



ATTRAnews

Quarterly Newsletter of Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas
A program of the National Center for Appropriate Technology

Volume 8, Number 1



Fall/Winter, 1999-2000

Two most prominent 'Jills' of U.S. agriculture visit ATTRA

Jill Long Thompson, U.S. Department of Agriculture Undersecretary for Rural Development, and Jill Shore Auburn, National Program Leader for the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program, had the opportunity recently to visit ATTRA offices and meet the staff.

The two well-known "Jills" of American ag were guest speakers last fall in the Contemporary Agricultural Policy Lecture Series at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

Women in agriculture

Speaking last Nov. 18 at the lecture series on the topic of women in agriculture, Thompson said, "The commitment to agriculture in the Clinton administration is part of a larger commitment to include opportunities for women nationwide."

Thompson explained that, in order to increase opportunities for women in agriculture, USDA must work to strengthen the agricultural industry as a whole.

"As we look to the next generation of policies, I think we need to find a way to bring the producer in balance with the buyer," Thompson said. To achieve that goal, she said, she would like to see departmental policy struc-



◆◆◆
Jill Long Thompson (right) and Jill Shore Auburn (above, second from left) dropped by ATTRA offices before speaking at the annual Contemporary Agricultural Policy Lecture Series at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.



◆◆◆
tured so that cooperatives are encouraged to grow and compete in the processing side of the agricultural industry. Cooperatives, she explained, are essentially locally controlled groups of farmers that enter into a partnership with the federal government.

Auburn in her lecture series talk, "A

New Look at Sustainable Agriculture," noted that consumer concern for healthier food is growing, but that the national emphasis is still on "cheap food."

"What people eat and how that crop is grown are becoming increasingly discussed in the marketplace today," she said.

Consumer breakdowns

She said the Hartmann Report, issued in 1996, showed that seven percent of consumers are "true naturals" who seek information on how their food was produced; 23 percent are "new green mainstreamers" who are somewhat knowledgeable about and would choose ecologically superior food products; about 10 percent of

the population are the "young recyclers" who are more concerned with food packaging than content; about 12 percent are "affluent healers" who are concerned with food safety issues; and the remaining 48 percent of Americans say they are too busy or overwhelmed by the choices to care how their food is grown.

National Campaign for Sustainable Ag rallies for FY2001 funding: *Federal budgets are being drafted*

The National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture (NCSA) is encouraging supporters of U.S. sustainable farming to become involved in this year's federal funding effort for ten programs that serve the public.

Index

- Pastured Poultry debuts // page 2**
- New ATTRA staffers out West! // page 2**
- Virtual visitors through website // page 2**
- RBS forms rural alliances // page 3**
- New & revised ATTRA pubs // page 4**

President Clinton's version of the FY2001 budget has proposed funding increases for these programs. House

and Senate versions of the budget will be submitted this spring. Budget mark-ups and final conferencing by the House and Senate will occur this summer.

See FY2001 budget chart on page 4

People wishing to become involved in the sustainable agriculture federal budget

process are asked to contact NCSA headquarters at: P.O. Box 396, Pine Bush, NY 12566, phone: 914-744-8448, fax: 914-744-8477, email: campaign@magiccarpet.com, website: www.sustainableagriculture.net. People can join NCSA's Action Alert Network by emailing a name, address, phone, fax, and email address to campaign headquarters.



Pastured Poultry booklet tops ATTRA's "hot requests" list // *Publication tracks experiences of 35 Southern farm families*

People ranging from market gardeners with a few acres to farm families with hundreds of acres in production have been dialing ATTRA the past several weeks to obtain a copy of the new *Pastured Poultry* booklet by technical specialist Anne Fanatico.

Publicity about the booklet in a host of farm newspapers, magazines and newsletters has helped to spur the 40-page booklet to the top of ATTRA's most requested publications list. The booklets were made available through ATTRA as a product from a grant led by Heifer Project International (HPI) and funded by the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. They are free for people involved in U.S. commercial agriculture.

HPI/NCAT project

Pastured Poultry describes the experiences of 35 Southern farm families who from 1996-99 participated in a project to produce and market pastured poultry. The project with a long name, "Integration of Pastured Poultry Production Into The Farming Systems of Limited Resource Farmers," was conducted by HPI and the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), which manages ATTRA.

"Features of pastured poultry include keeping the chickens in field pens that are moved daily to fresh

pasture and feeding non-medicated feed," Fanatico explains. "Farmers capture profits by adding value

Farm families employed the proven methods of Virginia farmer Joel Salatin, who is noted by many to be the top authority on the subject.

through on-farm slaughter and direct marketing to local customers."

The booklet is chock full of information useful to farmers considering pastured

poultry as an enterprise. Included are firsthand accounts of participating farmers and data on the intricacies of pen-building, brooding, feeding, processing, marketing, legal matters, economics, and a host of other topics.

Over the course of the project, HPI and other project cooperators provided about 40 hands-on training sessions throughout the South. Several landgrant universities (Southern, Kentucky State, South Carolina State, Florida A&M, and Fort Valley State) were involved through demonstration sites or Extension agents who helped provide technical support to pastured poultry producers in their areas.

(See *Pastured Poultry* page 4)

300,000 "virtual" visitors seek ATTRA information

An average of 500 to 800 people visit ATTRA each day, at a rate approaching 300,000 people per year, to obtain upwards of 5,500 publications per visit on a gamut of sustainable farming topics. One would think that with all that coming and going, the carpets in our hallways would be worn threadbare. However, ATTRA staffers heard nary a peep from all those "virtual" visitors who have been downloading informational materials from the ATTRA website.

At the website, visitors will find more than 100 of ATTRA's informational materials, an archive of our quarterly newsletters, explanations of sustainable agriculture systems and links to other sustainable farming websites and information resources.

