

Defender

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FAMILY FARM DEFENDERS

SUMMER 2026

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FAMILY FARM DEFENDERS

MISSION

Our mission is to build a broad grassroots movement to establish a fair, just and resilient agricultural system rooted in food sovereignty, agroecology, peace and international solidarity.

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Letter from the FFD President

Patti Naylor, organic grain/fruit farmer, Churdan, IA

In this Summer 2026 issue of *The Defender*, we remember the Farmer-to-Farmer Solidarity actions after Hurricane Katrina twenty years ago. The generosity of FFD members and friends who donated tractors and equipment, money, and time was truly amazing. The need was great, and FFD members responded with unwavering solidarity.

I am reminded of another time of intense and sustained solidarity. Ten years ago, in 2016, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe took a strong stance against the Dakota Access Pipeline. They set up Oceti Sakowin Camp on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota. Along with friends from Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, I traveled to the camp in October where, for a few days, I joined the Lakota and Dakota tribe members and Indigenous Peoples and allies from around the world as peaceful water protectors. Many Family Farm Defenders members also went to Standing Rock and many others donated to the cause. (See a more detailed report by John Peck in the online *Defender* archives in the Winter 2017 issue: <https://familyfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Winter2017pg4pg5.pdf>)



One line of unarmed peaceful water protectors facing a line of heavily armed law enforcement and private security personnel on a North Dakota ridge.

Photo by Patti Naylor

Acts of solidarity are also lessons. For those involved in Project Tractor, building relationships with farmers in Mississippi was paramount. At Standing Rock ND, lessons in resistance, mutual aid, and the injustices of colonialism from Native Americans who have 500 years of experience was invaluable.

Today, we are facing many challenges: data centers, mega-dairies, and the shredding of our country's constitution, to name a few. Building relationships within and between our communities, recognizing the struggles throughout history, learning peaceful resistance strategies, and maintaining hope will be necessary to create a better world for all.

In peace and solidarity.

Patti Naylor, FFD president

Family Farm Defenders Marking NFFC's 40th Anniversary

By Lisa Griffith, longtime FFD member and board secretary from Belleville, IL

This July, Family Farm Defenders will be among the roughly thirty grassroots organizations heading to St. Louis to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the National Family Farm Coalition's founding. FFD joined the Coalition soon after meeting NFFC members and staff protesting market globalization during the World Trade Organization's Ministerial Conference of 1999. Since that time, FFD has engaged in the Coalition's fight against the corporate domination of food, agriculture and trade policies by striving to restore fair prices for milk and other commodities, protect biodiversity and defend workers' and civil rights.

Dozens of FFD leaders, starting with founder John Kinsman, have represented Family Farm Defenders on NFFC's policy committees, board of directors and delegations to La Via Campesina gatherings worldwide. President Patti Naylor was the North American focal point to the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security; Jim Goodman has served as NFFC board president for eight years.

Longtime director John Peck, former president Joel Greeno, Rebecca Goodman, Amy Mall, Marlene Rojas Lara, Anthony Pahnke, Tyler Short, as well as Ben Burkett and George Naylor – two former NFFC board presidents – are among the farmers and their allies who have voiced the demand for food sovereignty. Randy Jasper, Sarah Lloyd, Paul Rozwadowski, Brenda Cochran, plus Tina and Gerald Carlin were instrumental in shaping NFFC dairy policy, including NFFC's Milk from Family Dairy Farmers Act. Ruth Simpson organized NFFC's 2002 annual meeting in Wisconsin complete with a Cedar Grove Cheese tour and international farmer guests, while John Peck arranged a public forum when NFFC visited Madison on their 2018 cross-country tour.

Perhaps most important are the bonds that grow between NFFC members, demonstrated in the united opposition to corporate-friendly international free trade agreements, land grabs and herbicide-resistant GMOs.

In 2006, Family Farm Defenders delivered five tractors to Petal, Mississippi, after Hurricane Katrina wiped out farms and fortunes of hundreds of Black farmers in Mississippi and Louisiana.



Darnella Burkett Winston, a student at the time, recalls that the tractor delivery embodied a dream come true, representing a movement within a movement based on trust, communication and cooperation. Her organization, the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, offers a prayer for the farmers who delivered the tractors at their annual meetings, and she remains inspired by the trust and commitment they showed.

Trust, solidarity and sharing are integral to the just, equitable and sustainable society that Family Farm Defenders and other NFFC members seek. Hopefully, the dedicated advocacy of these organizations will survive – and thrive – for at least forty more years to help farmers and fisherfolk, rural and urban communities achieve this objective.

To learn more about the Coalition and its history, visit <https://nffc.net/>.

For Native Tribes it's Déjà Vu All Over Again

By Jim Goodman, FFD board member and retired organic dairy farmer, Wonewoc, WI

When the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held confirmation hearings for current Department of Interior head Doug Burgum, he made it quite clear that he viewed public lands, lands belonging to the American public, as an asset on “America’s balance sheet”. His implication was pretty clear, these public lands should be used to turn a profit. [Public lands](#) belong to all Americans and were set aside for their protection, not for profit. But, no surprise, Burgum fully supports exploitative industries like oil, gas and mining on public lands, so [whose balance sheet will benefit?](#) At an energy conference in Houston last year he noted, “If we’re going to drill, baby, drill, then we’ve got to be asked to also [mine, baby, mine.](#)”

So much for conservation and environmental protection of our public lands — but like most members of the current administration, using your office to extract profit wherever possible is acceptable and “smart” — protecting the public trust takes a back seat. In 2024 the President asked a gathering of oil and gas executives at his Florida estate hosted by Burgum, to raise [\\$1 billion](#) for his campaign, for which in return, he would roll back environmental protections requested by the oil industry. In his thinking, that’s smart, a win win, personal profit for the president and windfall profits for energy companies.



But Burgum also knows there is profit to be made above ground on the public lands that cover large stretches of the Great Plains. In

June, the Interior Department approved new grazing rules that revoke [tribal rights](#) to graze Bison on federal land in favor of cattle, i.e. “production-oriented livestock”.

In the early 1800’s upwards of 50 million Bison roamed the Great Plains, by 1900 fewer than 1,000 were left. An organized campaign of commercial

hunting, the government’s desire to subjugate the Native Tribes by exterminating their food supply and the perceived need to close the range for private cattle grazing nearly exterminated the American Bison.

Déjà vu.

Tribal efforts to expand the herd, in cooperation with former Interior Secretary Deb Haaland during the Biden Administration, prioritized efforts to manage the herd for traditional purposes of food, cultural heritage and [land conservation](#) — and public land overseen by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was part of that partnership.

While fees charged for cattle grazing on BLM land are claimed to benefit the US Treasury, these fees do not help Secretary Burgum’s “balance sheet” either. Permitted grazing on BLM land actually [costs taxpayers money](#), while it benefits a small number of mostly rich landowners. True, there are ranchers who use the privilege of grazing public lands responsibly, yet, there are others who [abuse the privilege](#), while the Administration turns a blind eye and continues to roll back environmental enforcement. Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy continued to [illegally graze](#) BLM land in Nevada for years after piling up fees and fines of over \$1 million.

Aside from money made by extractive industries, administration officials and ranchers, all at the expense of taxpayers and the environment, there are too few who question why the ongoing racism of the current administration is allowed to continue. While the outright slaughter of Native Tribes as seen in the 1800’s is no longer occurring, the government is clearly denying the Tribes the right to celebrate their culture, their heritage and their right to a decent life on land that was once theirs, land where millions of Bison grazed, animals that evolved with the native prairie and in effect managed it and put it to its highest use. Land that now, in addition to production-oriented livestock, is covered by millions of acres of corn and soy.

