

Minutes
North Dakota Organic Advisory Board
ICS Office-Medina ND
March 9, 2010

Chairman Brad Brummond called the meeting to order.

Roll Call was taken:

Advisory Board members present: Brad Brummond, David Podoll, Christina Dockter, Scott Sinner, Grayson Hoberg, Ernie Hoffert, Lowell Kaul, Keith Kadrmas, Anne Ongstad, Dennis Schill, Betsy Perkins, Kayla Pulvermacher, and Chuck Fleming representing Commissioner Goehring.

Advisory Board members absent: Kevin Kvamme, Britt Jacobson, Chuck Gustafson.

Others present: Marlene Ells, Marcy Svenningsen

A quorum was declared.

Chairman Brummond asked if anyone wanted any additions to the agenda. SBARE report and an Organic FTE (Full Time Equivalent) employee were added.

Scott Sinner moved that the minutes of the January 12, 2010 Board meeting as printed be approved. Seconded by Keith Kadrmas. Motion carried.

Chuck Fleming gave an updated financial report. He reported expenditures of \$2,681 since the January 12th meeting bringing a total of \$8,660 in total expenditures for the 2009-11 biennium. The budget for the biennium is \$30,000. **David Podoll moved that the report be accepted. Seconded by Betsy Perkins. Motion carried.**

Reports:

FARRMS

Marcy Svenningsen, Executive Director of FARRMS gave greetings to the group and outlined the services offered by her organization. She is very interested in working closely with the Board on educational opportunities.

Committee Reports:

The Consumer, Retail, and Education Committee; Process, Producer, and Marketing Committee; Weed Control Committee, and the Professional Development Committee met in the morning before the Board meeting.

The Consumer, Retail, and Education Committee reported that they were very pleased with the reaction of Tom Woodmansee, Executive Director of the North Dakota Grocers Association, to the survey that the committee is asking the grocers to complete. They are very interested in getting a retail section in the www.ndorganic.nd.gov web site.

The Process, Producer, Marketing Committee reported that current demand for some commodities is weak, so not much is moving in the marketplace.

The Weed Committee reported that Mike Foley of ARS in Fargo is going to focus on perennial weeds and next generation weed management (non-chemical control). The Committee was pleased with that. ARS will change their emphasis from leafy spurge to Canada thistle control. David Podoll pointed out that last year the North Dakota Department of Agriculture made weevils available for weed control. They were also pleased with the weed research being done at Dickinson State.

The Professional Development Committee reported that the NRCS training went well. They are waiting for a verdict from SBARE regarding funding for the next biennium.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Brummond reported that he is very interested in having a good working relationship with FARRMS. He feels there are a lot of areas where the Board could work well with them. He expressed disappointment that an organic person did not get nominated for an SBARE position. Long term success will depend on getting people on that Board who understand organic issues.

A general discussion was held regarding livestock since the Livestock Committee did not meet during the morning session. It was a general consensus that the natural beef market has taken over much of the market that the organic producers use to have and thus the organic market currently were not competitive. It was decided that the Livestock Committee need not meet regularly anymore, but meetings would be called when specific issues are raised.

North Dakota Department of Agriculture Update

Chuck Fleming, Business Development Director of the Department gave the report:

- Reported that he attended the Minnesota Organic Conference and was very impressed with it. They had 450 in attendance. He indicated that the organizer of the conference might have an interest in having the Conference in two years in the Fargo-Moorhead area.
- Handed out information about the funds that are available for grants for high tunnels through the EQIP program for organic producers. He indicated that many of the county offices are not up to date on the program and indicated anyone wanted detailed information on the program should contact Jill Howard at the State NRCS office in Bismarck.
- Indicated that the Department would be getting the legal land descriptions of organic producers who want to cooperate and then develop a map of organic production that would be put on the Department's website to assist commercial and non-commercial spray applicators sprayers in identifying those areas so they will avoid them.
- Reported that the data base of organic producers and processors has been updated and is ready to be placed in the organic web site – www.ndorganics.nd.gov.
- Reported that Janet Jacobson had done considerable work on updating the website. The Department now needs to get it online.
- Announced that he now has the portfolio for the organic reimbursement program in the ND Department of Agriculture. A discussion was held on ways to

streamline the program so more producers would participate and the program would have less administrative headaches.

- Informed the group of the Hunger Initiative that the NDDA is launching. The goal is to have North Dakotans donate 500,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables to North Dakota Food Banks and food pantries. He invited members to participate in any way they can.
- Announced that the Department is looking at ways to fund a \$75,000 mobile food processing unit that could be used around the state for processing fresh fruits and vegetables.

Bowdon Locker Plant

Lowell Kaul gave an update on the Bowdon Locker Plant project. They have a person in Tennessee who is interested in managing the plant. Their attorney is now seeking price quotes for the design of the building. The next major step is to start an equity drive this summer. It is estimated that the plant could cost \$500,000.

Old Business

New Pasture Rules for Organic Producers

A discussion was held on the new organic pasture rules. Many of the provisions that the Board had objected too during the comment period have been taken out. Commissioner Roger Johnson had forwarded comments that Board members had last year during the comment period to USDA. Apparently someone listened!

Keith Kadrmas said he was generally pleased with the rules although he would have liked to have some space requirements in the feedlot provision. Scott Sinner indicated there may be a short term decline in demand for organic feed since some of the large dairies will not be able or willing to find enough pasture.

New Business

GMO Flax

Ernie Hoffert led a discussion regarding the problem with the Triffid variety of flax. He outlined the history of the variety in Canada. Europeans started testing that variety and GMO showed up in samples. They don't want it! Canada has conducted testing and found 10% of samples testing positive. One hundred samples have been tested in the US with none coming back positive. However, it is generally expected that positive samples will eventually be found. The Canadian government is not sure what their next move ought to be. Ernie recommended caution if buying Canadian flax seed. No official action was taken by the Board.

Organic economic impact study

Fleming reported that Janet Jacobson had compiled the numbers from the 2008 Census on Agriculture relating to North Dakota organic production. The Board reviewed those numbers and felt they were the best we could get to put into the input-output model to measure production.

Fleming reported that he had sent a processor survey to 24 North Dakota organic processors that are in the data base. Thus far only 3 have replied. Fleming indicated that this would not be sufficient data. He will continue the process of getting that survey completed.

The Board decided it would be nearly impossible to get specific numbers on North Dakota retail sales and consumption of organic products so national numbers would be used based on our population base.

The production, processing, and consumer numbers are to be compiled and then NDSU will use their input-output model to determine the impact of organics on the North Dakota economy. The Board decided that when this work is completed, a meeting of the Board with Commissioner Goehring should take place.

It was a general consensus of the Board that a discussion on the job description that was developed for a full time person in the ND Ag Department to work on organics be delayed until the economic impact study is completed.

The next meeting of the Board will be at the call of the Chair following the completion of the study.

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Brummond at 2:30 pm.