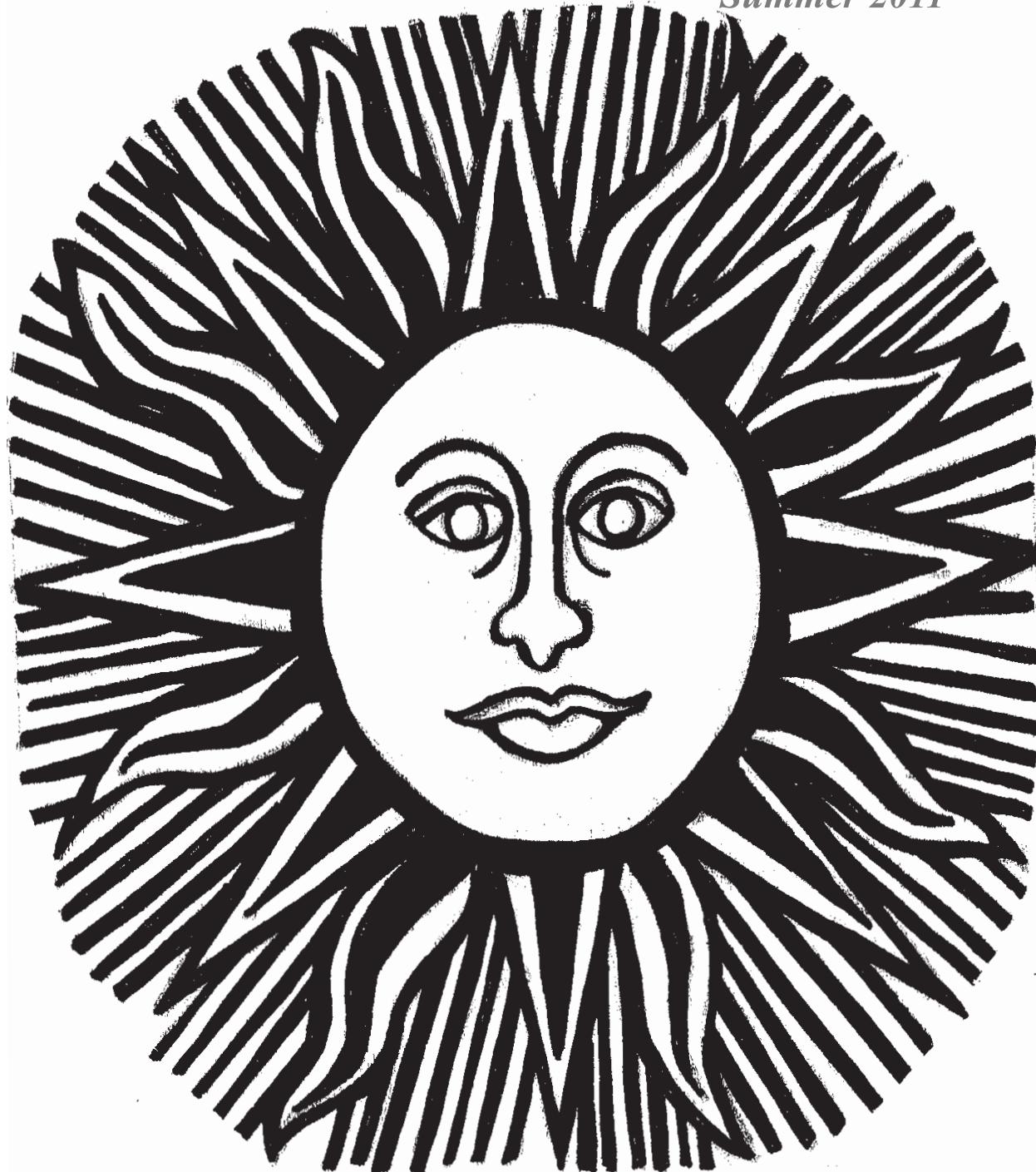


The Plainfield Co-op

Small Is More Beautiful Than Ever

Summer 2011



Hours: Monday-Saturday 9a.m.-8p.m. Sunday 9a.m.-6p.m.
Phone: 454-8579 **Website:** www.PlainfieldCoop.com



Management Collective

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Jeannine DeWald

Nancy Ellen

Dawn Fancher

Aaron James

Mike Peabody

Jessi Robinson

Dorothy Wallace

Jonna Wissert

Margie Yoder

Regular Staff

Dawn Rose Kearn

Kristin Brosky

Alanna Dorf

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The advertisement features a central image of a pie with the text "VERMONT PIE GIRL CO." and "Alexis Smith (802) 454-4662". Below this are four horizontal text boxes connected by a decorative chain:

- Fresh Organic Pies
- Dump Truck Hauling
- Horse Drawn Rides
- Massage & Aquasteam Therapy at Katuah Retreat

About This Newsletter

Building our economies around the needs of communities, not corporations, was a radical idea in 1973 when E. F. Schumacher published Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered. It is still a radical idea, though not at the Plainfield Co-op where we have been practicing this kind of economics since before Schumacher's book was published. (We started in 1972 as a pre-order co-op operating out of members' homes.) You will see, in the pages of this newsletter, how our theme of "Small Is More Beautiful than Ever" resonated with many of our writers and how ingeniously it is woven into their articles.

Since 1978, when the store opened, we have inch-by-inch transformed our building, our home, through labors of love. Scottie Harrison celebrated that opening

with the poster now hanging at the top of the stairs by the Community Center entrance. And Scottie's art work enlivens this newsletter as we again celebrate of the power of a small community, especially in the beautiful renovations to the back of the store, accomplished through donations of labor, time, thought, skill, and money by numerous friends. Thank you one and all.

We encourage other local artists of any age to contact us about using their work.

The Newsletter Committee:

Glenda Bissex, co-ordinator and editor
Doug Davenport, design & layout
Joseph Gainza, Board Liaison and editing
Debra Stoleroff, editing
Alan Taplow, advertising and distribution

Board Report *by Chris Jackson*

As spring moves along, the now 5 month old board continues to gel and work on finding its place in the overall mission of the Co-op. As I've written in previous articles, we all come from varied backgrounds, but what brings us together is how much we value small, local systems, like the Co-op thriving.

At this year's annual meeting the Co-op renewed our membership in the Neighboring Food Co-op Association. Mike Peabody and I joined other co-op board members and employees from around New England. It was exciting to hear about the important collaboration

that is happening to grow a robust regional food system, linking co-ops with, farmers, producers, and distributors. There are several initiatives underway exploring how New England can become more food resilient including grain growing and processing, frozen regional vegetables and fruits, a cooperative cheese cave, and meat processing. These have the potential of filling in some of the crucial gaps in New England's food system.

As much as our little co-op can benefit from more regional cooperation, we should also celebrate our uniqueness as a

...continued on page 4



Debra Stoleroff: Co-op member since 1978

much more localized resource. There are very few places in which small farmers and producers can sell their wares outside of some restaurants and the farmer's markets, which are also becoming increasingly difficult to be part of. It's always nice to see such diversity of produce, canned goods, prepared foods, and medicines in the Co-op's small space. Spring also ushers in a wave of wildcrafted foods from our local woodlands. There is something special about the quality, love and care in the work done by our local suppliers.