It is unlikely that cattle, corn and soy will ever be replaced by Bison herds on the Great Plains, because as the Coalition of Large Tribes ([COLT](#)), which

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Solidarity Not Charity — The Second Relief Trip of Family Farm Defenders to the Gulf Coast

By Camy Matthay, longtime FFD member near Brooklyn, WI (Reprinted from Spring 2006 Defender)

Over the weekend of March 30–April 1, I traveled south to Mississippi and Louisiana with other members of Family Farm Defenders, a national activist organization made up of farmers and consumers concerned with building a safe and sustainable food system. This was the second relief caravan sponsored by Family Farm Defenders to make the trip to the Gulf Coast. Shortly after the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, Family Farm Defenders had sent a biodiesel bus with seven volunteers and over 10,000 lbs. of food and medical supplies from their headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin to affected communities in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana.

HURRICANE DEVASTATED MISSISSIPPI

The destination of the second relief trip was Petal, Mississippi; there, five tractors were donated by Wisconsin farmers to the Indian Springs Farmers Co-op. Indian Springs is a member of the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, a coalition of independent farming cooperatives in 11 counties, many of whose members lost homes, equipment and crops to Hurricane Katrina. Donnie Pen-Travis, a Mississippi farmer whose family has been farming the same plot of land for five generations, said the tractors were sorely needed. In his community, seven farmers, growing crops such as collards, beans, various squashes and melons, had been sharing one tractor since last September. Darnella Burkett, another local farmer, who warmly embraced many of us upon arrival, told us that Family Farm Defender's support would help independent Mississippi farmers maintain economically viable and high quality operations. Randy Jasper, a farmer from Muscoda, WI spoke for all of us when he assured her that it was really satisfying to be acting in solidarity with small farmers in the South, who not only had the ill fortune of being in the path of a Category 4 hurricane, but who are struggling as small farmers do world-wide against the chronic manipulations of agribusiness and the destructive agendas of free trade policies.

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

That night Indian Spring families treated us to a dinner of locally produced food. We were offered barbecued goat (from Mr. Pen-Travis's farm), fried catfish, deep-fried chicken, beans, and steaming cornbread. Michael McNair marketer for the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, told us that at one time they had wanted to sell their produce to Kraft, but Kraft "wouldn't bother with us small timers." When Hurricane Katrina created food scarcity (or what I imagine Kraft would call "product scarcity") then Kraft was suddenly interested in their produce, but the cooperatives had already decided to give their produce to churches on the Gulf that were feeding the victims of Hurricane Katrina for free. This generosity, in turn, has created new direct markets for the coop.

ON TO NEW ORLEANS

From Shepelo, MS our group drove into New Orleans. Major wind damage to structures, trees, even entire tracts of downed Loblolly pines, was visible on both sides of the highway all the way into the city. It was hard to digest the fact that hundreds of square miles were so badly ravaged, and even harder to compute the \$1800 payment that a private contractor in Petal told us he was getting from FEMA per felled and cleared tree.

About an hour out of New Orleans, we passed huge lots filled with row after row of white vinyl-sided FEMA trailers – all empty, warping in the sun. The price tag on each trailer, including installation fees was \$70,000 – money that residents in New Orleans told us they wished to have had to rebuild their neighborhoods.

I will add that the word "residents," particularly when referring to severely affected neighborhoods, such as the Ninth Ward – which, significantly, is a historic Black neighborhood – is a gross misnomer. The few people who have returned to this area, where flooding from the industrial canal stained

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Why Continuing Caring: Thoughts From the Farmer's Daughter

By: Amy S. Mondloch, longtime FFD member

I'm a middle-aged city dweller who hasn't lived on a farm for more than just a few weeks at a time since leaving home for college in 1990, other than in a rental house that just happened to be on a farm that I wasn't involved in during the early 2000's. Yet, I continued to identify myself as a farmer's daughter. I continue to volunteer for Family Farm Defenders even though my current food growing experience is confined to pots on the balcony of my apartment. Why? Why continue to care? Many reasons.

Lake Mendota, the most studied lake in the world, is just a block from my apartment. Mendota is the headwaters of the Yahara chain of lakes which comprises Mendota, Monona, Wingra, Waubesa, and Kegonsa. 80–90% of the phosphorus entering this chain of lakes comes from agricultural run-off.



Amy Mondloch and Joel Greeno at May Day 2026 celebration in Madison

That phosphorus feeds algae growth in the lakes resulting in a massive expansion of blue-green algae that makes the lakes unswimmable for much of the summer in many areas because of high levels of toxicity.

Now, what is agriculture doing that is causing this? Well, let's start by correcting a piece here. Agriculture isn't the problem, agribusiness is. Agriculture is what I grew up with, those small family farms that often were generations old. As I see it, agriculture depends on an understanding of and connection to the land one farms. It depends

on farmers who understand that their actions have consequences that will impact them, their families, their communities, and future generations. They recognize that both the animals and the land they care for must be respected and cared for in thoughtful ways if those creatures and that place are to be able to sustain the farm and the farmer.

Agribusiness forces the farmer to let go of their knowledge of place and to ultimately deny their connections with the land and with the creatures there. Thus we've got acres upon acres of soybeans and corn, much of which is not meant for human consumption, being covered in pesticides. This makes it possible to build the massive dairy farms that we see today. We have roughly 5,115 dairy farms in Wisconsin as of January 2026. The average dairy farm in Wisconsin today has about 233 cows. Many of the large corporate farms have thousands of cows. The largest that I am aware of is milking 13,000. That means milking is happening all day long, a far cry from the folk tales of memory of the farmer milking in the morning and again in the evening.

This is a huge change from where we were back in 1950 with 143,000 dairy farms and over 2 million cows. Those were smaller farms spread out across the state with cattle more dependent on grazing rather than being confined. With cows spread out across the state manure was spread out and used as part of farming. Now, we have gigantic pits of poop, cattle eating far more grain than is meant for their ruminant systems to fatten them, and antibiotics being used to keep them from dying in confined conditions. That manure, the pesticides being used on those huge fields of grains, and those antibiotics are winding up somewhere. That somewhere is places like Lake Mendota, Monona, Wingra, Wabesa, Kegonsa, and the more than 15,000 other lakes in the state, as well as the rivers, streams and ground water. From there it winds up in us. I don't know about you, but the thought of manure, pesticides and the remnants of medications used on

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Mark June Dairy Month with Industry-Wide Reform

By Anthony Pahnke, vice president of Family Farm Defenders and an associate professor of international relations at San Francisco State University in San Francisco (Published by the Capital Times of Madison, WI, June 22, 2026)

Sometimes the truth stares you right in the face.

Case in point: In the middle of his [agricultural roundtable event](#) with farmers and Republican representatives held June 5 in Chippewa Falls, President Trump took a moment to reflect about a different meeting he once had with another group of producers. As the president remembered, he told the farmers, “I’m going to get you a subsidy.” To his surprise they responded that they didn’t want subsidies, but rather, “a level playing field.”

It would be easy to gloss over the truth in Trump’s recollection, especially as he rambled on about many things unrelated to farming, such as repairing monuments around Washington, D.C., his disdain for Democrats, and how the Southern border was closed to migrants. This, as NFL Hall of Famer Joe Thomas sat to Trump’s side and [drew gushing remarks from the president](#) about the retired player’s body.

[Unlike Thomas](#), most farmers cannot draw on millions to stay on the land. Instead, they can turn to the government to promote fair markets. As much could happen now, during June Dairy Month, as the Farm Bill works through Congress. Specifically, much needed relief could come by including policy changes into the ominous piece of legislation that would target corporate consolidation and address pricing problems in the dairy industry.

To be fair, discussion during Trump’s roundtable did include some dairy policies.

Secretary Brooke Rollins, for instance, alluded to trade deals that would increase exports. U.S. Rep. Derrick Van Orden, whose district the roundtable took place in and who appears in [danger of losing his seat](#) to the daughter of dairy farmers, Rebecca Cooke, touted the [Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act](#). The act restores whole and reduced fat (2%) milk options at schools.

The problem is that both initiatives don’t do much.

First, the evidence shows that increasing exports doesn’t keep people farming.