A new search engine allows visitors to quickly and easily locate specific bits of information from all the materials featured there.

Another new feature is a listing of prominent agriculture databases, directories, library catalogs, and search engines on the Internet.

The ATTRA website address is: www.attra.org.



Staffers attend & present at 2nd Small Farm Conference

Twelve ATTRA staff members traveled by caravan to the 2nd National Small Farm Conference last Oct. 12-15 at the Regal Riverfront Hotel in St. Louis. Several staffers presented workshops at the conference.

Sponsored by the USDA, the conference provided an opportunity for people in the public and private sectors, land-grant institutions and small and medium sized farmers to strengthen collaboration and partnerships to work more effectively with the small farm community.

Opening remarks by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman ushered in three days of open forum discussions, networking sessions and workshops on topics ranging from marketing strategies and value added enterprises to business and entrepreneurial skills and farmer-to-farmer networks.

For more information about the conference, visit the website: www.luce.lincolnu.edu/nsfc/.

ATTRA to better serve farmers, ranchers in Western U.S. with two new staffers

ATTRA through its parent organization, the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), is making a concerted effort to better serve farmers and gather sustainable agriculture information in the western U.S.

Two new staff members for the ATTRA program, Al Kurki and Nancy Matheson, will be working from NCAT offices at Butte, MT, and Fayetteville, AR. They will work to expand ATTRA's regionally relevant information about sustainable production and marketing practices; conduct extensive outreach to producer groups, ag professionals and tribes; and identify policies that both hinder and help farmers and ranchers moving toward sustainability.

Matheson & Kurki

Matheson is a farmer and Montana native who for 11 years was sustainable agriculture program manager for the Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO), a Montana-based non-profit. She also served as agriculture aide to Montana's governor (Ted Schwinden) in the mid-1980's.

Kurki has worked on community development and sustainable agriculture issues for 16 years in Montana. He was agriculture staff and executive director of AERO from 1984 to 1993.

Readers may contact Matheson by email at nmatheson@mcn.net or Kurki at akurki@mcn.net, or by dialing ATTRA at 1-800-346-9140.



Torgerson, Haskell speak to farmers about 'new generation' co-ops

ATTRA staff members took advantage of a visit by Randall Torgerson and Jim Haskell of the USDA Rural Business - Cooperative Service (RBS) in Washington, D.C., to host a meeting on Jan. 26 with Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma ranchers on "new generation" farmer cooperatives. The cattle and sheep producers are participants in a series of sustainable livestock and forage projects coordinated by ATTRA and are exploring the formation of a marketing co-op. The meeting was held near ATTRA offices at the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.



Jim Haskell chats with Ozark rancher.

RBS webpage is a great information resource

Readers wanting to learn more about the host of USDA Rural Business - Cooperative Service programs, resources and initiatives can visit the RBS homepage on the World Wide Web. At the website, visitors can download a variety of RBS research, cooperatives information and service reports dealing with many facets of USDA Rural Development and farm cooperatives. Also featured is an archive of the very resourceful bi-monthly *Rural Cooperatives Magazine*, which is loaded with the latest news about events and public policy surrounding the modern cooperative movement and descriptive stories about U.S. farmers and rural communities involved with the creation and operation of cooperatives. See it all at: www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/index.html.

RBS mission

Torgerson is deputy administrator and Haskell is assistant deputy administrator at RBS, which funds ATTRA. RBS provides technical assistance for groups of farmers and cooperatives to establish strategic alliances and partnerships that leverage public, private and cooperative resources to create jobs and stimulate rural economic activity. One of the mission goals of RBS is to promote understanding and use of the cooperative form of business as a viable organizational option for marketing and distributing agricultural products.

Value-added cooperatives

"New generation" farmer co-ops, the two RBS officials explained, "are not your father's cooperative." These modern co-ops mirror current changes in the food manufacturing and distribution system as it adjusts to a rapidly

changing global economy and the biotechnological and information-technology revolutions.

Farmer interest in cooperatives has been greatly spurred by the reduction in federal price supports that for 60 years have provided economic "safety nets" for farmers. In these changing times, farmers are being forced to take on greater responsibility for marketing their crops and livestock. Many new generation co-ops are value-added operations that enable farmers to better market and receive more money for their commodities.

Global shift

In the global economy that has produced some new rules for doing business, Torgerson and Haskell said traditional geographic boundaries formerly associated with states, regions and nations no longer apply with the same intensity. People in this new economic paradigm — including farmers — are also subjected to the combined pressure of specialization and economies of scope.

Taking all of the above into account, new generation co-ops address the critical need for greater control over quality and defined product characteristics that lead to vertical coordination of production and distribution.

Ozark co-op plans

Torgerson and Haskell suggested that the Ozark ranchers establish a steering committee to determine mutual interests and needs of group members. A facilitator will be needed, one who is a disinterested person willing and able to spur things along.

They said formation and implementation of a cooperative can occur quickly if the co-op is to be used mainly for such goals as getting group sales together, or it can take much longer to establish if such goals as direct marketing is the central focus.

Randall Torgerson: "Family farms or bio-factories"?

"Who will control agriculture in the next millennium?

Will it be farmers through their own organizational structure, in which cooperatives play a fundamental role? Or will it be IOFs (investor-owned firms) attracted to the food industry by increased food demand from a rapidly expanding world population?"



Torgerson speaks at Fayetteville meeting.

The outcome of answers to these questions will determine whether a farm-family, dispersed-ownership agriculture is retained in this country, or whether control of the food system becomes concentrated in a few off-farm firms attempting to manage 'bio-factories,' where producers often become piece-wage contract purveyors of their production services."



