

June 2013

## EQIP Amendment in Senate

The U.S. Senate has been debating the farm bill. We have been watching many amendments on the Senate floor, anticipating the impact they could have on our farmers.

The EQIP-Organic Initiative Payment Limit Amendment, sponsored by Senators Leahy, Cowan and Collins, would ensure that the same EQIP payment limit applies to both organic and conventional production. EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to producers to address conservation concerns on their land. Currently, there are two payment limits under the program. Farms enrolling in the EQIP Organic Initiative have a payment limit of \$20,000 per year while conventional farms can receive up to \$300,000 per year.

## Become A FFAN of National Farmers Union

National Farmers Union is excited to announce the creation of the Family Farmer Advocacy Network. We couldn't do our work in Washington, D.C., without the help of leaders like you across the country. Your grassroots contact with your members of Congress is critical to spreading Farmers Union's message quickly throughout the country.

To join our network and become a FFAN, please fill out the form at [www.NFU.org/FFAN](http://www.NFU.org/FFAN) to update your contact information. NFU staff will contact you occasionally with requests to contact lawmakers about specific legislative proposals to educate them about how the legislation will affect family farmers and ranchers.

Thank you for your help! We'll be in touch soon with further details.

## PEONY PRODUCTION

Lucky for me that I got to run into Dr. Holloway from Fairbanks. She is a leader in the peony production industry. I have included below the summary of AFES miscellaneous publication 2013-03 titled The State of the Alaska Peony Industry 2012 by Dr. Holloway & Ms. Buchholz.



Peonies have been grown for commercial production in Alaska for nine years; the 2011 season marked the beginning of measurable sales to markets outside Alaska. In 2012, the first foreign exports were reported although most sales were still experimental in nature. The industry continues in an experimental stage as growers from around the state clear land, replace vegetable and other field crops with peonies, and struggle with lack of information on soils, fertilizers, disease issues, and more.

Growers reported brisk sales with little or no inventory remaining at the end of the season. The buyers range from direct sales to consumers to large wholesale distributors. Prices fluctuate widely depending on the buyer. Despite a mountain of issues each grower is facing as they adapt techniques to a disparate state, more than 25,000 cut flowers were sold to domestic and international markets in 2013.

We have some membership currently growing peonies and this short publication is very interesting to read. If you are interested in the peony industry give Hans Geier, AFU secretary/treasurer, a call. Besides looking for new membership, we also love to share information.

## NEW COOPERATIVE FORMED IN ZAMBIA

*By Dickson Mutafela, CDF*

Chipata District Farmers' Association (CDFA) is an independent, membership-based and democratically organized association belonging to the farmers of Chipata District in Zambia, Africa.

In its quest to helping farmers gain more from their farming business, CDFA has conducted sensitization meetings on the development of a cooperative in all the 8 agricultural blocks from 4th march to 28th march. And a total of 1175 farmers were sensitized. The cooperative will help farmers with marketing of their farm produce and help increase productivity through mechanization.

The purpose of the meetings was to disseminate information on the Cooperative formation of a Cooperative which will be farmer owned and farmer controlled.

The idea was born when CDFA planned to start an agri-business wing that would operate as a business to provide services to farmers. This was after real-

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Can you believe it, we are shifting into June and the furnace is still kicking on! Who wee this is going to be some spring/summer and being the farmer that I am, an awesome fall. Those poor guys in the Willow area are still facing snow. I ran into some seed potato sellers from that area at the Master Gardeners' sale in downtown Palmer. They said they were going to plant potatoes when they got home, but mentioned not too far down the ground was still frozen. They had my favorite variety, German Butterball. I got introduced to that superb potato at the Plant Material Center (Bill C) out at Butte Alaska. To tell you the truth I don't know if it is really named Butte Alaska but I do know that Pioneer Equipment, Pyrahs PPK Farms, the PMC, and the reindeer farm (to name a few) are out there, so it will always be Butte Alaska to me. I started out at Butte Alaska many years ago before moving to my present location. The two boys with the last name of Shumaker were born in a log cabin at Butte Alaska besides many other critters. Yes time does move along so what is it with this global warming afflicting Palmer Alaska? I do have some great news – besides that I got all 1700+ Brussels sprouts planted and a few celery. I think everybody has a long way to go in getting their gardens in. We went down to the high school and tilled their garden so we are not the last to start; I have always had trouble with the finish part. BUT the great news is that we will have our own Alaska Framers Union website again. It seems we are doing enough discussion regarding topics like: raw milk, family fishing, farm to school, sustainability and others that we just as well get it on the web. Those things interest most of the people we represent but of course there are many other topic areas.

## ZAMBIA (CONTINUED)

izing that CDFFA is a Non-Government organization that is not aimed at doing business or making profit. But its members are farmers who are doing farming as a business, Hence CDFFA conducted several meetings brain- storming and consulting how an agri-business wing could be established.

The Association there after conducted a consultative meeting with its stakeholders and the resolution of the meeting was that CDFFA should facilitate a formation of a viable Cooperative for Chipata District farmers unlike a union or company.

My topic of discussion at this time is a herbicide that fits into the organic category. I have found that at Alaska Garden and Pet Supply they have one on the shelf. I haven't called the Wasilla garden supply store but my guess is they have it also. At the same time, online I found there was one that destroyed the weeds and grasses using vinegar, orange oil, dish soap, and water. I understand that doesn't fall into the organic category, but for the life of me I don't understand why.

Last thing to discuss is the conference that was held in downtown Palmer. Kudos go out to Amy Petite (DOA), Jeff Smeenck (PSWCD), Carol Kenley (for providing a certified kitchen) and the two stars of the show from Oregon, Sarah Masoni and Laura Burton. It was centered around utilizing rhubarb into a sellable product. Discussion was focused but we learned about market trends, what to look for when developing a product, processing options, food technology, packaging, shelf life studies and more. I left feeling like maybe it was time to get into a little more than just providing the raw product to the market. DEC was there and they shared the new regulations regarding cottage food regulations. The door is open for everyone to make a start. The new Alaska Food Code regulations adopted to allow the sale of non-potentially hazardous foods directly to the consumer without a permit if certain conditions are met. Go online to read about it or call your local DEC office. They can help! Heck, I even got to meet Dr. Holloway of the Alaska Peony Association, so it couldn't have been that bad. Got to run, want to have fun in the cold and rain. -Bob

A task force committee of five persons was formed to spearhead the formation of the cooperative with support from CDFFA Secretariat and CLUSA.

The Cooperative will focus on Production, Marketing, Mechanization and Value addition among others.

A volunteer from the USA under the CLUSA Farmer-to-Farmer project, Bob Shumaker has bought a Maize Sheller which will be used for income generation under the cooperative.

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