[Farm Bureau](#) data shows that, since 2016, total dairy export value has doubled from just over \$4 billion to over \$8 in 2024. But during this same

period, the number of licensed dairy herds has collapsed, [from over 40,000, to under 25,000](#).

Meanwhile, serving milk at school lunch does open markets. And nationwide, [since 2024](#), more people have been consuming milk after years of decline. But even amid rising demand, in 2025 Wisconsin saw a [700% increase in bankruptcies](#), particularly hitting dairy farmers.

Instead of such piecemeal fixes, the dairy industry needs industry-wide reform, as the farmers who spoke with Trump once said, “to level the playing field.”

The proposal that would advance such change is the [Milk from Family Dairies Act](#) (MFDA). Created by the National Family Farm Coalition and endorsed by [over 90 organizations](#), the act ensures farmers a decent price without driving up costs for consumers and relying on taxpayer-funded subsidies.

The principle behind the MFDA is supply management, similar to [the system in Canada](#). In this system, consumer supply demands are balanced with prices that farmers are paid for their milk in regular meetings of stakeholders. For farmers, receiving compensation for at least the cost of production is a big deal. That’s because, since 2021, even taking into consideration advantages of increasing herd size, dairy producers across the board have consistently had to [sell their milk at a loss](#) due to the rising price of feed, seed and fertilizer.

Consumers benefit as the MFDA makes investments in local dairy processors, increasing competition to drive down prices; it would also target corporate concentration in the industry with anti-trust enforcement to [curtail price gouging by large-scale retailers](#) at the grocery store. Currently, taxpayers pick up the tab for farmers who have financial troubles with subsidies, or direct payments, which Trump has [handed out repeatedly](#) across his administrations.

Unlike Joe Thomas, most farmers don’t have millions to keep them going. Instead, they have the government, which should ensure fair markets. So, to mark June Dairy month, our lawmakers should listen to farmers, level the playing field and include elements from the MFDA into the Farm Bill.

Sochan: A Cherokee Secret Hidden in Plain Sight

By Sierra Ross Richer

Life is never quite the same after learning a new edible wild plant. It's like meeting a new person in town—once I've been introduced, I seem to run into them everywhere, and my life changes—at least slightly—because they're in it.

This happened to me last week when I met sochan, a native plant I have, until recently, completely overlooked. It turns out I'm not the only one who has ignored this abundant, nutritious spring green; in fact, even most indigenous groups living within its range (which covers most of the Eastern and Midwestern US), didn't traditionally eat it, Samuel Thayer wrote in his foraging guide *Incredible Wild Edibles*.



After learning about sochan from a reel on Instagram, I had my first encounter with a member of *Rudbeckia laciniata* on a foraging walk with my partner Levi in our neighbor's woods. The plant, also known

as Cutleaf Coneflower (for its jagged leaves and tall stalks of yellow flowers later in the season), isn't hard to identify when you know what you're looking for. Its leaves, which are shaped like those of celery, are larger than most spring ephemerals—some reaching the size of my hand. Each plant has five to 15 leaves growing from the ground on ribbed, slightly purple stems.

As soon as I identified my first plant, I started spotting them all over the low, moist bottomland, vibrantly green among the nettles, violets, and buttercups. I picked a leaf from one plant and a leaf from another, and before long, my hand was filled with a lush bouquet. Sniffing the stems where I had broken them off, I smelled a mild mixture of celery and fennel. I couldn't wait to fry them up for lunch along with the ramps, American garlic, and Virginia waterleaf we'd already harvested.

When we returned home, I got right to work chopping up the greens, while Levi pulled out Sam

Thayer's guidebook to read more about the plant. Sochan, we learned, is something of a Cherokee secret (the name "sochan" comes from the Cherokee word for it: so-cha-ni). It's not that the Southeastern woodlands people purposefully kept the plant from their neighbors, but simply that over time, other people forgot about it.

While the Cherokee enjoy large quantities of the abundant, nutritious green every spring and summer (they produce a second flush of leaves after going to seed), most other indigenous people and whites alike look right over the plant—not because it's inedible but because we're not used to eating it.

MISSING THE FLAVORS

How often does this happen with edible wild foods? The answer is very often—especially in the USA today.

I was reminded of why on a recent climbing excursion to a county park, where I excitedly pointed out to my friends the wild edibles emerging from the thawing ground around us. While one friend nibbled enthusiastically on the ramps, Canadian wild ginger, Virginia waterleaf, cleaver, and nettles I offered her, another turned down my samples with the all-too-common response, "I'll wait an hour to see if it kills you first."

She probably didn't expect us to actually get poisoned, but I've encountered the underlying fear she voiced many times when introducing people to edible wild plants. Many living in the United States today avoid eating all wild plants because some wild plants are poisonous. What a loss! But I'm not surprised that's where our society is at.

It takes thousands of years for people groups to develop cultural knowledge about plants and their uses, and white people have only lived on this continent for a few centuries. To make things worse, since our ancestors arrived here, we haven't exactly prioritized learning about the native flora and fauna—and how to eat them.

There are multiple reasons for this. One is snob-bishness. European settlers brought their own crops, livestock, and food traditions with them to

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What To Eat Now: The Indispensable Guide to Good Food, How to Find It, and Why It Matters

by Marion Nestle • [North Point Press, 2025](#)

Reviewed by M Grace Grzanek, Executive Director of The Just Food Initiative of the Fox Valley, WI

If you miss the look of an old-fashioned fat encyclopedia on your book shelf, you can recover such nostalgia with Marion Nestle's new tome *What To Eat Now* an update on her similar title from 2006.

Seven hundred plus pages are the result of privately researching science, politics, and universities' MBA instruction for creating instant profits. Along with personal advice from this PhD molecular biologist, and MPH nutritionist, this book makes very accessible reading, especially for those among us who are not professionals or long-life food experts, simply mindful and conscious eaters who want to be healthy.

Her clear focus, though, is, as always, food POLITICS — why are we stuck with a food system that seeks personal profit for the few over community health for the many. Food corporations are expected, by their stockholders, to make a notable profit every 90 days or lose investors. So they use their supermarkets to play this game. We eaters are caught in the middle.

Whether we are growing our own food in the back yard or the back forty, there comes a time when we need coffee beans, a fresh pineapple, ripe olives, and other such delectables that don't grow happily in Wisconsin or Illinois. So, we seem to need access to a corporate supermarket, whether stand-alone or in a big-box store.

Six thousand items comprise the average supermarket. Yet few eaters realize that only ten men own it all (the packaged items), along with the four men, one in China, who own all the pork, and so on. Choices? Not really. Simply a plan to overwhelm eaters toward bewilderment and keep us unfocused.

Nestle wrote to help eaters navigate these monstrosities called supermarkets — to OUR best advantage, not to the advantage of the wallets of monopolistic corporation CEOs and their brethren (they ARE mostly male).

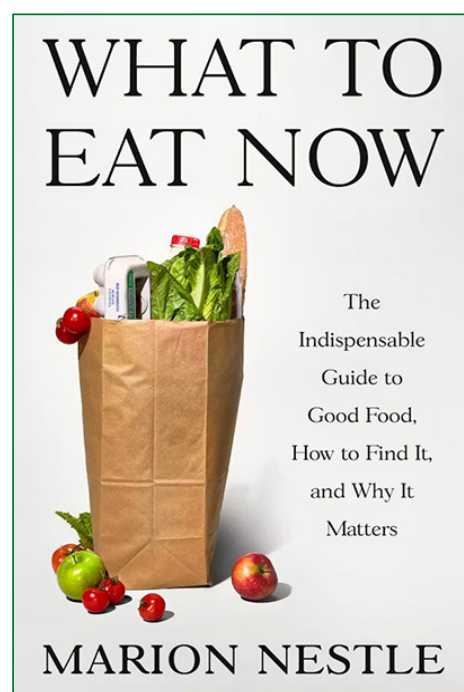
Aisle by aisle, Nestle takes us on a supermarket tour, suggesting what to look for and what to avoid.

