

ROLLING PRAIRIE

notes from rolling prairie farmers alliance

WEEK OF
JUNE 29, 2009

Coming Up

Standards (cont'd)

For weed control, we rely on rotations, timely cultivation, cover crops, delayed planting and a host of cultural methods widely practiced before the advent of herbicides. To combat insects, to the extent necessary to produce adequate crops, we rely on rotations, naturally occurring beneficial insects, cultural methods, and careful application of approved botanically-based insecticides.

We plant no Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) crops. We grow fresh, tasty, clean vegetables and fruits within 60 miles of where it will be eaten. Fresh, well grown, local produce is always nutritiously superior to produce trucked in from California, Mexico, Washington, or elsewhere, whether it is organic or conventional.

There are many highly complex technical questions which cannot be answered in a brief newsletter. We urge you to talk with your site coordinator or site farmers if you want more specific information or wish to find out what specific practices they follow and how they will deal with the issues of organic certification.



Assassin bugs are beneficial



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

EAT FOOD * NOT TOO MUCH
* MOSTLY PLANTS *

* MICHAEL POLLAN, IN
DEFENSE OF FOOD *

ROLLING PRAIRIE FARMING STANDARDS

When eight growers formed Rolling Prairie Farmers Alliance back in 1994, all of us were organic farmers. By 1996, all of us were Certified Organic. Certification required verification by a third party that the farmers were following generally accepted organic farming practices.

Since then, the organic farming industry has been in a state of continuous change. This transformation has been speeded up, but not caused, by the National Organic Program (NOP) of the USDA. In Oct. 2002, the USDA organic rules went into effect. The changes are quite complex and difficult to explain. In general, the amount of record-keeping has increased, certification costs have increased, and a number of disputes and controversies over the standards have erupted.

At the same time, large scale industrial agriculture has entered the organic domain. The California-Mexico mega-farms now have organic divisions that

sell wholesale produce across the country.

What does this mean to Rolling Prairie subscribers? This year we have seven active growers plus the JCCC Sustainable Ag Program farm. Only two are presently certified organic under the NOP. Some of the farms are using a different process called Certified Naturally Grown, but since some of the farms are not now certified, we want to describe our production standards. *To be concise, none of us are doing anything that would have been prohibited by organic certifiers before 2000.*

We do not use chemical fertilizers. We keep soil productive through crop rotation, proper use of composts and manures, soil-improving green manure and cover crops, and approved slow-release mined minerals and plant/animal byproducts such as alfalfa meal. Attention to soil health, particularly soil organic matter, is the most important aspect of organic farming. We use no chemical herbicides or insecticides.