healthy environment for both. I see this as particularly beneficial to rural areas where small-scale farmers have a difficult time finding consistent markets for their products and school districts are smaller and less bureaucratic.

Around the nation parents are getting involved to bring farm-to-school programs to their areas. The benefits are so great that it hasn't taken much effort to get school boards and staff to initiate a pilot project. It does take a little work, though. An advocate is needed to shepherd the concept through administrative channels until it is accepted. Someone must select and purchase the produce and deliver it to the school. In some cases, parents need to be willing to help prep and serve the food. With a little dedication it all works.

The quality and nutritional value of school lunches has been on the decline for years. To cut costs, schools increasingly contract food service to fast food chains or serve pre-made,

pre-packaged foods. These high-fat, high-sodium, high-sugar meals are only barely palatable and utterly contradict the education children receive about good nutrition. If we don't offer children the chance to choose fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables at school, we deprive them the opportunity to connect what they learn about healthy eating to their lives. Children's poor eating habits have already contributed to a national trend toward obesity and early onset diabetes and heart disease.



The small amount of fresh vegetables or fruit served in schools usually has been stored and shipped and stored again until it has lost most of its flavor and nutritional value. Kids hate vegetables served like this so we have begun to believe that we can't get kids to eat vegetables.

Meanwhile, farmers who produce the really fresh fruits and vegetables that kids like and can keep our kids healthy are finding that entry into the markets that provide food to their local schools are blocked by purchasing contracts with large-scale distributors. It does not need to be this way. These barriers can be dismantled if parents, teachers, and farmers work together to create a healthier environment for everyone. 

If you are interested in starting a Farm to School Program in your community, Rural Roots can help! Contact us at 208-883-3462 or dephelps@earthlink.net

New Leadership Team Members Continued

serve and honor Rural Roots by supporting its current goals and assisting others to be successful. I offer my experience as: Grower / Producer; Active supporter of sustainable agriculture; Collaborator; Board Member of related groups; Life Long Learner; Advocate of others endeavors; Mediator; Practical Visionary. If it is not appropriate for me to participate with the Leadership Team at this time, I will continue to support Rural Roots as a happy and enthusiastic member."

Stan Urmann, Riley Creek Blueberry Farm.
"Rural Roots Members: Riley Creek Blueberry

Farm is entering its 7th year of production. While not certified organic, we have been practicing sustainable agriculture for the last 5 years. Our family has dedicated ourselves to the survival of the small farmer. I would like to bring this enthusiasm to the Leadership Team."

Over the past two months, Skeeter has led a Palouse Chapter organic egg production workshop, contributed an article to this edition of the RR newsletter, and has agreed to do another workshop in Coeur d'Alene April 26, 2001. Stan has expressed interest in being a farmer instructor for the On-Farm Education Program and a case study farm for the Direct Marketing Research project. Again, welcome! It is great to have you both on board! 

Idaho Organic Eggs Continued

comes free of snow. We expect to be at 80% - 90% production by April.

Q. How fresh are the eggs?

Our eggs are collected a minimum of 4 times a day. All eggs are laid in the hen house which prevent old eggs being mixed with fresh laid. They are immediately cooled to between 34 – 38 degrees at each collection. This ensures all the eggs are held at their nutritional peak. They are delivered once a week and transported refrigerated to market. When they arrive they are no more than 6 days old and at their optimum nutritional potential. The summer is more worrisome, due to heat and egg quality deterioration. The eggs are collected and cooled between 5 – 8 times a day to ensure the highest quality for our customers. If we need to be away, we have paid farm support that is thoroughly trained for egg handling. Any eggs that are questionable are not sold.

What ever you choose (educating, purchasing, growing, marketing, producing, teaching, gathering, participating), each person's efforts are needed to help shift our vision and actions towards sustainable agriculture. It begins with conscious choice to support taking care of our earth and each other. We can learn much from those who have come before us, and integrate old ways with the new.