Obvious aisles include dairy, meats, bakery, produce, etc. Less obvious are infant formula and baby foods, kiddy enticements, pet foods, edible cannabis, nutritional supplements.

Few eaters have any clue that these food-like items sit on shelf space that needs to be PAID FOR by the food company who is trying to sell them. Therefore, small, new, independent food producers in our Fox Valley or yours hardly stand a chance for supermarket exposure — they simply do not possess that kind of disposable advertising money. Those choices are denied.

While this tome is extensive and comprehensive, it is definitely NOT an encyclopedia. It IS a very readable compilation on a great variety of subjects and questions important to an informed eater. Five to ten pages at a time make for a perfect reading bite, with an extensive index to get us quickly where we need to go if we're in a hurry. Not every topic in the food world is covered — that is impossible. Yet Nestle tries hard.

Nor is this work truly “now” ... “up to date” — it was necessarily out of date the day Nestle recorded her last word. Within two weeks of my reading the book, at least three updates from the food world superseded several items of info in Nestle's book.



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New Landmark Dairy Bill Will Transform and Revitalize Dairy Sector

The Milk from Family Dairies Act creates lasting economic justice for dairy farmers

June 29, 2026, Washington, DC — This June, the [National Family Farm Coalition](#) (NFFC) was thrilled to endorse the [Milk from Family Dairies Act](#), a revolutionary new bill introduced by Senator Peter Welch (D-VT) that aims to make important reforms to the US dairy sector. More than three dozen farmer advocacy and dairy groups — including Farm Aid, Wisconsin Farmers Union, R-CALF, Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, and many others — have joined NFFC in endorsing this bill. The Milk from Family Dairies Act is cosponsored by Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

Instead of the “get big or get out” model that has failed farmers for decades, the Milk from Family Dairies Act provides a forward-thinking vision for

dairy farmer. “Farmers and their customers need a return to common-sense farm policy that stops the endless cycle of consolidation, low prices, and over-reliance on export markets. The Milk from Family Dairies Act is the best dairy legislation we’ve had in many years, and we urge Congress to support this bill before we lose any more US dairy farms.”

“Vermont’s dairy farmers, organic and conventional alike, deserve a fair price for their milk and need a dairy industry that offers a viable future for the next generation,” said Maddie Kempner, Policy & Organizing Director of NOFA-VT. “The Milk from Family Dairies Act offers a pathway out from under corporate consolidation and oversupply and toward a fairer future for all dairy farmers.”

“Dairy farmers need fair prices that cover their cost of production and ensure farm viability for future generations,” said Wisconsin Farmers Union President, Darin Von Ruden. “Wisconsin Farmers Union is proud to endorse the Milk From Family Dairies Act because this promising piece of legislation has the potential to give small and mid-sized dairy farmers a fighting chance against a heavily consolidated market.”

THE NITTY GRITTY

The Milk from Family Dairies Act includes the following key components:

- Price floors, based on scale of operation, that allow family-scale dairy farmers to cover their costs of production;
- Reducing volatility in the sector and better balancing the supply of dairy with domestic demand;
- Reducing the US dairy sector’s overreliance on export markets, a strategy which has largely failed small-scale producers;
- Gradually scaling down large-scale megadairies to help restore competition to the sector; and,
- Investment and incentives to rebuild regional dairy infrastructure.

The full text of the Milk From Family Dairies Act: <https://www.welch.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Milk-From-Family-Dairies-Act.pdf>

Sen. Welch’s statement: <https://www.welch.senate.gov/welch-leads-bill-to-combat-consolidation-in-the-dairy-industry-ensure-fair-prices-for-family-dairy-farms/>

family-scale dairy farmers to succeed. It would help stabilize the dairy market and ensure dairy farmers get a fair price for the milk they sell. Customers at the supermarket will benefit from a steady supply of reasonably-priced dairy products, while rural economies will benefit from thriving local dairies and investments in regional infrastructure — all at a significant savings to taxpayers.

“Farm policy has shifted away from ensuring farmers a fair price to one that sees agribusiness profit as its sole driver. This is especially true for the dairy sector,” said Jim Goodman, Co-President of the National Family Farm Coalition and retired

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The Mass Deportation Industrial Complex and 287g Agreements in Wisconsin

By Anthony Pahnke, Vice President of Family Farm Defenders

Originally published in the Spring 2026 Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice Newsletter

The nation was shocked when federal agents killed Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis earlier this year. Bruce Springsteen wrote a song about the violence after President Trump “surged” agents to our neighboring state, as many participated in a general strike to oppose the government’s heavy-handed enforcement tactics.

Protest got results — Kristi Noem was replaced as head of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the institutional home for both agencies tasked with arresting immigrants, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). The roving patrols of agents arresting immigrants also appears to have stopped.

Still, the mass deportation industrial complex that our current government created remains in place. Last July’s ‘One Big Beautiful Bill’ (OBBB) earmarked [\\$170 billion](#) for everything from hiring an additional 10,000 ICE agents, to paying private contractors to make new detention centers, build the border wall, and fund technological changes for monitoring of immigrants. Moreover, with [DHS’ own statistics](#) showing that it’s not the “worst of the worst” being detained, but people with no violent criminal histories arrested for no reason other than residing in the country without authorization, immigration enforcement is now a multi-billion dollar, tax payer-subsidized money-making machine.

Wisconsin has a special place within this complex. Of particular importance is if, and how, our local police collaborate with federal agents in locating and arresting undocumented migrants.

The legislative tool that makes such collaboration possible is the 287g program. Part of the Clinton-era “tough on crime” approach to law enforcement, concerning immigration, the program appeared in the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRAIRA).

To join, Sheriffs, alone without consulting any lawmakers, simply need to sign a memorandum of understanding with ICE. Currently, [19 counties in Wisconsin have signed up](#). Since Trump became

President, that number has more than doubled — as just eight had agreements in 2024.

Local collaboration with federal agents in the 287g program can take place according to what is known as the Warrant Service Officer (WSO) model, Jail Enforcement Model (JEM), or Task Force Model (TFM). Currently, in Wisconsin, there are only WSO and JEM agreements. TFM has taken hold elsewhere, particularly in Texas and Florida, where we have seen a [jump in arrests since 2025](#). In the TFM, local police are deputized to arrest immigrants who are suspected of being undocumented. Such arrests can take place during routine traffic stops, on the street, or really, whenever.



A vigil in Minneapolis early this year

WSO and JEM agreements don’t deputize local law enforcement to operate in the streets, but allows police to either keep immigrants in custody for ICE to apprehend at a later time, and/or interrogate people in custody about their immigration status.

Seemingly more benign, the problem is that like the TFM, the WSO and JEM provide financial incentives for our police to work with the federal government. With [a dollar amount attached per person arrested](#), and an inflated budget thanks to the OBBB bankrolling enforcement, we can expect 287g to grow in our state.

For this reason, work in our counties must continue. 287g not only dissolves trust and spreads fear, particularly in immigrant communities, but uses our tax dollars to reorient the police onto the

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(c) Paul McMahon, 2019



Above: anti-F35 protest, Madison 2021.

Left: International Day of the Peasant, CME protest, Chicago.

Below: FFD Annual Meeting, Wisconsin Dells 2013.





Above: Joel Greeno, Siena Chrisman, John Kinsman, CIW protest 2013.



Above and below: sochan.



Above: Got Milk? Not Without Immigrants rally, 2020.
Below: May Day, Madison 2026.



Below: bison mother and calf.



John Kinsman,
CME protest,
Chicago 2011.



Above: Solidarity Cows, Cheddar Uprising 2011. Right: FFD at WTO protest, Seattle 1999. Below: NFFC panel, UW-Madison

Above: Teamsters support FFD haylift 2011. Below: Maria Whittaker, Randy Jasper, Cancún protest 2010.