The board of directors, in collaboration with the Management Collective, is working to continue this unique flavor, while also ensuring customer satisfaction and safety. As always, we are open to hear more feedback from the membership. Our monthly meetings are open

to the public and you can find the time, date, location and agenda of the meetings on the wall to the right of the entrance. In June, the board will be going on a day long retreat in order to explore our individual, and collective visions for the Co-op and to possibly plan events in which we can open up more dialogue with the membership.

Finally, on behalf of the board, I want to recognize all the folks who have been giving their time and talents to the store and community center. We would like to thank all those who helped with the renovations, organized events, and volunteered around the store. ♦



NEW STAFF MEMBER

Introducing Dawn Rose Kearn



Dawn Rose Kearn is a fairly new member of the Plainfield/Marshfield community. Born in California, she spent her adolescent years traipsing the glorious Redwoods of her family's backyard, and after moving to South Londonderry, Vermont, she fell in love with the quiet beauty of this state. She has been living in the Central Vermont region since 2006, and going on two years in Plainfield. She is still loving it!

As the new cheese department manager she hopes to offer a wonderful spread of local Vermont cheeses as well as imported and other domestic cheeses. It is her goal to be well informed as to the treatment of the dairy cows, goats, and sheep,

and the level of sustainability of the creameries we are buying from. She welcomes any comments or requests from patrons and fellow staff members and is looking forward to building relationships with the wonderful people living in this community. Happy Summer!

Management Collective Report by Jessi Robinson

As most of you have probably noticed, we are coming to the end of our back of the store renovation. Many members of our community have collaborated on the overhaul of the Co-op, donated time and money and now we can reap the benefits of a better space in which we house our co-op. The culmination of all our energy and dedication has resulted in beautiful new workspace in the back of the store, a pristine new walk in cooler, a more efficient back stock and produce area and a styli new office.

This was a long process and it could not have been accomplished without the huge amount of community support we received. A special thanks to Sam Clark, Mike Russell, Joe John, Allen Banbury, John Draper, Paul Bales and Michael Horowitz for going above and beyond to ensure the physical well being of our co-op. Sam Clark's gorgeous design work and cabinetry is now evident through out the back of the store. The green, purple and red countertop and wood work have transformed the space into a much more pleasant, inviting space.

Mike Russell's skill, experience and work ethic helped to move the project right along on schedule and gave us all peace of mind that we have a solid structure supporting our new walk in and supports in place to hold up the floor of our community center. Thank you Joe John for pushing for a proper floor as part of this project, we will be eternally grateful for that sound reasoning and will also be enjoying the resulting rainbow floor. Then we have Allen Banbury, a volunteer unlike any I have ever seen before. His tireless devotion to his community gives us all something to aspire to and we

thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you to John Draper for his continued willingness to try and make sense of the random wiring in this old building and for all the work he's done to ensure we have lights in our cooler, isles, walk-in, etc. Thank you to Paul Bales for installing our new 40 gallon hot water tank, produce sink and mop sink. Thanks to Michael Horowitz for the organization that helped ensure the completion of this job.

In addition to those mentioned above, I would also like to thank Rebecca Armel and Sarah Phillips for the tremendous effort they put in as part of the fund raising committee to raise the money to fiance this project. You guys are awesome, your dedication is up there with Allen's and I offer many thanks on behalf of our staff and everyone who shops at our rad little co-op.

We have an amazing staff here that spent a lot of time helping with the planning and design, packed up the back and then worked around the construction and chaos without complaint. We had to make a lot of adjustments, improvise when faced with unexpected challenges and everyone really rallied. I am proud to be a part of such an amazing crew, thank you guys!

We also had many business sponsors in our community who I would like to thank. A huge thank you to Hunger Mountain Co-Op, Buffalo Mountain Co-Op, Strafford Organic Creamery, Vermont Coffee Company, La Panciata, Vermont Soap Organics, Littlewood Farm, Wellsprings CSA, Wilmer Brandt, Champlain Orchards, Vegetaballs Pesto, Neighborly Farms, Maple Hill Community Farm, Selina Naturally, North

Country Federal Credit Union, Washington Electric Co-Op and Provisions International LTD. We could not have done it without the generosity of our business and personal contributors.

Finally, a big thank you to all our member volunteers who came and donated their time to make this all happen. Thanks Brad Wolfe, Amy Lester, Mitchell Estrin, Erok & Heidi, Mike Brosky, Gemery & Elysian Gomes, Michael Peabody, Doni Cain, Margie Yoder, Jeannine DeWald, Dorothy Wallace, Scott "the chainsaw man" Crocker, Daniel Marcus, Bob Minsenburger, Walter Hergt, Alex Forbes, Bill Peabody, Malcolm Grey, Sada Dumont, Ben Sklarski, Gail Faulk, Strat Douthat, Chris Miksic, Brian Tokar, Alec Hill, Stephen Morgan, Paul Angell and Sara Andrews. Thank you to the Maas family for hanging out with Joe John's kids, so he could be here. I would also like to thank those who donated food to feed our crew; Whizzo Bagels, Rhapsody, Manghi's Bread, Dawn Rose Kern, Nancy Ellen and Les Snow.

If you haven't already, I would like to invite you to come in and check out the renovated space. It looks amazing and is

a testament to the awesomeness of our community since it was done with a whole lot of volunteer energy. Seriously, come on back and see for yourself.

Now for some housekeeping news. Our Cheese Buyer and long time employee Janice Lloyd has decided to move on to other things. You can now visit her at Cafe Verde and check out her hats and clothes from her Red's Thread's line while you are in there. We will miss her and are glad she is just up the street and around the corner. She is being replaced by Dawn Rose Kern who will now be ordering our cheese and working register shifts in the store. We are excited to have Dawn Rose join our staff, she is awesome! Look for her bio on the website or in the next newsletter.

I guess that's all for now. The renovation has been all consuming for the past two years, so now we can breathe a collective sigh of relief that it went smoothly and see what's next for our co-op.

Thanks everyone! I'll see you in the Co-Op, Jessi ♦



Strafford Organic Creamery
53 Rock Bottom Road,
Strafford, VT 05072
(802) 765-4180
info@straffordcreamery.com
<http://www.straffordcreamery.com>

Delivery to the Plainfield Co-op every Friday

Plainfield Co-op Building Committee, Summer Report



by Sam Clark

"We are gearing up for the renovation of the "back of the store". This involves a new, bigger and more efficient walk-in,

major repairs, improved work centers, improved windows and doors, and better shelving. We are aiming for a spring project, though the actual timing will depend on when we can get the new cooler delivered." (from winter report)

When the above was written, the Building Committee wasn't entirely sure this daunting project was possible.

Working with the staff, we had lots of good ideas, including a much improved layout, and a sense of the needed repairs. But when we started filling in the budget numbers, there was one problem. We were trying to do a \$40,000 project with a \$26,000 budget. The Board came up with a bit more money, giving us \$30,000 to work with if needed. A lot of effort also went into finding less costly sources for our more expensive items, like the shelving (thanks Jeannine) and the cooler (thanks Allen).

The project grew in several ways at the last minute. At the urging of Joe John, we added a new floor throughout. Joe did the floor with major help from Country Floors and Chris Martin. We had budgeted quite a bit for structural

repairs to the floor - there was thirty years of water damage under the old cooler. But no one was prepared for the amount of damage that was revealed when the old cooler came out. That entire floor was rebuilt down to the ground. The beautiful new cooler now sits on probably the strongest piece of real estate in Plainfield. There was also a large segment of rotten sill that had to be replaced. Also, there was major reinforcement of the floor above, which was a little too flexible when dance groups were operating in the Community Center.