Q. How do you handle health problems?

Our birds have been disease free. Our management practices focus on prevention. We maintain clean, well aired coops, high quality feed, and keep a vigilant watch over the birds. Consistent observation of behavior and how the birds look can alert us immediately to potential health risks before they develop. Within the coop we have a separate pen that houses birds who may be picked on, or need other care. This works very well and still maintains contact with the other hens. Picking is inherent in chickens. We have learned to adjust feed, protein content, spacial environment, light intensity, nesting environment, and hay quantities to relieve stress and minimize picking. We have found it essential to provide consistent high quality care in order to prevent health problems.

Q. Do you think the Idaho Certified Organic

Egg market is solid?

Yes- with excellent, consistent quality, and customer education about the greater community benefits of supporting their local Idaho Organic Producers. Quality, availability, and education are key. So advertising is an essential expense to get the word out that Idaho organic farmers can provide for Idaho Organic consumers

Q. What might be helpful for others?

- Do your homework!
- Consult with others who have the experience and knowledge.

- Compensate them for their time as they are creating money from their sustainable endeavor just as you wish to. Learning from others can save you money, time and help establish a solid market the first time around.

- Create your first product to be the best you can offer and improve from there. A finished, professional looking product helps build a positive reputation with new customers and encourages you to constantly improve.

- Be aware of what is already being done. Don't need to reinvent the

wheel.

- Be the best steward of your livestock.
- Be realistic: have a "get out plan." Provide humane treatment and transfer of your livestock if you change your mind.
- Share ideas with committed folks.
- Know your sources for all feeds. Don't be afraid to question and examine better ways to do things.

Q. What do you see for the future?

I vision a collective of farmers to produce Idaho Certified Organic Eggs. Possibly under one label and provide eggs for our local community. I know there is market potential in the surrounding areas including Lewiston, Clarkston, and south Spokane. Being in competition with my neighbor would not be profitable for anyone. The collective could include all who want to produce eggs and match customer demands with consistent high quality and service. Purchasing Certified Organic feed and grains in bulk would lower cost considerably

and be easier on feed producers with steady accounts. Again, consistent quality, availability and education are key to ensuring markets here in Idaho.

Q. What resources did you find most helpful?

- Rural Roots. Small Acreage Farm Organization.
- A Biodynamic Farm.
ISBN 0911311459. www.acresusa.com
- The Chicken Health Handbook.
ISBN 0882666118. 1994
- Pastured Poultry Profits.
ISBN 0963810901. 1993
- Egg Facts and Fancies About Them.
SF490 1335 1890 (U of I) 1890.
- Marketing Poultry Products.
SF502 B45 1949 (U of I) 1949.
- Poultry Feeds & Nutrition.
SF494 P38 1980 (U of I) 1980.
- Standards For Eggs In Shell.
SF490.7 U54 1990 (U of I).
- Practical Poultry Management.
SF487 R52 1956 (U of I).
- Karl Whitney, Weare New Hampshire.
Created New Hampshire Reds. My Grandpa!
- Conversations with chicken farmers from all over!
- Modern Poultry Farming.
SF487 H85 1944 (U of I) 1944.

Blessings,
Full Circle Farms
Skeeter Lynch & Phil Gage,
1249 Hatter Creek, Princeton, Idaho 83857
(208) 875-0857 stratpath@moscow.com

Tilling the Soil Train-the-Trainer Workshop Scheduled

*By Vickie Parker Clark, Extension Educator, UI
Kootenai County Cooperative Extension, Coeur'd
Alene, ID*

Some of you may have heard about the NxLevel "Tilling the Soil" curriculum. This curriculum targets small acreage producers who want to "capitalize on consumer trends through innovative production and marketing methods." It is a 10 session course (usually run over 12 weeks) that walks folks through developing a business plan. (See www.nxlevel.org for more information). In order to teach this curriculum, you have to attend a train-the-trainer workshop.

We (Univ. of Idaho Extension, Spokane and Post Falls Small Business Development Centers, Rural Roots Assoc., and the USDA Risk Management Agency) will be offering the train-the-trainer workshop on May 17th and 18th in Coeur d'Alene. The training will start at 9 am. on the 17th and run through 12:30 on the 18th. Cost of the training will be \$90 to cover the cost of reference materials.