It's Time for a Progressive Policy to Protect Agricultural Supply Chains

By [George Naylor](#), FFD board member, [Patti Naylor](#), FFD president, and [Laurel Levin](#), research assistant with the Race, Climate, & Agrarian Justice Lab at American University (Originally published by Common Dreams, June 3, 2026)

Price floors and supply management programs seem common sense to policymakers when it comes to oil and minerals, but what about US farmers and our overall food system?

The race to obtain critical minerals and the war in Iran have not only exposed a dangerous dependence on [fossil fuels](#) and [mining](#), but they have also uncovered something more surprising—Republicans in Congress actually understand progressive agriculture policy. They just don't want to admit it.



John Kinsman and a few of his herd

In February, Vice President [JD Vance announced at the State Department](#) that the administration must institute a price floor to protect the US critical mineral market. “This morning, the Trump administration is proposing a concrete mechanism to return the global critical minerals market to a healthier, more competitive state: a preferential trade zone for critical minerals protected from external disruptions through enforceable price floors,” Vance explained.

Meanwhile, the US—and other countries around the world—are [deploying oil reserves](#) to buffer price shocks caused by the Israel-US attacks on Iran.

Price floors and supply management programs seem common sense to these policymakers when it comes to oil and minerals, but what about US farmers and our overall food system?

Like oil and critical minerals, food and agriculture supply chains, such as corn, soy, and dairy, are [vulnerable to global shocks](#), including extreme weather events, [wars](#), and other supply disruptions. The public also needs to understand that without inflation-adjusted price floors, agricultural commodity prices may sink to disastrously low levels, leaving farmers no choice but to increase production with more chemicals and [GMO](#) seeds at the expense of our land and water.

Congress and the US Department of Agriculture can avoid low prices by creating reserves accumulated during large harvests and, just like the federal petroleum reserve, bringing them back on the market to stabilize prices in times of shortage. We can all agree that food shortages would be disastrous, so guaranteeing its citizens food security should be imperative for any democratic government.

So while Republicans can recognize the importance of price floors and supply management during this administration, Democrats should look at history to understand how the same instruments were developed for agriculture during the Great Depression under the Democratic Party's New Deal. The twin crises of farm bankruptcies and the Dust Bowl spurred militant farm organizations to demand a response from the federal government.

The response was parity farm bills that stopped farm bankruptcies and stabilized the farm economy so that conservation measures and preservation of diversified farming could lead to food security and a balanced economy. Federal leadership in the White House and Congress recognized that price and supply management benefited both farmers and

PLEASE SEE PAGE 22

What To Eat Now

FROM PAGE 9

Yet, it is a wonderful starting point for serious novices who want to understand how and why they are being hoodwinked by commercial food producers. The best-selling items and most profitable to the CEOs are still not real foods, but junk that is cleverly marketed through psychological advertising and prime display space.

Nestle spends a lot of book pages clarifying what is meant by “processed” — extremely helpful to eaters who don’t harvest their carrots and kale straight from the soil each morning. In the experience of JFI, this term is one of the least understood by all eaters. Glad she tackled it.

She clarifies other jargon — what’s the difference between junk food and processed food ... when is “milk” not “milk” ... why do snack foods have to be so salty ...the deception of techno-foods like “meat” made in a chemistry lab, then hyped as “plant based,” proclaiming to be healthier than real meat ... and more. Very valuable explanations.

Nestle’s tone is moderate, not too bombastic, much more generous and realistic, no doubt, than we at Just Food would allow, given the injustices created for all us eaters by agribusiness and the trust-busting antics of the four major chains currently in ownership of over 50% of today’s supermarkets.

Her writing is clear, blunt, truthful. She’s believable because she continues to research her subjects — not only via primary sources (biased) and / or responses from companies that courteously answer her inquiries, but with personal observation at the supermarkets she experiences both in Manhattan and in Ithaca, her two homes. She’s believable also because she’s been an eater for almost 90 years, before the word or concept of “supermarket” existed, and knows better.

A year younger than my own 90 years, both she and I have encountered monumental changes in what we now name as “food.” Remembering what she and I knew back in the 1930s and 1940s, we have the advantage of having tasted and enjoyed the non-supermarket offerings of close to a century ago. For us older folks, it may be easier to skirt through a supermarket and not get distracted by

the bewildering array of non-foods. Nestle takes the boomers and younger generations who have never experienced the corner mom and pop establishment where you were able to get a loan till payday and not get charged an extra 27% on your credit, and invites our current eaters to consider a future and better kind of supermarket.

I very much like her imaginative thinking on pages 581-582, where she invites us to envision a supermarket that stops marketing to young children ... gives price breaks for smaller, not larger, portions ... sells salads at a price lower than the price of environmentally-destructive hamburger meat ... rewards CEOs for long-term responsibility and sustainability rather than a 90-day gain in stock price ... pays workers a fair wage ... respects animal welfare ... unveils the lies about “plant-based” foods ...

To be honest, I am not completely sure and convinced of the best use of this monumental work. Probably as a quick reference or as short 5-to-10-page self-educational reads, sort of like sound bites. Nestle’s greatest dilemma, I am sure, was what to leave out.

Each of us will use this excellent resource differently. That’s fine. Enjoy the book. Enjoy the food Nestle recommends. We all need to develop a definite, practical, workable alternative to monopolistic corporate supermarket hype. We need to, like Nestle, IMAGINE (or remember) something better for our food future.

“Everyone eats,” notes Nestle, and “the market for food is never going to disappear.”

Yet, no American NEEDS 4,000 calories worth of adulterated food each day — especially fats, sugars, and ultra-processed junk packaged in cans, plastic bags, and plastic pouches.

Food choice truly remains with the eater. Nestle elucidates well how to scope out today’s supermarket and make the wisest choices we can. WHAT TO EAT NOW is a good book for the kitchen library of every household. At \$36.00, however, that may not be an affordable option for many. There’s always the local public library, where we have already — in rent or in real estate taxes — paid for the privilege of referencing this up-to-date advice via interlibrary loan.

We encourage all eaters to utilize this new work — in your own favorite manner, and in small bites. It’s an excellent and pragmatic food shopping guide. Easy to digest. Dig in.

Cherokee Secret in Plain Sight

FROM PAGE 8

the Americas, believing them to be more sophisticated than the wilder foods eaten by indigenous North Americans. The second reason is capitalism. In a capitalist society, to have people feeding themselves from the land is a threat to the economic system. Those in power benefit from our society's widespread fear of wild foods, because it makes us easy, dependent consumers in an increasingly industrialized food system.

The ability to grow and harvest our own food gives us sovereignty and resilience. But, as Linda Black Elk, a native foods advocate I met at the Seed Savers Exchange's 50th anniversary last summer, said, fear is a major hurdle that keeps people from foraging.

Yes, there are plants that can poison, and even kill us if we consume them, but in reality, Linda said, there are more edible plants than poisonous ones. And even within the category of plants we label as "toxic," most aren't as deadly as we imagine—many only cause stomach upset or other minor symptoms, and often these issues can be mitigated with proper harvesting and preparation.

We do need to exercise caution when eating wild plants, but we humans are good learners, and if we put our minds to it, we can easily learn to

identify which plants are safe and delicious to eat. Thankfully, we don't have to start from zero, either, because people like the Cherokee have thousands of years of knowledge we can learn from.

In order to eat wild foods, we don't have to know every edible plant that is out there. We can start with a couple, or even just one, and expand our knowledge and diets slowly from there, just like we invite people into our lives one face and one name at a time.

To eat my first sochan, I decided to follow Sam Thayer's advice and fry it in lard, then drizzled on a homemade vinaigrette. The result was delicious.

It's been less than a week since I met the plant, and already sochan has made my diet more diverse, nutritious, and delicious. It's changed my life in another way too: by adding another nugget of knowledge to the cultural heritage I hope to pass on to those who come after me.

