



Newsletter of the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service: A project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)

We're Back and We're Glad!

Thanks to the support of all the farmers, ranchers, and others who appreciate our services, NCAT's ATTRA project was funded for fiscal year 2008. After a year with significantly cut budgets and programs, we are once more working to provide the services our ATTRA clients want and need.

We have called our staff back from lay-off. Our phone lines are once again open 12 hours on weekdays so you can talk to one of our agricultural specialists. We are taking new research cases and writing new publications with up-to-date, cutting-edge information on sustainable agriculture. Our website is again dynamic and

packed with information. Look for new and exciting publications, partnerships, and trainings.

Many thanks to ATTRA's supporters, who encouraged our efforts to continue our work. Thank you for your donations and your kind words. The money you sent allowed us to keep the website up and running over the past year, the phones answered a few hours each day, and made it possible for us to write and send the Weekly Harvest throughout the year. Thank you very much for your help!

In this issue we feature a round-up of ATTRA services to highlight what's new and to remind everyone what we have to offer. All our publications are available free online or by calling 800-346-9140. Our specialists can be reached at that number 7a.m. to 7p.m. CST.

ATTRA Celebrates 21 Years of Work for Sustainable Agriculture!

Things have changed a great deal since 1987 when NCAT first started answering farmers' questions about sustainable agriculture. At that point it was difficult for farmers to learn about alternative production techniques. Extension agents offered help with conventional methods, but farmers and ranchers who wanted

to try a different direction were pretty much on their own.

Environmental concerns were beginning to be felt at that point, but "organic" was still a foreign word to most farmers and extension agents. They generally scoffed at those who wanted to eliminate pesticides and herbicides. Most people

thought it was impossible to farm without agricultural chemicals.

NCAT took a new approach, highlighting the successes of innovative farmers. We counted on the fact that when agricultural producers hear about a good new system from a fellow farmer, they are inspired to try it out.

Specialists Recall ATTRA's Early Days

*Janet Bachmann, NCAT Agriculture Program Specialist
Fayetteville, Arkansas*

NCAT started ATTRA in 1987 with a few technical specialists who came to Memphis, Tennessee from all parts of the U.S. — California, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Minnesota, Iowa.

I think we were successful in gaining respect from farmers across the country because they respected the information we got from other farmers. We took the "gray" literature, the anecdotes, and the research-based information from around the U.S. and the world, and put it together in ways that we thought could help people create more sustainable farms.



Our publications grew from questions posed by callers. After a dozen or so calls asking for organic strawberry production

information, for instance, a program specialist would create a "standard response." These were later edited and formatted to become a publication.

*Lance Gegner, Animal Welfare
Institute, Minnesota*

I began work the first day that NCAT's ATTRA project started, on June 1, 1987, at the Agricenter International in Memphis, Tennessee. Initially the staff had no library, only their own books and files. But since the specialists all had experience in different fields, there was always someone with the expertise to answer callers' questions. I always loved to work directly with farmers. I enjoyed working for NCAT and I hope I helped some farmers over the years.



Gegner now travels extensively and reports with pride that 90 percent of the farmers he meets at conferences know about the ATTRA project.

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ATTRA Helps You Sort Out the Farm Energy Puzzle

The energy crisis of the 1970s was a driving force behind the formation of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT). Now high energy prices are big news again and the ATTRA project is helping farmers and ranchers save valuable energy resources.

Our website features a Farm Energy section with a large number of publications and links, www.attra.ncat.org/energy.php. You will also find an online "Farm Energy Search Tool" for locating energy-related equipment, funding, and technical assistance in your state.

NCAT is helping farmers learn about alternative fuels and energy conservation through workshops across the United States. In February NCAT Specialist Mike Morris co-chaired the Forum on Energy Efficiency in Agriculture, held this year in Iowa. The conference emphasized that increased farm energy production must be accompanied by improved efficiency in our food system and throughout our economy.

Here are ATTRA's latest publications on energy conservation and renewable energy. For a complete list of our farm energy publications, see www.attra.ncat.org/farm_energy/farm_pubs.html.

- **Biodiesel Production for On-Farm Use: A Curriculum for Agricultural Producers**
www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/summaries/biodiesel_on_farm.html
- **Biodiesel Use, Handling, and Fuel Quality**
- **Clean Energy Farming: Cutting Costs, Improving Efficiencies, Harnessing Renewables**
- **Conserving Fuel on the Farm**
- **Food Miles: Background and Marketing**
- **Locally Owned Renewable Energy Facilities**
- **Small-Scale Wind Energy on the Farm**

New from ATTRA about Livestock

- **Poultry House Management for Alternative Production**
- **Ruminant Nutrition for Graziers**
- **Tools for Managing Internal Parasites in Small Ruminants: Copper Wire Particles**
- **Tools for Managing Internal Parasites in Small Ruminants: Sericea Lespedeza**

NCAT's Fayetteville, Arkansas office leads the way for ATTRA's small livestock publications. NCAT program specialists Margo Hale, Linda Coffey, and program manager Teresa Maurer all work with sheep and goats. Hale raises Boer-cross meat goats. Coffey keeps Alpine dairy goats as well as Suffolk and Gulf Coast Native wool sheep. Maurer and her husband Jim Morgan breed Katahdin hair sheep – which do not require shearing and are raised for meat – and are active in Katahdin Hair Sheep International.