We are also offering the "Buzz on the Biz" train-the-trainer workshop the evening of May 17th. This curriculum is for youth entrepreneurs. Details are on the NxLevel website. Cost of this training will be \$35 to cover materials.

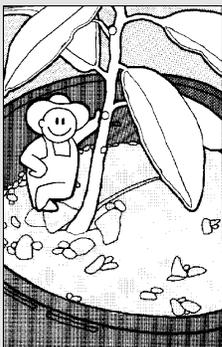
If you are interested in attending both workshops, registration cost is \$120.

The NxLevel trainer has requested that those attending either workshop have a background in business plan development and/or financial planning. The train-the-trainer course will not teach you how to develop a business plan. Its focus is on how to teach the curriculum.

THE CLASS SIZE IS LIMITED TO 25 and pre-registration is required. Contact Vickie Parker-Clark at -(208) 667-6426 or vickiepc@uidaho.edu for more information. For further information on the Buzz on the Biz training, contact Carolyn Clark at (509) 358-7765 or clrk@wsu.edu



Rural Roots



Rural Roots
PO Box 8925
Moscow, Idaho
83843

Rural Roots' Revised Vision, Mission Statement and Goals

RURAL ROOTS VISION

The Inland Northwest food and agricultural system is made up of urban and rural communities that actively support and participate in locally owned and operated —food and farm enterprises. These sustainable enterprises contribute to individual and community health, prosperity, and quality of life. Our communities are built on reciprocal relationships where people are valued for their unique contributions and creativity. There is a strong network of inspirational small acreage farmers, ranchers, market gardeners and food-based businesses. All of our community members have access to affordable, high quality local food and fiber. The health of the people in the region is echoed by the health of the land.

RURAL ROOTS MISSION STATEMENT

Rural Roots mission is to create healthy, vibrant, and sustainable community-based food systems in the Inland Northwest.

As a regional non-profit organization, Rural Roots works to increase community members' ability to engage in sustainable small acreage production for home and market. We understand that local food and agriculture contributes to our sense of community and is integral to our quality of life and economic prosperity. We recognize the importance of developing local markets, creating opportunities for value-added products and increasing understanding about the importance and potential of local food and agriculture.

RURAL ROOTS GOALS

- Increase the availability and visibility of locally grown food and fiber in the Inland Northwest.
- Encourage and support sustainable, locally owned and operated food and farming enterprises.
- Enhance the economic viability of Inland Northwest small acreage farmers, ranchers, market gardeners and food-based businesses.
- Increase community participation in the development and revision of food and agriculture related policy.
- Develop community-based and regional food system networks and partnerships.



Inland Northwest Food and Farming Calendar

April 21- 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. **Second Annual Eastern Washington Community Foodshed Symposium.** Location: Grace Lutheran Church in Spokane. Sponsored by Spokane Tilth. Contact Seth Williams, Symposium coordinator, 509-236-2265, earthcyc@mindspring.com, for details.

April 22- 10 a.m.-4 p.m. **Earth Day 2001 at Riverfront Park,** Spokane. Rural Roots will have a booth at the Park. If you would like to help staff our booth, contact Rural Roots Leadership Member, Cathy Weston, 208-773-9420, cweston66@hotmail.com

April 26- 10 a.m.-4 p.m. **Rural Roots Coeur d'Alene Chapter workshop and meeting.** Location: Kootenai County Extension Office, 106 E. Dalton, Coeur d'Alene. 10 a.m.-12 p.m. *Rural Roots Leadership Team Meeting.* 12pm-1pm *Rural Roots Brown Bag Networking Lunch – for members and non-members, bring a lunch and join the fun!* 1 p.m.-4 p.m. *Organic Egg Production, Organizing a Marketing Collective and Organic Certification Workshop.* Workshop is free for Rural Roots members, \$15 for non-members

May 17-18- Tilling the Soil of Opportunity Train-the-Trainer course. Location: North Idaho Center for Higher Education classroom in Coeur d'Alene Idaho. The training will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the 17th and from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on the 18th.

May 24 Rural Roots Sandpoint Chapter meeting . For time and location contact Diane Green, Greentree Naturals, 208-263-8957, greentree@coldreams.com

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