Sierra discovered Family Farm Defenders at the Practical Farmers of Iowa Conference in January 2026. She is a farmer, forager, writer, adventurer, Mennonite, and sustainability enthusiast based in Eastern Iowa. Sierra works on small vegetable farms, grows dry beans, and helps her partner Levi produce hickory oil at Fancy Twig Farm. During her childhood, her family lived among indigenous peoples in Ecuador and Peru, an experience that continues to shape her view of what it means to be indigenous in place and what it looks like to live a sustainable life. This essay was posted on her Substack "LANDing" in April 2026.

May Day 2026 Reflections

By: Rebecca Goodman, FFD board member and retired organic dairy farmer, Wonewoc, WI



I attended my very first May Day event this year and took a few pictures. I wrote a history of May Day for the FFD newsletter last year and reread it to update my memory: how important the labor movement has been in world history and how some governments have used it for their own purposes!

Labor unions and immigrant groups organized the event in Madison, as it should be, with FFD bringing up the rear on the march to Wisconsin's Capitol. The Madison schools were not in session to mark the holiday, which meant there were also many kids and parents at the rally.

All very impressive since I have never been in a position to be a union member. It was a wonderful experience for me. I was so happy to see my state senator Sarah Keyeski there. What a gift to see one's representative out with the people and actually listening to their concerns.

To read Rebecca's great May Day history from the Summer 2025 Defender newsletter, visit our online archive: https://familyfarmers.org/?page_id=375

Solidarity, Not Charity FFD to the Gulf Coast

FROM PAGE 5

the facades of buildings upwards of 5 feet, are truly stakeholders, that is people who are trying to protect their rights and that of their former neighbors to return and rebuild their homes and communities. Among the stakeholders we spoke to in this ward, there was consensus that deliberate sabotage had played a role in the break in the levy that flooded their neighborhood. Possible motives include relieving floodwater from the more economically valuable French Quarter on the opposite side of the canal.

Nanny Vanita, one of the Ninth Ward stakeholders, came back “through hell and high water” to protect her neighborhood. Reminiscing in front of a small yard that had been planted with sunflowers in an effort to decontaminate the soil, she told us a little bit about the pre-Katrina neighborhood. “Over there,” she pointed down the street, “there used to be the beauty shop, and the man who lived behind the shop repaired motorcycles. The elementary school is 3 blocks away. I don’t know if it will every open again.” Pointing to the closest intersection, she said, “That’s where my oldest son was shot. And there,” she said, indicating an alley littered with scraps of metal, plastic, and twisted tree limbs, “that was where I had my little cart. I used to make snow cones for all the kids on the block. I lost my community, my house, all of my belongings, all the poems I wrote in my life.”

There is no electricity, no line-based phone service, no public transportation; running water (if it is running) is not potable, and the soil is contaminated with lead and other heavy metals. Another member of our group remarked that it felt as though we were walking the streets of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Houses and cars looked like rotting carcasses of another civilization. In the Ninth Ward alone, it’s been estimated that 90% of all homes need to be gutted down to the stud walls. The whole Ward looked like a cross between those aerial photos we’ve all seen of Hiroshima (post bombing) and the garbage pile.

Despite these wretched conditions, southern hospitality was still in great evidence. In one New

Orleans parish, members of a small church, who had just attended a funeral service for an elderly parishioner, heard about our relief efforts, and invited us in to share their dinner. The following afternoon, over a jerry-rigged outdoor stove, Nanny Vanita spent hours preparing an amazing gumbo for us and another crew of volunteers, some of whom had been there for months removing sheetrock covered with mildew from salvageable homes. By the time we pulled up our “chairs” we were eating by firelight in a setting that was ghostly and apocalyptic – with only one street lit within blocks.

On Sunday we were also able to visit the parish of St. Augustine in New Orleans, which the Archdiocese of New Orleans had intentions to close. Largely due to overwhelming grassroots opposition, the death sentence has recently been modified to terms that the Pastoral Council must engage in addressing within 18 months.

Significantly, St. Augustine is the oldest African-American Catholic Parish in the United States, founded in 1842 at the request of the free black citizens of New Orleans who wanted their own place of worship. From its founding, the parish was a diverse community encompassing not only blacks and whites but also slaves as well as free persons. The diversity was still in evidence as we attended an outdoor Sunday service in front of the tomb of the Unknown Slave, on the Gov. Nicholls Street side of the parish. Wandering in the sanctuary of the church after the services, its beauty and peacefulness caught me completely by surprise; not since visiting Notre Dame in Paris have I been so viscerally moved by an interior space. The stained glass alone is exquisite.

At this time, Pastoral Council President Sandra J. Gordan told me that though there is a lot of work to be done, ministries that need to be re-organized, she feels optimistic that their goals will be attained, and added that she hopes that “the religion will make more of an effort to be attuned with the lay people.” That remark spoke volumes, since – for me – this whole trip underscored the remarkable capacity of lay people, volunteers, stakeholders, or whatever you want to call people who believe in their capacity for self-reliance and in mutual aid, to survive and grow in their solidarity against hierarchies of moneyed disinterest – be it the Church or the government.

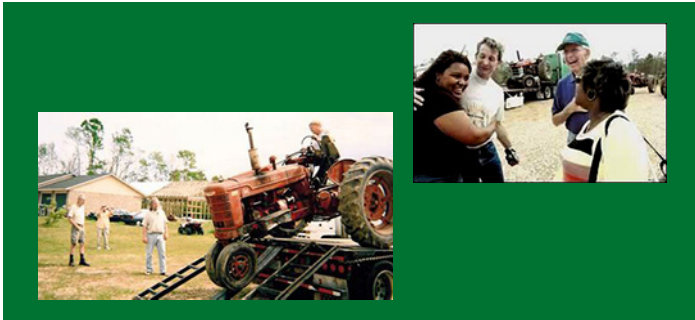
PLEASE SEE PAGE 22

Farmer to Farmer Solidarity: Project Tractor

By Chelsea Ross, journalist with the Madison Observer (Reprinted from Spring 2006 Defender)

With a glint of pride in his eyes, Joel Greeno slowly maneuvered a large orange tractor down an improvised ramp resting against the back of a flatbed truck. An unusually diverse crowd of independent farmers cheered as the mechanical beasts rolled onto the red Mississippi soil. The scene was the culmination of solidarity and aid effort called Project Tractor as well as the focal point of the Family Farm Defenders annual conference.

The idea for Project Tractor was sparked when Greeno, a Wisconsin dairy farmer, met Mississippi farmer Carroll Oatis when Oatis stood admiring Greeno's shiny tractor at a Farm Aid parade in Chicago. "If I only had me a lil' ole tractor like that I wouldn't have to hoe all those low rows by hand," Oatis told Greeno. That was late September '05, just weeks after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast.



Six months later, five tractors and 15 farmers from Wisconsin arrived at Indian Springs Farm in Sheeplo, Mississippi. Oatis was not there to see them touch the Mississippi ground; he was in the hospital – he had collapsed earlier that day from hoeing his field.

"That will never happen again," said John Kinsman, a dairy farmer from Sauk County and President of Family Farm Defenders – the national coalition of independent farmers that coordinated the effort to donate the tractors to the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives. Many of MAC's members had lost crops and resources from Katrina's destructive forces.

Sheeplo farmer Donnie Pen-Travis lost a tractor and acres worth of bell peppers, sugar cane and sugar peas. Pen-Travis and six other MAC farmers

have been sharing one tractor since last September.

"That donation of the tractors is going to be the difference of survival to some farmers out here," said Michael McNair, marketing specialist for MAC. Following the ceremonious transfer of the tractors, a press conference was held to acknowledge the donation and the new alliance created between the two farming collectives. "This is not about charity. It's a solidarity effort. And I don't know who's gaining more. I think we are," announced Kinsman. "If they were charity tractors, I wouldn't bring them down here. They are solidarity tractors," chimed Randy Jasper, who drive the tractors from Wisconsin to Mississippi on his 18-wheeler flat-bed truck.