Coffey and Hale are currently producing an Illustrated Guide to Sheep and Goat Production. This new-style ATTRA publication will feature clear line drawings. Over the past year, the two specialists worked with the Southern Consortium for Small Ruminant Parasite Control to produce two publications, listed above.

Specialist Anne Fanatico is a poultry expert who often works with alternative and pastured systems. She manages ATTRA's Sustainable Poultry web page (www.sustainablepoultry.ncat.org) which offers publications, video clips, and other resources for all aspects of poultry production. A new feature on the website is a poster about mobile poultry processing.

Not all ATTRA's livestock publications come from the Arkansas staff, however. NCAT Program Specialist Lee Rinehart, field director for NCAT's new Northeast office in Pennsylvania, recently developed a publication on grazing animal nutrition.



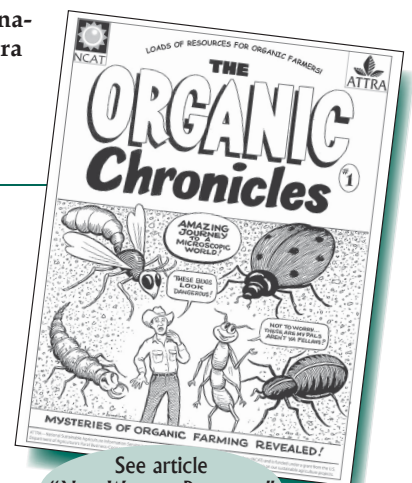
New from ATTRA in Spanish

Over the past year we produced several more titles in Spanish.

- **Fresas: Producción Orgánica**
[Strawberries: Organic Production]
- **El Manejo de Gallineros para la Producción Alternativa**
[Poultry House Management for Alternative Production]
- **El Manejo Sostenible de Suelos**
[Sustainable Soil Management]
- **Nuevos Mercados para Su Cosecha** [New Markets for Your Crops, available in English fall '08]
- **Sistemas Avícolas Alternativos con Acceso a Pastura**
[Alternative Poultry Production Systems and Outdoor Access]

New from ATTRA about Organic Production

- **Organic Chronicles**
- **Garlic: Organic Production**
- **Organic System Plan Templates for Certifiers**



See article
"New Ways to Present..."
on page 3.

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Montana Food Corps Brings Local Food to State Students

Over the past year Montana schools and colleges got a welcome boost from a group of young, energetic Americorps volunteers. The VISTAs (Volunteers in Service to America) are working with the Grow Montana coalition to bring fresh, locally produced food to the state's students.

Known as the Food Corps, the program enhances the strength of Montana's farm economy as well the health of its young people. By the end of the 2008 school year, the volunteers will have helped return over \$1 million to Montana's farmers and ranchers through farm-to-cafeteria projects at Montana State University, Salish Kootenai College, two University of Montana campuses, and the Missoula County public schools.

Food Corps is the result of a partnership between the Grow Montana coalition and these educational institutions. Grow Montana promotes Montana-owned food production and distribution as a sustainable economic development strategy. NCAT is a founding member of the coalition and administers the Food Corps program.

Keeping Montana Food Dollars in Montana

Montana's public institutions spend nearly \$33 million annually on food. The Food Corps volunteers' job is to help steer



A truckload of cantaloupes heads for the Farm-to-Cafeteria program. Photo courtesy of UM Dining Services.

more of these food dollars to Montana farmers and ranchers and local communities. Food Corps volunteers reach out to community groups, officials, restaurateurs, and food producers to create support for farm-to-cafeteria programs and the local food movement.

Food Corps volunteer Erin Foster West has been working since August with Missoula County public schools. She has helped them spend more than \$12,000 on local food and nearly \$150,000 on dairy. Erin works closely with teachers from 10 schools to provide nutrition and local food education through

taste tests, cooking projects, and field trips.

Erin has also worked with nearby Alberton school district, helping coordinate a Farm-to-School Day featuring local potatoes, beef, onions, apples, and pumpkins. Erin has so many ideas for growing the program that she is considering a second year as a Food Corps volunteer.



Food Corps Volunteers from left to right: Patrick Murphy, Kevin Moore, Sarah Kester, Tessa Roberts, Erin Foster West. Photo courtesy of Sarah Kester

University of Montana Dining Services

The farm-to-cafeteria initiatives at the University of Montana-Missoula started in 2003. Now Food Corps volunteer Sarah Kester is helping the university dining services reach their goal of spending 20 percent of their budget on farm-to-cafeteria items. Sarah launched a staff newsletter to promote local products and seasonal produce. She is experimenting with social networking websites such as MySpace and Facebook to increase student awareness and commitment to local foods.