The major reason we were able to go ahead in spite of financial constraints was that many, many people put in huge numbers of volunteer hours. When we did pay people, they charged very low rates or reported only a fraction of the hours they put in.



Paul Bales did our plumbing, John and Gabe Draper the wiring, Raymond Chase the refrigeration. Mike Russell was the carpentry mastermind and supervisor. Allen Banbury was in charge of the cooler. Amy Lester led the painting crew. Dan Marcus built the loft for the new compressor, and also worked on putting the cooler together. We got tremendous support from local builders, particularly from Montpelier Construction (Mitchell Estrin, Walter Hergt, Chris Miksic, Malcolm Gray). Chris and Malcolm built the veggie shelves in Chris's barn. The cabinetry came from the Sam Clark Design shop. Thanks Ian Maas, Todd

Krumperman, Alex Forbes, Bill Peabody, Barney Carlson and others. There are many others who worked on the renovation. We apologize for not having those names here.

The Co-op staff put in huge hours at the planning stage, getting things ready for construction, and working on projects such as setting up the new shelving, and of course, moving back into the space. This work will continue over the next few weeks.

It's also important to mention the fine work of the Fundraising Committee, led

by Rebecca Armell, and "anonymous" who donated \$10,000 just at the perfect moment when a big boost was needed. Many members and vendors made generous donations.

Thanks, everyone.

We do want to mention that there are many small projects that remain to be done. The building committee will need some new people. This has been a fun and productive committee to participate in. Call if you are interested in joining us. ♦



Co-op reconstruction underway



Afterwards, Aaron luxuriates in a new office

No Small Thing *by Les Snow*

Here is a summary of the Plainfield Co-op's financial statements as of March 31, 2011. While financial statements are an important tool for checking the financial pulse of a business entity, they can't tell the full story or show the true character of an organization. For that, one must go beyond debit and credits, but not necessarily too far, because the best stories are often related to financial transactions. Our co-op has recorded many such stories during the past couple of years.

After many years of using income from member dues for day to day operations instead of capital improvements, as required by policy, that income has been set aside for improvements for more than a year now. As a result, the Co-op had funds available for last year's entry improvements and to cover the last expenses of the back of store renovation.

The great majority of member dues income is collected in the first quarter of the year. After three years of that first quarter income decreasing, it has increased in 2011.

The Co-op has been able to maintain its repayment obligation on the September 2008 \$45,000 renovation loan using income from operations. This is no small feat. As of March 31, 42% of the loan is paid off.

While the Co-op may have spent close to \$100,000 the past couple of years on the improvements related to the renovation effort, the true value of those improvements far exceed that figure due to the efforts of volunteers and the generosity of many dedicated and skilled trades people,

The renovations not only made the Co-op a more pleasant place to shop and work, but brought energy and workflow efficiencies that will result in lower annual and per unit costs for years to come. Our building has always been a great asset of the Co-op, but now more than ever before.

Beyond the funds for the renovation campaign and other capital improvements, the Co-op does not have much of a financial reserve. Each major phase of the renovation has pinched that reserve by causing higher labor costs and lower sales in the short-term, but the Co-op has managed those financial storms fairly well.

Maybe those used to working with larger organizations would look at these stories and not think much of them, but for a small food co-op they are a big deal, and help paint a picture of an organization bettering itself. Sometimes small can be big! ♦



Plainfield Co-op Financial Summary, 2007-2011

Profit & Loss Statements, 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	Jan-Mar 2011
Sales	701,489	804,805	803,121	883,455	219,207
Cost of Goods Sold	511,709	547,849	545,612	600,990	147,064
Gross Profit	189,780	256,956	257,509	282,465	72,143
Operating Expenses	213,577	250,337	267,150	268,138	75,042
Net Operating Income	-23,797	6,619	-9,641	14,327	-2,899
Other Income/Expenses					
Other Income	21,708	14,821	14,285	12,256	12,371
Other Expenses	8,632	10,925	2,100	2,082	1,170
Net Other Income	13,076	3,896	12,185	10,174	11,201
Net Income	-10,721	10,515	2,544	24,501	8,302

Plainfield Co-op Balance Sheets, 2007-2011

ASSETS	12/31/2007	12/31/2008	12/31/2009	12/31/2010	3/31/2011
Current Assets					
Checking/Savings	4,187	41,982	23,359	45,002	39,480
Accounts Receivable	1,112	153	520	0	448
Other Current Assets	45,800	50,380	51,080	51,002	51,401
Total Current Assets	51,099	92,515	74,959	96,004	91,329
Fixed Assets	59,518	80,384	84,846	100,364	100,020
Accumulated Depreciation	-45,681	-49,793	-49,793	-63,881	-63,881
Cap. Imp. Deferred Revenue	0	0	-24,282	-15,851	-17,632
Other Assets	0	0	44,095	26,239	26,142
TOTAL ASSETS	64,936	123,106	129,825	142,875	135,978
LIABILITIES & EQUITY					
Liabilities					
Current Liabilities					
Accounts Payable	35,797	37,623	46,527	48,558	40,357
Other Current Liabilities	-2,427	3,134	3,280	4,664	508
Total Current Liabilities	33,370	40,757	49,807	53,222	40,865
Long Term Liabilities	0	43,755	36,182	28,115	25,993
Total Liabilities	33,370	84,512	85,989	81,337	66,858
Equity					
Common Stock	5,972	5,972	5,972	5,972	5,972
Retained Earnings	36,306	22,107	35,320	30,967	54,846
Net Income	-10,712	10,515	2,544	24,599	8,302
Total Equity	31,566	38,594	43,836	61,538	69,120
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	64,936	123,106	129,825	142,875	135,978

Fundraising Report by Rebecca Armell

Well, the fundraiser is officially over! After three years we have reached our \$95,000 goal and completed the envisioned renovations. We pieced together this unprecedented sum from many sources and through many efforts. We started with a \$45,000 loan from the Cooperative Fund of New England which the Management Collective has been paying off through operations. We had an incredible head start with a \$10,750 anonymous donation to purchase a new veggie cooler. Next we launched the 2009 Plainfield Co-op Building Campaign.

We began by looking for financial support from our immediate circle. Each Co-op

board and staff member made a financial contribution. Appeal letters were sent out in July 2009 and November 2010 to our membership and greater community. Many generous folks donated a total of \$26,750. They are listed on pages 25-26.

We solicited donations from vendors and local businesses which raised \$7,000. We held a Winter Ball in both 2010 and 2011 which brought in \$2500 and began a new festive tradition. Finally, our little donation box screwed to the counter in the store took in \$3000 in loose change. Each of these pieces of support amounted to huge improvements. Now our little Co-op is more beautiful and efficient than ever!

Letter To The Newsletter

Dear friends,

Thanks for publishing the informative article on pesticides in the last issue. As Co-op shoppers, we know how destructive to our health and the soil are the whole array of industrial farming practices that are now called "conventional." I'd like to clarify one issue raised by this story, though.

The author tried to make a point by associating Dow Chemical with the Homeland Security agency, and claiming that Dow was the largest manufacturer of pesticides. While Dow may be the biggest in the US, the global honor belongs to the German company Bayer, which has been in the pesticide business since the 1930s. While we usually associate Bayer with aspirin and other pharmaceuticals, it's now the world's largest manufacturer of insecticides and other noxious agricultural chemicals. The largest maker of herbicides (weed killers) is another European company, Syngenta, which is a product of 15 years of various companies' mergers and spinoffs as they maneuvered to get the most business

advantage from the spread of genetically engineered crop varieties (GMOs).

