

Organic Dairy Co-op

(Continued from Page A1)

and string Italian cheeses; cream and Neufchatel cheeses; and Feta cheese.

It also markets organic brown eggs, apples and apple cider seasonally, and vegetables.

It promotes the fact that it uses non-homogenized organic milk and microbial enzymes instead of rennet, and salt without flowing agents.

What this follows are dietary beliefs that may or may not be supported by scientific research, but in general hold that the human body and its digestive system was not made to be sustained on a food chemistry that includes man-made chemicals or advanced processing technology.

Non-homogenized milk is regarded as more healthy by some who follow these dietary beliefs, because it is argued that the homogenization process alters the size of fat and protein molecules or globules suspended in milk, and that the human system is designed to digest milk in its natural state, even though non-homogenized milk may separate and not be as constant in texture.

In general, organic farming fol-

lows a no-man-made chemistry regime.

However, the term "organic" is currently undefined for most regulatory applications. Thus there are a number of differing definitions and "organic" practices.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture was to have created a working definition this past year and a certification process, but because of the different independently started "organic" organizations making up their own versions of a definition, the desire to be established as first in a new market, and the delays that are implied in transitioning a farm from current commercial practices to "organic" practices, that definition is now expected sometime in coming months.

In the meantime, while most states are awaiting a federal definition (so that interstate commerce won't be a problem for instate producers), some states, such as California, have created their own standards.

Other than states, producer organizations and even individual farm-markets have developed their own standards for production of crop to which the label, "organic" is applied.

The CROPP cooperative is one which adopted its own standards, but since its standards are more strict, they are also approved under the standards of the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA).

Steve Fiscus, of Flinstone, Maryland, is working on behalf of CROPP, sort of as an advance-man.

His job is to seek out producers in the Mid-Atlantic region who may be willing to adopt the cooperative's organic standards in producing milk, become a member of the cooperative, and then be included on hauling routes to deliver the organic milk to an appropriate processor.

Currently, he's seeking producers interested in working in this niche.

The niche is real, but its strength as a market uncertain.

CROPP started in the Midwest, where dairy production had been leading the nation until California production skyrocketed.

However, as more urbanites and rural people have become skeptical of modern agricultural production practices, the "organic" name has become more and more accepted by mainstream consumers. These primarily niche consumers will pay a premium.

According to Fiscus, he fully expects that OCIA standards will be within the standards adopted by the USDA and the majority of states.

In working to line-up potential producers to supply the minimum 40,000 pounds milk per day production that has been projected as needed to establish a dependable organic market, Fiscus has been holding meetings to talk to producers about the cooperative and the successes it has found in the Midwest and more recently in Washington state.

According to some literature distributed by Fiscus, "CROPP Cooperative is presently considering organizing a regional pool in your area. We are seeking producers who are interested in joining our cooperative as member/producer/owner. We need to find a minimum of 300-400 cows who (sic) qualify to start a new pool of organic dairy production. We also are considering regional egg pools, as we have an organic egg program in our cooperative."

Though restrictions to observe in producing milk for CROPP are more specific, there are 11 basic qualifications a new member would need to join:

- The bulk tank should hold five milkings in flush, with a minimum

storage capacity of four milkings required.

- The operation has to be certified organic by an approved certification agent.

- Membership in CROPP and abiding by membership requirements is required.

- Membership with the cooperating milk handler and abiding by its requirements is necessary.

- Average somatic cell counts for the year have to average less than 400,000.

- The product has to be Grade A, IMS milk with the farmer having a history of producing good quality milk.

- There is an equity requirement that is equal to \$11 per hundred-weight of average monthly hundredweight production.

- The producer must be willing to not use antibiotics and hormones.

- Must be willing to accept that the CROPP dairy pool policy is that, in extreme cases of oversupply, the last producer joined would be the first dropped.

- A Bang's vaccination, or a blood test proof, is required.

The requirements also extend to feeds. The cows have to eat certified organically raised forages and grains for at least a year prior to the

(Turn to Page A31)

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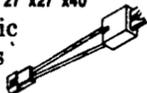


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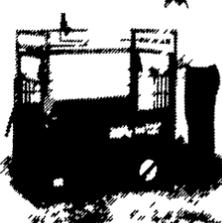


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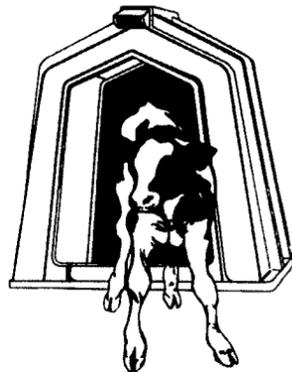
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