Since his 2006 arrival at the University of Montana-Western in Dillon, Food Corps member Kevin Moore has doubled the percentage of local food purchased there. Kevin has taken a strong leadership role with this year's new team and serves as liaison between the Grow Montana steering committee and the Food Corps.

Cheri McCarthy, who heads UM-Western's food service, points out that "Dillon is cattle country. Even some of my kitchen staff are ranchers. It just makes sense for us to serve Montana beef." Chancellor Dick Storey said, "The farm-to-college program is crucial to the university and our state and local economies."

Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer awarded an EcoStar to NCAT's Grow Montana Food Corps in 2007 for good environmental performance. To learn more about the Food Corps, contact NCAT Program Specialist Nancy Matheson at 406-227-0389 or visit www.growmontana.ncat.org.

New Ways to Present ATTRA's Agricultural Information

Because we want our materials to be accessible to everyone who needs them, NCAT is creating a series of pictorial narratives. The newest of these brief, illustration-rich publications explains why farmers might want to convert to organic production. *Organic Chronicles No. 1: Mysteries of Organic Farming Revealed* is available in English and Spanish on the website and by request on the ATTRA tollfree line: 1-800-346-9140.

With funding from the USDA Risk Management Agency, we are currently working on an illustrated story about

land tenure arrangements. Created in collaboration with California Farm Link, the publication shows the pros and cons of various ways to structure leases.

The next in this illustrated series will focus on sheep and goat husbandry. We are also planning issues on pest management and crop production. The entire series will be available in English and Spanish, with some translated into Hmong.

Last year ATTRA published *Nuevos Mercados para Su Cosecha* (New Markets for Your Crops). This new-style illustrated

publication looks at marketing farm products to local institutions like schools and hospitals. We will translate it into English this year. For more information about the illustrated series, contact NCAT Program Specialist Rex Dufour, 530-792-7338, rexid@ncat.org.

- **The Organic Chronicles No. 1: Mysteries of Organic Farming Revealed**
- **Las Crónicas Orgánicas No. 1: No Tenga Pánico Vuélvase Orgánico**
- **Nuevos Mercados para Su Cosecha**



Unique Online Search Tools on NCAT's ATTRA Website

ATTRA's Ecological Pest Management Database

www.attra.ncat.org/index.html

This online resource identifies least-toxic pest management products and methods for insect and vertebrate pests, weeds, and plant diseases. It focuses on "bio-rational" pesticides – formulations with little or no long-lasting environmental impact – noting which have been reviewed by Organic Materials Review Institute.

ATTRA's Farm Energy Pages

www.attra.ncat.org/energy.php

The publications, success stories, and links within these pages explain how to make buildings more energy efficient, use the sun's energy to heat greenhouses and pump water, choose and put up wind turbines, make and use biofuels, and more.

ATTRA's Organic Livestock Feed Suppliers List

www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/livestock/feed_srch.php

This resource list helps organic livestock producers locate sources of organic formulated feed rations or feed ingredients. Search by state or product.

ATTRA's Organic Seed Suppliers Search

www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/altseed_search.php

This database provides sources for organic seed of agronomic and horticultural



crops. Some national, mail-order suppliers of untreated seed are included, with the emphasis on small alternative seed companies offering open-pollinated vegetable, flower, and herb seed.

ATTRA's Sustainable Agriculture Organizations and Publications List

www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/susagorg.php

This state-by-state list of sustainable agriculture grassroots groups, nonprofits, and agencies is updated annually. Includes contacts for a broadly defined sustainable agriculture community.

ATTRA's Sustainable Farming Internships & Apprenticeships Directory

www.attrainternships.ncat.org

This directory of on-the-job learning opportunities in sustainable and organic agriculture in the U.S. (and some in Canada) has been published by ATTRA since 1989 as a tool to connect farmers and apprentices.

ATTRA's Sustainable Poultry Website

www.sustainablepoultry.ncat.org

Looking for information about alternative production systems and uncommon breeds of poultry? This website offers publications and links about poultry genetics, feeding, processing, marketing, health, and welfare.

ATTRA's AgWeb: The Ultimate Agricultural Research Directory

www.attra.ncat.org/searchAgWeb.html

Whatever information you are looking for can be found somewhere in these links to agricultural research libraries and resources.



ATTRAnews

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May-June 2008 • www.attra.ncat.org

ATTRAnews is the newsletter of the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service. The newsletter is distributed free throughout the United States to farmers, ranchers, Cooperative Extension agents, educators, and others interested in sustainable agriculture. ATTRA is funded through the USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service and is a project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), a private, nonprofit organization that since 1976 has helped people by championing small-scale, local, and sustainable solutions to reduce poverty, promote healthy communities, and protect natural resources.



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