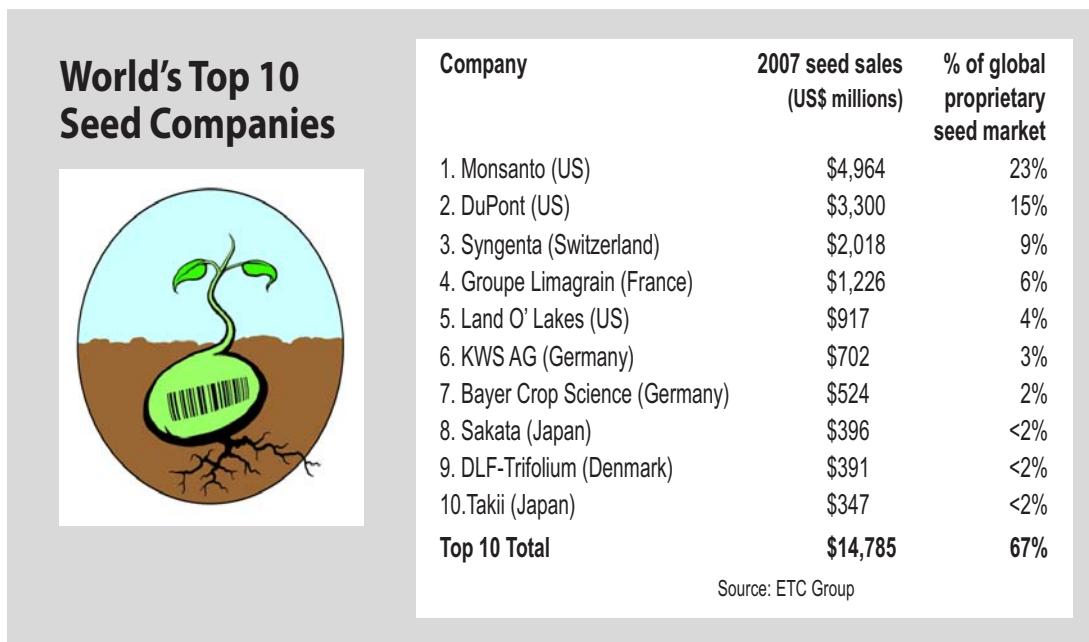
Dow is the world's number 4 in pesticides, followed by Monsanto, once the leading manufacturer of Agent Orange and today mainly associated with its 'Roundup' family of herbicide products. In recent years, Monsanto has also become the world's largest seed company, having spent hundreds of millions on acquisitions and mergers in their attempt to force the world to accept their GMOs. While 90% of soybeans and 80% of the field corn in the US is now GMO — and the largest category of GMOs are engineered to tolerate high doses of Roundup — much of the world continues to say NO to Monsanto.

Here are two detailed charts (see *pages 12 & 13*) from the ETC Group, based in Ottawa, that show the increasing overlaps between the global seed and pesticide industries. Hope they help clarify the story for everyone.

Brian Tokar

Corporate Farm Inputs: Seeds, Agrochemicals, Fertilizers

Seed Industry

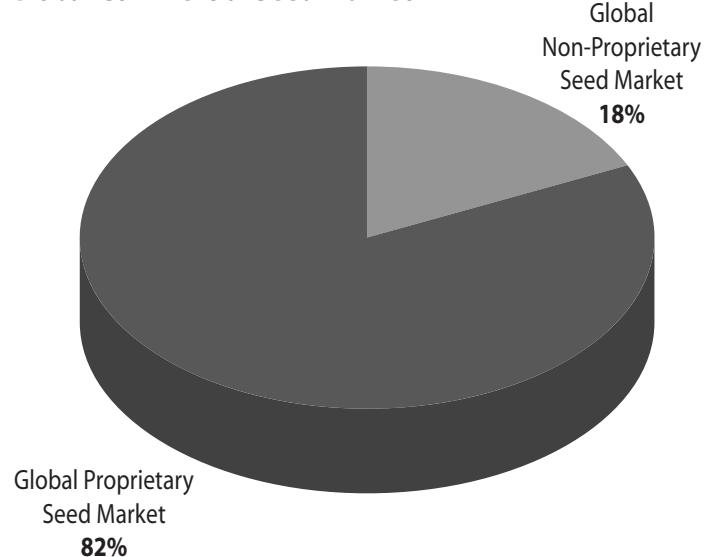


Commercial Seed Market: In the first half of the 20th century, seeds were overwhelmingly in the hands of farmers and public-sector plant breeders. In the decades since then, Gene Giants have used intellectual property laws to commodify the world seed supply – a strategy that aims to control plant germplasm and maximize profits by eliminating Farmers' Rights. Today, the proprietary seed market accounts for a staggering share of the world's commercial seed supply. In less than three decades, a handful of multinational corporations have engineered a fast and furious corporate enclosure of the first link in the food chain.

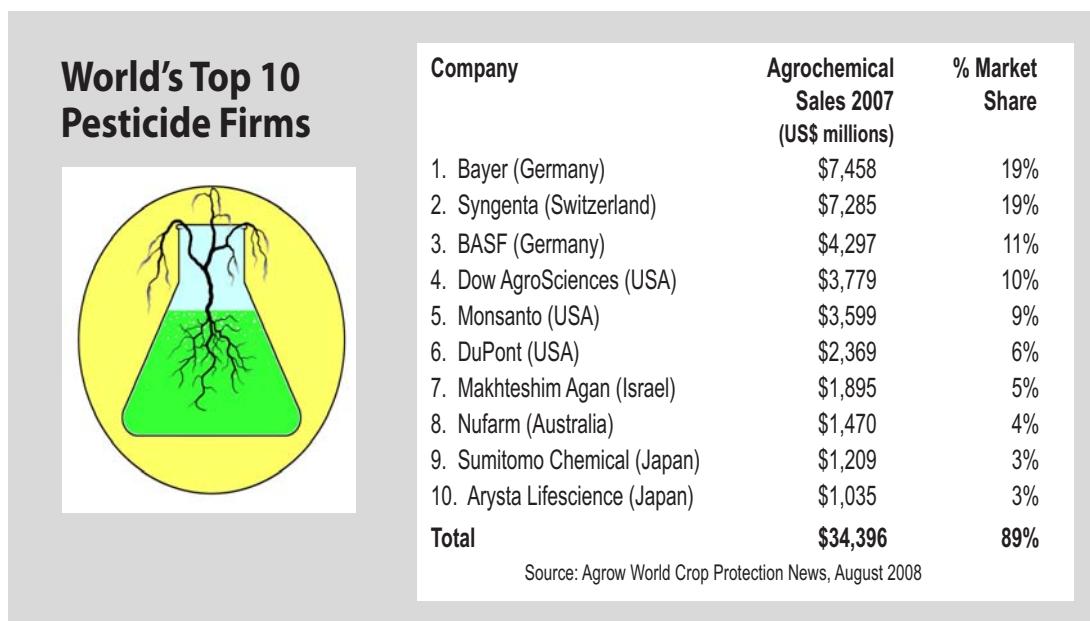
According to Context Network, the proprietary seed market (that is, brand-name seed that is subject to exclusive monopoly – i.e., intellectual property), now accounts for 82% of the commercial seed market worldwide. In 2007,

the global proprietary seed market was US\$22,000 million. (The total commercial seed market was valued at \$26,700 million in 2007.)¹ The commercial seed market, of course, does not include farmer-saved seed.