For FFD, the donation of the tractors is just the most recent effort toward solidarity with farmers and city dwellers alike whose lives and livelihoods have been altered by Katrina. FFD sponsored a group of Madison members who drove a bio-diesel fueled bus to New Orleans within weeks after Katrina to help with relief work – a few still remain working in the most devastated areas of the city. On top of providing physical aid, FFD representatives connected with farming cooperatives around Louisiana and Mississippi to distribute food and resources. FFD also recently pledged sponsorship to an ad hoc organization called Project Hope that is working in St. Bernard Parish, one of the lowest income and hardest hit areas of New Orleans.

With the support of FFD and other cooperatives across the country, McNair's vision may likely become a reality. Since the FFD coalition returned to the Midwest, six more tractors have been donated to Project Tractor. Although they will most likely not be delivered until this fall, after the growing season is over, Jasper is available to load up his flat-bed truck again. It seems certain Project Tractor has sparked a solid relationship.

"I see this relationship continuing to grow," said Donnie Pen-Travis as he walked the FFD crowd through a farm tour of his sugar peas. "Most of the small farmers from this area are already extinct. For small farmers like us to hold on, we have to continue to build coalitions like this."

Report Back from Mexico Solidarity Trip to Oppose USMCA

By Jim Goodman, FFD board member and retired organic dairy farmer – Wonewoc, WI

Rebecca and I had the great opportunity to attend a forum in Mexico City at the National University on March 19. We were the guests of Movimiento Agrícola Capesino (MAC), an organization of farmers, academics as well as trucking industry and union workers. MAC has been protesting the consequences of the USMCA trade agreement on the prices farmers receive for their grain, as well as the fact that the trade agreement, in effect, forces Mexico to accept imports of US Genetically Modified corn (GM) as well as the Roundup herbicide which small farmers do not wish to use and cannot afford.

USMCA is basically the updated version of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which since it was signed in 1994 has lowered farm prices, pushed small farmers off their land and forced GM corn into Mexico despite the wishes of farmers and consumers. Academics involved with MAC note the crushing effect these trade agreements have had on rural Mexico, the threat to the native varieties of corn that originated in Mexico generations ago, as well as the negative effects on rural infrastructure, trucking, processing etc. that suffer as farmers go out of business.

The problems small Mexican farmers are seeing are not unfamiliar to small farmers in the US. Like farmers here, the protections of parity pricing, grain reserves and stable markets that began under the first Farm Bill under Franklin Roosevelt, their constitutional protections from the Lázaro Cárdenas (the FDR of Mexico) administration were eliminated as NAFTA took effect.

As farmers in the US could no longer absorb the losses they incurred as input costs went up, local markets dried up and grain prices fell as corn acreage and yields increased. The only option to survive was to produce more bushels as the profit per bushel dropped. Dependence on government payments helped keep some farmers afloat, but as always the bigger farms received the vast majority of the payments. Small farms went out, big farms got bigger, and the real beneficiaries of free trade were

the corporations like Monsanto and Cargill who profited from selling costly crop inputs and having access to cheap grain on the world market,

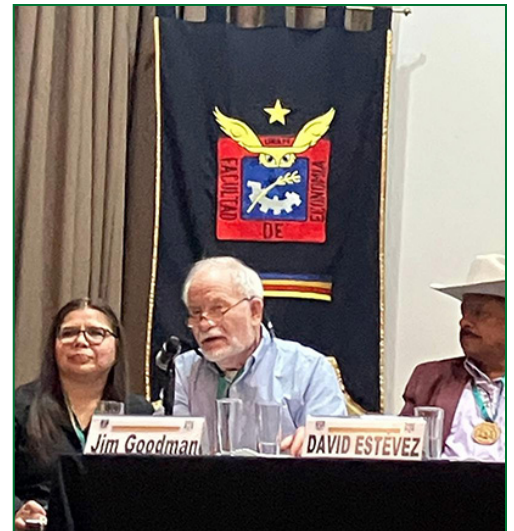
In Mexico the situation was somewhat different in that, as prices fell small farms went out of business, but that farmland often went idle, unlike the US where small farm acreages were absorbed into larger operations. This situation in Mexico not only had devastating effects on farmers, consumers and the economy, but as that farmland went out of production, the ability of Mexico to feed itself in the future became more at risk.

Unlike the US Mexico is not a player in the international grain market, they do not base their farming

system solely on exports, they prefer to feed themselves by growing traditional crops, like white corn, that they have always depended on.

It was also interesting that MAC apparently has a very good relationship with the Mexican Government. Where we would be happy to get a meeting with congressional staffers, MAC can meet with Presidential staff. This I think is important because Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum seems to be unwilling to bow to the US administration.

Perhaps if we, as US farmers, want to expose the inequities of USMCA, not just for ourselves, but for Mexico and Canada, we need to ally with Mexican farmers who see the problems as we do, but in their case, they may have the power of their government behind them as opposed to our situation where we are fighting corporations who have the total support of the US government.



Twenty Years After Hurricane Katrina, FFD Solidarity Remains Stronger Than Ever!

By: John E. Peck, FFD executive director, and organic flower produce farmer, Brooklyn, WI

Solidarity not charity — that has been one of the unofficial slogans of Family Farm Defenders since its founding way back in the 1990s. When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in late 2005, it proved to be one of the worst disasters in U.S. history. And it was hardly a “natural” disaster either — institutional racism, federal neglect, human incompetence — made the aftermath so much worse.

Thankfully, it was also a moment for grassroots solidarity from groups like FFD, which within weeks of Katrina’s landfall had dispatched a veggie powered busload of volunteers and supplies to the Gulf Coast. For many stricken folks, the arrival of the FFD volunteers was the first sign of any outside help.

By spring 2006, FFD had even bigger solidarity plans afoot — namely Project Tractor. Thanks to, John Kinsman, our group’s first president, and many other civil rights activists, FFD already had deep ties with folks in the South. Through Project Hope scores of farm kids from the Midwest had been part of solidarity exchanges with farm kids in Mississippi during the 1960s — and those relationships had only grown since.

When word came that the MS Association of Cooperatives lost much machinery due to Katrina, it was clear what FFD had to do — send donated tractors south. Joel Greeno, Randy Jasper, and others soon jumped into action. We are reprinting two articles from our Summer 2006 newsletter that share more about this amazing Project Tractor story.



And the post-Katrina recovery experience has not been forgotten! Since then FFD has engaged in even more solidarity. When massive climate-change induced floods ravaged the Midwest in 2007 and 2008, FFD raised over \$25,000 in funds that were distributed to 40+ farmers and farmworkers who had been adversely affected.



Project Tractor Post-Katrina Panel Discussion held in Petal, MS. From left to right: Randy Jasper, Darnella Burkett-Winston, Joel Greeno (speaking), and John Kinsman.

Photo John Peck

In 2009 when Hurricane Gustav hit the Gulf Coast, FFD launched Project Tractor II to deliver more donated farm equipment to the Point Coupee Farmers Cooperative in LA. When drought struck in 2011, FFD worked with Farm Aid, Rural Coalition, and the Teamsters Union to deliver 17 semi-loads of donated hay from WI and IA to ranchers in need in Oklahoma and Texas.

FFD has been a food sovereignty friend to peasant farmers and indigenous peoples in other places, too — such as Cuba, East Timor, Oaxaca, Standing Rock, and Palestine — to name but a few. More recently FFD has not been shy about speaking up in support of our own refugee and immigrant neighbors here at home as they face violent abuse and often illegal deportation. Solidarity has no limits — and we hope that you will support FFD as we continue this effort to build grassroots relationships between communities and across borders.

