

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

Honorable Members of the Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture,

I live in Missouri’s northeast corner of the state, a mile and a half overlooking the Mississippi River. Blue Heron Orchard is an organic orchard with 5 acres in apple trees of about 13 varieties. I also grow a market garden of mixed vegetables and fruits on 3 acres that I sell locally. I also have a state inspected processing kitchen that is also approved for creation of organic based food, most all of which is made from our own inputs. Products include: apple cider, apple cider vinegar, pure apple syrup (Pomona’s Ambrosia), apple butter, fire roasted peppers, dried apples and apples.

I have received two SARE (Sustainable Agricultural Resource Education) grants. The first was in 1995 for “Sustainable Plum Curculio Control in Apple Orchards”, and the most recent, 2007, “Site-Specific Apple Insect Control Through a Web-Based Application”. I have also received (now defunct) a Missouri Sustainable Agricultural Demonstration Award in 2002: “Fresh Apple Cold Storage with Sustainable Materials: Native Lumber and Straw Bales”.

I consider my farm a reservoir both for learning and a refuge that allows the kind of purity that is so often projected. The difference here is that this farm is open to the public... not just on a label. Our focus is education and sharing our experience through workshops, open houses, sales and presentations related to grant awards. I also contribute my time to John Wood Community College’s (Quincy, Illinois) Horticulture Committee.

Challenges continue to hamper the consumption of organic food in low economic or economically challenged communities. The lure of ‘cheap’ or processed food, non-local in origin, is often detrimental to the consumption of high quality fare and discourages the expansion farmers wanting or willing to grow. Also, the overall health of the community is compromised.

A major aspect of food awareness needs to be made in our schools. Junk food in schools, soft drink machines, children arriving in school without a decent breakfast, and the low quality of school lunches will hardly serve what will become ‘our future’. Here is where our success needs to be found, as farmers and as a society.

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