Global Commercial Seed Market



Agrochemical Industry



The top 10 companies control 89% of the global agrochemical market.

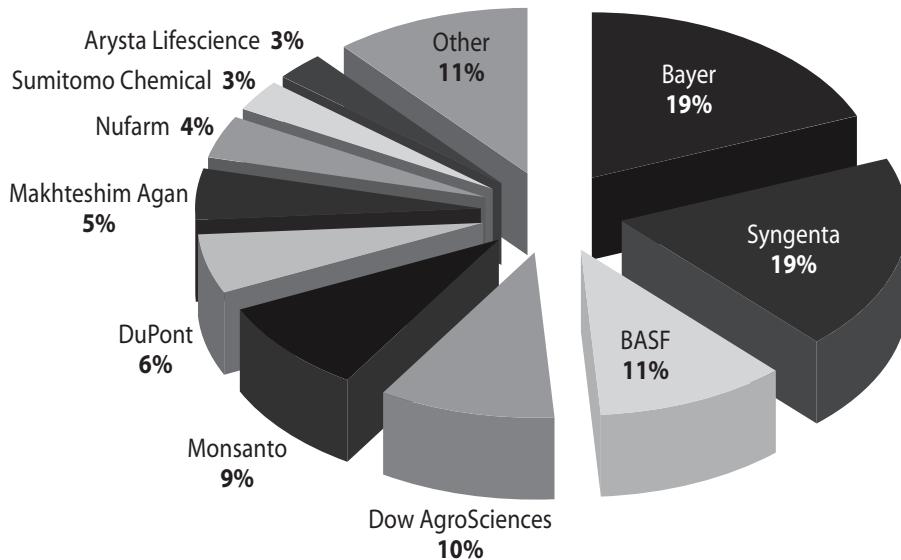
The worldwide market for agrochemicals was US\$38.6 billion in 2007 – up 8.4% over the previous year. The top 6 companies accounted for \$28.8 billion, or 75% of the total market.

Symbiotic Sales: The world's six largest agrochemical manufacturers are also seed industry giants. Despite skyrocketing fuel and fertilizer costs, high grain prices created soaring demand for commercial seeds and pesticides in 2007. After two decades of sagging sales, the world's largest pesticide

companies rebounded last year – in large part due to the subsidy-driven boom in agrofuel crops.

In 2007 the four largest pesticide companies (Bayer, Syngenta, BASF, Dow) reported double-digit sales jumps. Pesticide revenues are up in nearly all

Global Agrochemical Market 2007 Sales



Produce (and Ozzie) Report by Mike Peabody



Ozzie has begun crawling, essentially. Maybe not. It's more like "inch-worming" but forward motion has been achieved. Just a few months ago, when he was mostly immobile, I liked to think he was safe and, concurrently, so were my belongings. With each passing day, new risks bloom before my eyes like spring's first flowers and I see my grasp of the situation slowly melting away. It used to be enough to be able to see him; now, I have to be able to *catch* him. When I first heard the theme of this quarter's newsletter, I felt a bit nostalgic for the seemingly long-ago days when I really thought my boy was "small", when I could still get things done if I put him on the floor for a few minutes. I suppose everyone wishes they could get back to when the things they loved were so little and very easy to understand and manage. I also suppose we have all forgotten, at some point, how much harder small was than we remember now.

I started reading Schumacher's book not long after I finished *Cradle to Cradle*, that exemplary modern text on re-engineering modern systems of production. Its repeated reference to the older book made me think it was worth examining. The steady rationality of *Small is Beautiful* was and still is a welcome departure from the many more pie-in-the-sky theories about the retooling of capitalism to suit the needs of people as a mission objective and not just as message satisfaction. It was one of the books that made me invest my life in and turn my skills towards jobs where I could work

hard for a noticeable benefit beyond just supporting my lifestyle. I've worked with a number of small farms and businesses and one of their most wonderful qualities is also what sometimes threatens their viability: they treat humans like people. It's true that treating the labor pool like a slurry of expendables yields tremendous profits. There are few big businesses that can demonstrate otherwise. The smaller an entity like our co-op is, the more it needs to (and is expected to) cater to both customer and employee desires on a more personal level. The process of Taylorizing labor (reducing every job to its simplest and most easily repeatable tasks) can't intrude because below a certain level of operability, too much specialized work in too many fields is required for just basic functions. Everyone at the Co-op knows how to run the register but not everyone knows how to manage payroll, inventory, or department margins. The people who can't do these things aren't more disposable. Their working the register allows everything else to happen. This is why I (and all of the managers) value working members so much. Someone who bags my greens for a couple of hours might sound like a menial schlub but the thought of having to re-train anybody who knows how to do it right sends me right out of a good mood. Keeping it small allows humans to do what they do best, to rely on each other.

I'm actually going to talk about something other than the arrival of spring's vegetables and talk shop about a more pressing concern of mine. You may notice bananas are suddenly more expensive. That's how it's going to be and I will tell you why. I don't generally balk at soap-boxing but let me preface my

upcoming explanation about this change. Bananas are the world's most popular fruit. Growing and selling bananas is a three billion dollar industry that relies heavily on labor in parts of the world which are traditionally exploited by Western multinationals. You can't just grow them anywhere the climate will provide, you have to know that there is a ready (and cost-effective) source of workers who can feed the planet's appetite for the funny yellow fruit. This is why fair-trade organizations like Equal Exchange (EE), who help assemble organic grower co-ops in these places and coordinate distribution, are fighting tooth and nail to keep Dole and Chiquita—two notoriously labor-unsympathetic corporations—from buying out and dissolving the same co-ops in places like Peru and Ecuador in their bid to edge out EE's organic banana market share. EE does what it can to be competitive but after decades of huge profits made from bending Third World agriculture (and politics) to their desires, the bigger businesses have an undeniable advantage when they make their offers. The only option left EE to protect itself, the integrity of its co-ops, and the standards they uphold is to beseech the retailers and smaller distributors to increase their pricing.

However, as many shoppers have noticed, it's not common to see an organic banana selling for more than 99 cents a pound anywhere. For Dole, et al, the average is closer to 79 cents a pound. Equal Exchange has noticed this, too. But that doesn't reflect any

of the shifting costs on their production end. From where I stand, the per-case cost of bananas has increased by almost 20% and I haven't altered the retail price in the last year by more than a penny. Bananas, as a result, are one of the poorest-earning items in my department, despite their popularity and the work involved with obtaining and handling them. I have been holding to the same 99-cent rule that I assumed everyone cleaved to, until I noticed an odd discrepancy: no one else I've visited ever seems to be selling fair-trade bananas. ♦



Mike rejoicing at new walk-in refrigerator

Perhaps I just went to those stores on “off” delivery days but I didn’t see any, regardless. I order fair trade bananas exclusively, unless I’m absolutely sure there aren’t any to be had. That isn’t what other stores are doing, though so apparently I’ve been competing against myself. If I could order a pallet-load of them and get a price break for buying in bulk, I could afford to keep the margins lower. As it is, the five or six 40-pound boxes I get each week just keep getting less and less profitable, but no modern grocery store can go without bananas for long. I thought of “variable pricing” (artificially making them cheaper to keep their sales steady), but the increase in cost of bananas in just the last three months means that I will risk selling them at a loss in the near future. My department just isn’t able to take that hit. The longer we, as consumers, demand the cheapest bananas possible, the longer EE will risk losing ground (literally) to bigger, less conscientious entities. It’s the same rule governing small businesses across the board. Finally, after looking at the numbers and hearing EE make a solid case for

breaching the “99-cent ceiling”, I decided to make my move. The actual difference in per banana cost to you, the member/customer, is roughly nine cents each. This seemed a negligible alteration with long-term benefits to my department and to the fair-trade banana industry as a whole. I will make a separate tag with a lower price for bananas which are not fairly traded, even though they all cost me just about the same amount. The point is to benefit other co-ops, in our tiny way, since that’s what co-ops do for each other. But I’m hoping this will stir shoppers into supporting EE and other fair-trade growers of bananas, not simply as pleasant concepts but by taking part of the fiscal realities which developing nations struggle with every day and helping things change for the better.

