

To the Staff of the Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture

“Written Testimony for the Hearing on Economic Impacts of Production, Processing, and Marketing Organic Agriculture Products, 4/18/07.”

ATT: “Honorable Members of the Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture:”

From: Butterfield Organic Growers, 1429 Upper City Road, Pittsfield, New Hampshire 03263 (Merrimack County)

Our Operation:

We are a small family run business located in a rural area of fading agriculture. The land has been certified organic since 1997 and we use mostly hand tools and hard sweat in our operation in order to save on fuel costs. Our greenhouse is not heated but is used to help extend our short growing season. We are a growing zone 5a. There are a variety of products grown here including perennial fruits, vegetables, flower and herb plants. We specialize in garlic-5 types, Egyptian onions, blue spruce trees and black raspberry plants along with seasonal organic produce sold at a local farmers market which I founded and started over 10 years ago as a direct retail outlet. We also have a farm website which has brought in more small order business in the last 3 years than the local market and only because I publish it myself can I afford to have it. (I learned by having to do winter computer work) We have had to sell some farmland.

The Community:

Our local in town community is divided among rich and poor but many of our customers who come to the market use the Farmers Market WIC coupons (for low income folks) and make it a weekly habit to shop for fresh, locally grown produce. They also have a chance to interact and socialize with other people. I see the retired and elderly really enjoy that immensely along with the vegetables and fresh breads that they purchase.

Economic Challenges:

- 1. High property taxes-they have almost tripled in 15 years.**
- 2. High workman’s comp wages and payroll taxes-they are so high that many farmers cannot have seasonal employees or illegally pay them “under the table”.**
- 3. High fuel costs-Our heating oil, propane and fuel costs have doubled.**
- 4. Fees we pay-we pay a certified organic renewal fee yearly, whereas conventional growers do not have a yearly renewal fee or inspection and can use whatever legal**

chemicals and growth inhibitors are available. For example there is the ever-popular Atrazine (a weed inhibitor for corn) commonly used in corn production, which has been known to contaminate the water in wells and streams. An abutting farmer was using it and it goes down stream into our farm. It pollutes wells, streams and rivers. Do I pollute their soil and water? No!

How you can help organic growers:

1. The paperwork to apply and renew is astounding! We do get a reimbursement check for 75% of our costs but it should be taken right off the upfront costs! (In Germany organic farmers are paid-not have to pay to grow organically. The government saves money as the costs to clean up the environment and the pollution from soil, air and water is much worse from conventional farmers.)
2. Send us the marketing material for free as part of our fees such as the USDA organic logos and signage.
3. Stop patenting seeds and plants and allowing organic crops to be contaminated by wind from genetically engineered crops. Have all genetically engineering growers make public their usage and map all locations.
4. Help us with getting farmer grants. It is a full time project writing and submitting a grant only to have it refused. I have written two and realize the political arena in the grant giving process and the politics involved are not conducive to my getting one! I am not into red tape nor do I have high friends in the “agricultural offices”. I know a few people on a person level, my organic state inspector, and some of her co-workers in the agricultural office at the state level. We are working from sun-up to sun down now and have only time in the winter to do politicking and work other jobs as 80% of farmers, including myself have to have an off farm job to make ends meet. It is hard to find a temporary job in winter and explain how it has to end in spring and the employer has to find someone else. I’ve been doing it for 12 years.
5. Take global warming seriously and realize how hard it is to grow crops in this crazy weather with floods, temperature extremes and fire and windstorms. It is only going to get worse.

Sincerely,

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