Hunger for Fertilizer

By Stephen Bartlett, coordinator of Sustainable Ag of Louisville, KY (SAL) and proud board member of FFD

The world looked the other way
when Monsanto pushed patented seeds for mono
cropping
But could not look away
when the global commerce of Urea was disrupted
at the Strait of Hormuz
Like a slow moving tsunami
The world could foresee a wave of hunger
by summer or fall of 2026
immediately the price of chemical fertilizer
shot to the sky like a dangerous drone
then like a ballistic missile

As surely as summer follows spring
And as surely as Trump follows Netanyahu
The wheat and rice baskets of the world
are threatened by a clownish demented
lame duck with orange-dyed hair
and acolytes without critical thinking capacity
cheered by a fool's narrative
as the usually restrained
Persians unleash their
armory
dug into underground weapon
palaces
In Iran you could dig for a
potato and suddenly see
missiles
Shooting up from the field
Headed for Dubai or Tel Aviv, or
Hormuz
Best defense is a good offense!
Thus a new beginning is fore-
told for millions of farmers
Who want nothing more than
to feed their communities
With or without fossil fuels and
expensive chemicals
With or without the permission
of Monsanto or NATO
Or the producers or merchants
of chemical fertilizer...
Think of it as a new beginning...
Viva la Lucha, Viva la Esperanza.

Landmark Dairy Bill

FROM PAGE 10

Dairy farmers and the communities they support cannot wait any longer for policy change. The US dairy sector is consolidating at an alarming rate, with fewer farms producing more milk than ever before and milk prices trapped in a slow but steady decline.

There are now fewer than 24,000 US dairy farms remaining, [a stark 40% loss since 2017](#). Every farm closure means lost jobs, infrastructure, and rural heritage.

It's time for Congress to address the root causes of the dairy crisis and move on from the same band-aid solutions of subsidizing insurance schemes and expanding export markets. The Milk from Family Dairies Act is a fundamental change to federal dairy policy that ensures dairy farmers get a guaranteed, fair income that will cover their real costs of production and can support their families.



Stephen Bartlett with his garlic field — fertilized not by urea that passed through Hormuz but by natural fertility of a former pasture and Kentucky straw mulch.

Progressive Supply Chain Policy

FROM PAGE 14

society as a whole.

The policy was simple and transparent: The farm bill would ensure that during years of good harvests, [public grain reserves](#) would purchase the surplus at the parity rate (price floor adjusted for inflation) and store it to protect consumers in future times of shortage.

A productive agricultural economy that conserves our resources, challenges agricultural consolidation, and offers economic opportunity in rural communities should be a top priority for all our citizens.

However, both parties abandoned this common-sense approach to farm policy in the early 1950s, so that costs of farming have totally outpaced commodity prices. Subsequently, headlines warning of a farm crisis in 2026, like during the Great Depression and the 1980s, are not uncommon. The prices paid to farmers for commodities such as corn, soybeans, wheat, and dairy have [dropped to record lows in real dollars](#). Over the years, this imbalance has led to the loss of family farms, the consolidation of agribusiness and food processing monopolies, along with their profits benefiting handsomely. Stabilizing the ratio of farm prices to farm costs (the correct goal of any Farm Bill) is the key to a sustainable agriculture that avoids soil loss, water pollution, and the decline of rural communities.

A supply management program would not only help revive family operations and rural economies

but would also be essential to combat the expansion of confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and lower costs for taxpayers. As reported by Food & Water Watch, [CAFOs are a disaster for our climate, air, and water](#), especially for nearby communities. CAFOs are among the most egregious features of today's low-price, commodity-based industrial agriculture. Thousands of livestock (owned or vertically integrated with large food processors) are confined in small facilities without fresh air or sunlight and fed cheap corn and soy.

CAFOs have been replacing conscientious family farmers who are stewards of the soil and their animals. When family farmers are forced out of livestock production, they face the dilemma of “get big or get out” and often have no farming alternatives other than to tear up their pastures to grow corn and soybeans that will end up feeding animals in CAFOs.

The Trump administration is applying often-forgotten policy instruments to sustain our fossil fuel dependence and our high-tech future, rather than prioritizing a resilient, sustainable economy. Managing a price floor and creating federal food reserves in the agriculture sector are necessary to combat the adverse effects of food processor monopolization, farm consolidation, soil and water degradation, and external shocks, such as wars.

A productive agricultural economy that conserves our resources, challenges agricultural consolidation, and offers economic opportunity in rural communities should be a top priority for all our citizens.

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Solidarity, not Charity FFD to the Gulf Coast

FROM PAGE 17

In conclusion, and thinking once again of the Ninth Ward as well as Mid City and the Orleans Parish next to the French Quarter, there is no doubt in my mind that the government wants to neglect these neighborhoods long enough so that they can be condemned and rebuilt to suit “better” people. I witnessed two white realtors driving around in their big SUVs looking for opportunities to profit off of the grief of the poor. The question that continues to



Common Ground Relief Center in the Ninth Ward, post-Katrina

haunt me is why Americans who believe themselves to be in possession of some moral agency continue to tolerate the authority of this current government.

Progressive Supply Chain Policy

FROM PAGE 22

“We love farmers” and “We put America’s farmers first” are just political slogans to get votes with no substance behind them. These slogans lead to the usual sleight of hand to send taxpayer dollars to get some farmers through the next planting season. This policy leaves the disastrous cheap commodity regime in place—encouraging CAFO production and exporting commodities at a loss.

The administration’s discovery of the logical policy of price floors and reserves for oil and minerals must open new doors to applying these logical and transparent mechanisms to agriculture to restore the security of family farmers and conservation of our precious resources—after all, we can’t eat petroleum or precious minerals.

Why Continue Caring

FROM PAGE 6

farm animals in my system makes me a bit ill just to think about.

Not only all this, but we are losing farms and farmers who are the backbone of what is actually agriculture. Wisconsin lost 233 dairy farms in 2025. That was better than some recent years. In 2019 the number was 818 nearly 11% of our dairy farms were gone. Between 2004 and 2024 at least 275 farmers in Wisconsin died by suicide. Nationally, agricultural workers have a suicide rate that is 3.5 times higher than the general population. These are people who feed us who are losing their livelihoods and who are dying.

I think about all this and I remember being a little girl on the farm watching out the kitchen window as our neighbor’s barn burnt to the ground. I think about my father, about him, my mom and all the other farmers that surrounded me growing up in rural Wisconsin, so many who lost their farms or who recognized that there was no future for them in farming anymore and let those generations old homesteads go. I see no other option but to keep fighting, so that we all might eat clean food, breathe clean air, and drink clean water again.

You can read more by Amy Mondloch at: <https://sustainablelifeinaction.com/>

For Native Tribes, It’s Déjà Vu

FROM PAGE 4

represents more than 50 tribes managing 25,000 bison on land that accounts for about 95 percent of Indian Country noted, the new Interior Department rules are designed to protect cows and were published without prior consultation with tribes.

It is not nostalgia that Bison should graze public lands, especially those adjacent to Tribal reservations. Bison are [far better environmental stewards](#) than cattle and for that matter, probably people as well. It is also, perhaps, a pipe dream that this administration would recognize the inherent cultural rights of Native Americans, or any minority for that matter. To them, the extraction of profit for themselves and their corporate cronies is all that matters. But this administration will someday end and perhaps the next will be more enlightened and respectful of minority rights and common sense.



Mass Deportation Complex

FROM PAGE 11

federal government’s priorities. This betrays the principles of federalism while taking local police away from their real jobs.

Supporting organizations, like Voces de la Frontera and the ACLU, is key. Together, they have filed a lawsuit claiming that the JEM particularly is illegal for keeping people beyond 48 hours. Faith-based groups like WISDOM are also organizing around this issue, pushing counties around our state to rethink their collaboration.

There are 72 counties in Wisconsin and all of them have elections for Sheriff this year. If your county has a 287g agreement, perhaps you should ask your Sheriff about it. Write a letter, make a phone call, or perhaps go with a group of friends to make your inquiry. As a taxpayer, you have a right to know how your money is being spent. And if you don’t approve, well, make your voice heard at the ballot box.



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