Small really is beautiful. It’s also expensive and a lot of damn work. Let’s never forget that.

(Read more about Equal Exchange’s banana projects at www.beyondthepeel.com) ◆



***Owned by Dairy Farmers
Since 1919***

Spring Salad

by Nancy Ellen

Use whatever mix of lovely fresh local greens are coming up in your garden or co-op or farmers' market (spinach, arugula, baby lettuces, mesclun, etc.) and fill a large pretty bowl with them (wider is much better than deeper here). Thinly slice part of that last red storage onion from the fall and add it to the bowl, mix it in gently with your hands. Get some of your favorite nuts (pine nuts, walnuts and pecans work well) and dry roast them in a small skillet until fragrant. If you're using larger nuts like pecans or walnuts, chop them after letting them cool. Crumble some feta or goat cheese on top of the greens, as much as you like — I usually use a generous half cup or so. Scatter the nuts on top of the cheese. On top of that, throw on some dried cherries. Do not mix!!!! Decorate the top with edible flowers — chive blossoms, pansies or violas. To serve, just gently grab a 'hunk' of salad (it's important to get all the layers, not just the top!) with clean hands — or utensils if you are squeamish, but hands work best for this — and place on individual plates. Let each guest dress his or her own salad with the vinaigrette that follows.

This salad is very adaptable and can easily change with the seasons, mood, or availability of ingredients. In fall or winter, scatter pomegranate seeds on top instead of dried cherries, or place slices of fresh apples, pears, or clementines decoratively around the edge of the bowl. Fresh berries or slices of peach or plum are great in summer— it's up to you, have fun! Just remember the basic recipe — greens+ allium + nuts + cheese + fruit + flowers — and use what appeals to you. The important thing is that this salad should look as good as it tastes — that's why it is built in layers and NOT mixed — it should be brought to

the table like this so that everyone can admire the beautiful colors and patterns you've put together.



Vinaigrette by Nancy Ellen

Ingredients:

- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp. mustard (Dijon is good)
- 1 or 2 Tbsp. maple syrup, to taste (optional, but yummy)
- 1/4 cup of vinegar — I like to use half balsamic and half red or white wine vinegar, but feel free to experiment!

Place in Jar and put the lid on and shake thoroughly until ingredients are blended. Then add:

- 3/4 cup of olive or walnut oil and shake again until well blended.

Preparation

- Like most vinaigrettes, this will readily separate and needs to be shaken up before use each time. Again, this is a very basic recipe that lends itself to experimentation — add some fresh herbs or garlic, change the proportions to suit your taste, use a different oil or vinegar or mustard or sweetener (if using). It's hard to go wrong and easy to fix when you do!



Joe John: Co-op member since 2007

Plainfield Community Center Report by Doni Cain

Mission Statement: The Plainfield Community Center serves as a bridge to further the relationship between the Plainfield Co-op, its members and the broader community. It provides a community space and encourages diverse activities and events.

The Plainfield Co-op has been working under a new governance structure for the past couple years, called Policy Governance. Part of Policy Governance is setting clear guidelines by the board. In general terms, it is understanding what the members want and monitoring staff to insure the members wishes are being fulfilled to the greatest extent possible. The Board no longer oversees or manages any particular part of the Co-op and that is why the Community Center has moved from a board run committee/space to part of operations which is the responsibility of the Management Collective. There is no longer a board representative on the Community Center Committee and all decisions pertaining to the Community Center are now made by or approved by the staff at the Co-op.

Since the Community Center is part of the Co-op's operations all finances are traced through our accountant. This includes income and expenses as well as "rent" the Community Center pays to operations. This rent is \$150 a month and it only covers utilities such as phone and power as well as a small portion of liability insurance and taxes on building. There will be a report on the finances given at the annual meeting or quarterly reports can be obtained by contacting me.

The Community Center Committee is always looking for new people to join and help bring energy and new ideas to the group. Currently the committee is made up of Alexis, Jerome, Mary, Mike and me. We are also looking for working members to help with a variety of projects from organizing events to straitening up once a week. Alexis Smith is the gallery curator and she should be contacted directly at 454-4662 for more information about showing art. For all other questions, including scheduling, contact me by calling the Co-op at 454-1478.

Last month's art show was a great success with several people bringing together Cuban and Haitian art. All proceeds from the sale of the art went to an artist collective in Haiti to help purchase supplies and keep the collective going. The current show is paintings by Justin Lander form Modern Times Theater. All his paintings are currently for sale for \$7 apiece and can be taken directly off the wall.

The new meeting room where Jill Frink Thompson used to have an office is now a meeting room that can be rented separately of the main space. The room has a table that fits at least six people, two white boards, a chalk board and a sink. Renting the main space comes with the use of the smaller room. Now large events that offer food can wash their dishes during or after an event. During the annual Winter Ball it worked very well as cafe and separate sitting space.



Les Snow: Co-op member since 1989

Renting of the community center is done at the register in the Co-op. The space cost is \$9 an hour for members and \$15 for non-members. Events cost \$30 for members and \$50 for non-members. There is also a small security/cleaning deposit required at the time of rental. We have started offering "Community Center Sponsored Events" to people who wish to put on free community based events. The only requirement for this is that there is a specific community aspect to the event and that no money is collected for the event. If money is donated, it goes to the Community Center.

In the interest of integrating the Plainfield Co-op with the broader community, I am representing the Community Center at new group forming in Plainfield called *Winooski Valley Center for the Arts* (WVCA). This is a group of artists and community organizations such as Goddard and PACA who are creating and using more spaces for the performing arts. There is a lot of positive energy going into this group. They plan on gathering funds needed to create more spaces for performing arts in Plainfield. WVCA can help us better use the Community Center for a performing arts space and offer it to the broader arts community...

Eric Gillard is putting on a monthly potluck and open micless night. This happens the last Friday of every month at 7 pm and has had a great turnout full of everything from solo singer songwriters to stand up comic routines. All are welcome and encouraged to perform. There is Ecstatic Dance happening the third Wednesday of the month and a new Yoga class happening every Saturday in July and August. A full calender of all upcoming events is posted at the top of the stairs leading to the Community Center as well as on the Co-op's website. We have dedicated a portion of the community posting board in the entry way to community center events.

The Community Center is also beginning to put on classes. Some are free and others will have a small fee. The Community Center put on a car maintenance class for women taught by Marcie at Crossroads Mechanic. Nicko Rubin of East Hill Tree Farm will be teaching a class on fruit trees and berry bushes this spring. His class will go through all the basics of how to design and place fruit trees, how to plant a tree and all the maintenance one should know. Chris Jackson will be teaching a class on fermentation this spring or summer. He will show us how he makes all the wonderful concoctions he creates. ♦

PLAINFIELD COMMUNITY CENTER

Space available for your:

Classes



Meetings

Parties

Workshops



Art Gallery Exhibitions & Special Events

\$9/hr. for Co-op Members, \$15/hr. for Non-Members

Events: \$35 for Members, \$50 for Non-Members

Scheduling Book at Co-op Register

More Information? Call Doni Cain, 454-1478

Using the Community Center benefits The Plainfield Co-op

Food Co-ops Deserve a Seat at the Table *by Joseph Gainza*

In the last issue of this newsletter, Joey Klein of Littlewood Farm in Plainfield recommended that we patronize our system of local farmers and gardeners selling their produce through the Co-op.

Looking at the rise of fuel prices and climate destabilization brought on by global warming, Joey argued that what now is a “pleasant feature of our community [will] become a vital necessity.”

As is usual with him, Joey is ahead of the curve and spot on. Across the New England region and elsewhere in the US, local activists and organizers have been erecting the infrastructure for re-localizing economic activity and in the process revitalizing rural and urban communities. Food has been a central feature of this effort.

The food infrastructure includes a growing number of organic vegetable growers, orchardists, meat and cheese producers, grain growers, farmers markets, diversified farms (animals and vegetables), community supported agricultural enterprises, and, of course food cooperatives. More young people are choosing agriculture as a way of life and more consumers are buying local first.

Without much fanfare, we have a movement brewing with the potential to change how this state produces, purchases and consumes food.

This movement includes not only grassroots efforts and organizations. Such regional and statewide groups as the Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA), The Center for an Agricultural Economy, Rural Vermont, and the Vermont Council on Rural Development are collaborating with the legislatively

created Sustainable Jobs Foundation and the Vermont Department of Agriculture to regenerate the rural, local, land-based economy.

At the conclusion of an extensive study, including over 1,000 interviews, the Council on the Future of Vermont reports: “Vermont needs to develop agricultural resources *to advance local foods consumption, town by town, region by region*. When faced with potential threats from global warming, disease, and the decline of the oil-based economy, many Vermonters support the *expansion of local and regional food systems.*”

(Emphasis added)

The Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA), based in Shelburne, MA is working with its 20 member food co-ops in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut on a “shared vision of a thriving regional economy, rooted in a healthy, just and sustainable food system and collaboration among co-ops.” The Plainfield Co-op is a member of the network. Combined membership is over 80,000 people.

As reported by Erbin Crowell, ED of NFCA, a study commissioned by them in 2008 provided some promising news that food co-ops are becoming a vital part of western New England’s food economy and also a significant player in the larger economy. Vermont economic analyst Doug Hoffer, who conducted the study, reported that the then 17 NFCA member co-ops had “aggregate annual sales exceeding \$161 million ... purchased more than \$33 million in local products in 2007, including \$10 million

in fresh farm products, \$18 million in locally-processed foods, and \$5 million in other products.” Together these co-ops paid \$7.3 million in sales, excise and other taxes. When state income taxes paid by the 1,240 full-time employees of the member co-ops are included, the total tax revenue for host states added up to \$13.7 million. Since the study, the number of member co-ops has increased to 20 with 1,425 employees, and annual revenue totaling over \$185 million.

While the rest of the economy languishes, food co-ops continue to grow. From 2005 to 2007 the median growth rate in revenue of the NFCA member co-ops was 14%, and during the economic recession between 2007 and 2009 revenue grew by 8%, with a 4% increase in employees, and 17% increase in members. Annie Gailard of Buffalo Mountain Co-op in Hardwick reports that the combined number of employees in Vermont makes food co-ops the 25th largest employer.

Hoffer’s analysis indicated that co-ops are better places to work with a lower staff turnover than supermarkets (36% compared to 59%) and more full time employees (62% compared to 43% in supermarkets). Food co-ops also serve as economic anchors, especially in small towns such as Hardwick and Plainfield. The Sustainable Jobs Fund reports that in Vermont the entire food system represents 18.8% (or 55,581) of all private sector jobs and are connected to 13.2% (or 10,974) of all private businesses. They add that “retail food purchases generated over \$2 billion in sales in 2008. When measured by employment

and gross state product, food manufacturing is the second largest manufacturing industry in Vermont.”

Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin has stated unequivocally his support for Vermont’s “working landscape” which includes agriculture and forestry. He and his Secretary of Agriculture, Chuck Ross, grew up on Vermont farms; they have spoken of their personal commitment to strengthening Vermont’s agricultural and forest industries. Governor Shumlin has made this effort a central feature of his economic development plans for the state. In meetings with producers and groups dependent on the working landscape they are looking at policies and practices which the state can promote and support.

It is time for the food cooperatives serving Vermont to join together and secure a seat at the table with others working to broaden and deepen Vermont’s food economy. We are a critical part of the food system and growing even during difficult times for the economy overall. Co-ops offer a viable alternative to the market economy. As a growing stakeholder in Vermont’s food economy we need to have our voice heard. Over the next several months the Plainfield Co-op Board will be examining how we might do that most effectively. ♦



Wilmer Brandt: Co-op member since 1972

A Sprinkle Of Herbs Or A Spot Of Tea: Small Is A Beautiful Taste Treat

by Dorothy Wallace

Small is, indeed, more beautiful than ever. Although we are privileged to enjoy herbs and spices from faraway, tropical lands, there is added satisfaction using herbs grown right here in Vermont and sold to us directly from the farms where they are grown. The Co-op buys about 50 dried herbs from three Vermont farms and many fresh herbs, in season, from several local farms. The availability or the source of some herbs may fluctuate depending on the success of the harvest and the season.

Cate Farm, just a couple of miles away on Route 2, is operated by Richard Wiswall and Sally Colman. On their 22 acres and in seven 100-foot greenhouses, they cultivate mouth-watering organic tomatoes and other vegetables, gorgeous annual and perennial flowers, and fresh herbs. They also grow and dry the essential root herbs echinacea, burdock, and dandelion. You can support their endeavors by shopping in the co-op's produce and bulk herb departments!



Zack Woods Herb Farm in Hyde Park is run by Jeff and Melanie Carpenter. Their stated mission is “to be good stewards of the land and to protect the medicinal plants that we cherish [and] . . . to create a sustainable organic farm that provides people with some of the highest quality medicinal herbs available.” Their 30 acres are the source of many of our bulk herbs, including burdock, calendula, echinacea, elecampane, goldenseal, hawthorn berries, marshmallow root, milky oats, nettle, peppermint, raspberry leaf, and skullcap.

Bee's Dance Medicinal Herbs, also of Hyde Park, is where Lyn-Laeh Ehrenberg, practices bio-dynamic principles to organically grow and ethically wildcraft herbs such as astragalus, catnip, chamomile, comfrey leaf and root, elderberries, elderflowers, gravel root, lemon balm, meadowsweet, motherwort, mullein, red clover, sage, spearmint, St. Johnswort, valerian, wormwood, yarrow, and yellow dock.

The Co-op also buys all of its bulk tea from local distributors. These vendors support organic farmers around the world and here in Vermont.

The exotic masala chai is distributed by Adivasi of Brattleboro and Udaipur, Rajasthan, India. Their mission is to provide “financial stability and viable market outlets” for craftspeople and farmers in India.

Many of our classic black, green, and specialty teas come from two Vermont distributors. Vermont Tea & Trading

Company, in Middlebury, is run by Bruce Malhotra. It is USDA and VT NOFA certified organic since 1994. The Co-op carries their Ceylon, Darjeeling, Earl Grey, English breakfast, genmaicha, gunpowder, Irish breakfast, jasmine, kukicha twig, silver needle king white, spring green, yerba mate, and the blended echinacea rosehip.

Keith and Jen Lashua of Williamstown operate Love & Tea Company. Their declared purpose is to "make life beautiful" which they do by finding "herb growers who practice a heart-centered approach with nature" and blending small batches of "vibrant and properly dried herbs." They are working to source more herbs from the local region. In the bulk jars, the co-op carries their Chai of Evolution, Earl Grey decaf, flowering Peach Green, Keemun, Lapsang Souchong, oolong, pu-ehr, rooibus, and Sencha varieties. Love & Tea is also the

source of the tubes of loose tea adorned with lovely, original artwork by Jen Lashua, Donna D'orio, and other artists. The varieties include Om Time, Mellow Mama, Green Mountain Mint, Happy Citrus, Love Celebration, among others.

Jill and my other predecessors did a great job finding local vendors. Now, if we could just find someone to grow cinnamon and saffron! ♦



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Littlewood Farm

end of Recreation Field Road, Plainfield

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New England Farmers Union: Shaping Food and Farming Policies that Affect You

by Winton Pitcoff, NEFU executive director



Few things are as delicious as local, vine-ripened tomatoes in August. They're tangy and sweet. And if they're really fresh, you can almost smell the dirt they grew in.

Whether you get your tomatoes at a food co-op, from a farm stand or through a CSA, the regulations that allow you to make that purchase start hundreds of miles from the farmer's field where those tomatoes grew. Those policies and regulations are written in Washington, D.C., and can mean the difference between local farms' survival or disappearance.

New England Farmers Union (NEFU) is the only regional organization dedicated to lifting the voices of farmers, food producers and consumers to ensure that policymakers in Washington, D.C., represent the needs of New England agriculture. Our members – farmers, consumers and allied organizations – communicate regularly with our region's national legislators.

And we're getting results. Last year's food safety act exempted small farms and food processors from burdensome and unfair regulations. Legislators included

those exemptions at the last minute, after hearing from thousands of family farmers and the consumers who buy their food. That was a real victory for New England farmers and food producers, and ultimately their customers, and it serves as a valuable reminder of how we can shape federal policy when we work together collectively and strategically.

For the first time in recent memory, New England has five members of Congress on agricultural committees, and NEFU has excellent relationships with each of them. As negotiations for the 2012 farm bill approach, we have an unprecedented opportunity to influence this key legislation that affects everything from buy-local programs to conservation initiatives. But we have to be organized.

Our members shape our policy and our priorities. Thanks to our partnership with the Neighboring Food Co-operative Association (NFCA), a network of more than 20 co-ops across New England with more than 80,000 individual members, we are lifting up the voices of those who value fresh food, care about the environment and want our rural economy to thrive. The NFCA and all of our members work collectively to ensure that policymakers in Washington hear the voices of New Englanders. Join NEFU today and let us bring your voice to the national table.

To learn more about NEFU, please visit our website, www.newenglandfarmersunion.org. ◆

A Heartfelt Thanks to the Multitude of Folks Contributing to the Co-op's Building Campaign

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Neighborly Farms
Selina Naturally
Strafford Organic
Creamery

Vermont Soap
VegetaBall's Pesto
Cabot Creamery

Kudos to the Generosity & Support of our Member-Owned Neighbors:

North Country Federal Credit Union
Hunger Mountain Co-op

Washington Electric Co-op
Buffalo Mountain Co-op



A Sustainable Lifestyle *by Larry Pleasant, Vermont Soap Company*

What is a sustainable lifestyle? What would it look like? And would we be happy living in a sustainable society? To these questions I can only answer, "I'm not sure".

There is, however, an aspect of sustainability that I am quite sure of. And that is this, "A sustainable civilization will be biological, rather than technologically based." You see, the ecosystem is sustainable, adaptable and in it for the very long term. Are we?

Let's imagine what it would be like to build a house in our imaginary sustainable Vermont world...

One way would be to stack stones. Stonewalls and thatched roof houses can last for hundreds of years. But today our imaginary builder is a single woman with minimal tools. How would SHE build a sustainable house? One way might look like this:

Our builder selects a well-drained site or knoll and opens up a 100'x 100' clearing using hand tools, and animals. The manure and leaves are carefully gathered and composted, and the dead wood is cut and stacked for later use.

In a sheltered area, she scratches an 18' circle in the earth and plants fast growing industrial hemp along the perimeter. She plants a stand of grain nearby and starts a garden, growing roots and gourds for the winter months.

By late August the hemp plants are nearly 18'tall, and she weaves them together like a net, still growing. Some are harvested for clothing, twine and edible oil containing seed. Space is

framed for a door, an antique windshield she found, left over from the old days, and the stacked stone hearth and chimney she has been building all summer.

She harvests the grain and ties and weaves the straw over her dome to cover it tightly. Then she wets down the grasses and inoculates them with special mushroom spores. The mushroom mycelium grows over her dome and they coat it with a hard, waterproof, self-healing covering. By the time the cold rainy season hits she is safely ensconced within her cozy nest with her gourds, grain, seeds, firewood and critters.

Sustainable societies will take on many forms, matching individual micro-ecosystems and priorities. But the common theme of biology rather than technology will run through it all.

Worldview and food go hand in hand. Our religious beliefs and practices and our society's beliefs and practices mirror our food growing/gathering patterns. As the average citizen grew further and further away from personal involvement in food growing, storage and preparation, we also have become increasingly divorced from our own biology of being.

Our children's neural nets have now been wired to adapt them to an electronic world and a virtual reality. This has left them over stimulated, hyper and bored. The sustainable world we yearn for will be simpler, quieter, have a lot fewer people in it. And will most certainly be based in the intelligent utilization of biology, rather than metal and digital based technology.

This is the Soapman urging you to visualize sustainability.

“Farmers’ markets are the fastest growing part of our food economy. The number of farms in the United States has actually begun to grow, for the first time in a century—and they’re precisely the kind of small farms that grow food people want to eat, not commodities to earn federal subsidies. We’re seeing the spread of rooftop solar and small wind power and a dozen other localized energy technologies Schumacher could only have imagined to help: most of all the Internet—which, despite its manifest flaws, does allow us to live local economic lives and still be in touch with the rest of the world. . . . Embracing what Schumacher stood for—above all the idea of sensible scale—is the task for our time. This book could not be more relevant.”

- from Bill McKibben’s Foreword to the 2010 edition of *Small Is Beautiful*.



“The social structure of agriculture, which has been produced by—and is generally held to obtain its justification from—large-scale mechanisation and heavy chemicalisation, makes it impossible to keep man in real touch with living nature; in fact, it supports all the most dangerous modern tendencies of violence, alienation, and environmental destruction. Health, beauty, and permanence are hardly even respectable subjects for discussion, and this is yet another example of the disregard of human values—and this means disregard of man—which inevitably results from the idolatry of economism.” - E. F. Schumacher



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