

Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association

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Andrew Whitby

Dear members and friends,

Last year many of you responded positively and generously to a far-reaching new vision put forth by the Biodynamic Association. Through your devoted support and active participation, this vision is starting to take form!

Please enjoy this brief progress report to learn what the Association is doing, with your help, to support the next generation of biodynamic farmers, advance biodynamic research and help grow the food revolution.

How would you describe biodynamics in 60 seconds or less? See one answer from our next generation of biodynamic farmers on the back page, "Biodynamics in One Minute on CNN: What would you say?"

While you're there, please read "Envisioning the Future" to find out how you can join the conversation on our emerging strategic plan.

To close this letter, I ask for your financial support. Thanks to you, we have made great progress this past year. But yes, there is still so much more we need to do to bring the benefits of biodynamics to our communities and to the earth.

So please, help us realize the great potential of the biodynamic movement and meet the urgent needs of the time. Use the enclosed envelope and send in as generous a gift as you can!

With deep gratitude and warm wishes during this holy season,



Robert Karp, Executive Director

P.S. Please. Think big. Give the biodynamic movement the resources to grow, and invest in a healthy and sustainable future!

2010 Growth Stats

- Membership has grown over 30% in the past year.
- Over 3800 people now subscribe to our e-newsletter.
- Over 6000 people worldwide follow us on Facebook.



2010 Progress Report

Growing the Food Revolution

The 2010 National Biodynamic Conference

The whole conference was so uplifting, inspiring, nurturing, and “learning.” Sense of community, getting to know many across the country, all involved in this agricultural movement of the future, truly spiritual seeds for the future of mankind.

This statement from a participant captured the experience of many who attended our national conference, *Biodynamics & the Future of Agriculture: Growing the Food Revolution*. Living up to its name, this conference truly served as a vessel for the growing biodynamic community and its emerging role in the food revolution.



Natt McFee Photography

Held at the Threefold Educational Center in Chestnut Ridge, New York, the conference attracted over 350 participants representing every generation; every type of farmer, non-farmer, and gardener; every part of the country (and many parts of the world); and every level of biodynamic experience.

The event included four world-class keynote speakers: Nicanor Perlas, Michael Schmidt, Sister Miriam MacGillis and Fred Kirschenmann; thirty-two workshops from leading biodynamic practitioners from around the country; a food and wine tasting fundraiser; a panel discussion with young farmers; the launching of BING (see right) and a screening of Taggart Siegel’s new film about the global bee crisis, *Queen of the Sun*.

It was by all accounts an extraordinary event and by the end we all felt a new seed was indeed planted for the future...a seed for a new way of working together and coming together and *becoming* together as a movement: a seed for a new agriculture and for a new phase in the life of the Biodynamic Association.



Supporting the Next Generation

The North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program (NABDAP):

NABDAP is a project of the Association that is working to nurture the next generation of biodynamic farmers by providing a comprehensive and rigorous apprenticeship program that includes coursework and two years of training on a biodynamic farm. This year NABDAP organized a two-week Intensive for farmers and apprentices titled “The Plant between Earth and Cosmos,” led by professionals in soil science, plant botany, entomology and biodynamic agriculture. They also held their second annual Farmer Mentor Workshop for the farmers who guide the apprentices during their two-year on-farm training. NABDAP also awarded its first seven diplomas in a heartfelt ceremony held during the 2010 National Biodynamic Conference. See photo.

Biodynamic Initiative for the Next Generation (BING)

A highlight of our recent national conference was the inaugural meeting of the Biodynamic Initiative for the Next Generation, attended by over fifty young farmers, apprentices and activists! BING is a new project of the Association designed to create opportunities for the younger generation inspired by biodynamics to connect, share, and learn from one another. The group is currently working to organize an event focused on urban agriculture in inner city Detroit.

Biodynamic Scholarship Fund:

We launched a new scholarship fund this year to help apprentices, farmers, and others in need of financial assistance attend biodynamic conferences and trainings. In response, we received over 130 scholarship applications for our national conference that were carefully processed by volunteer committee members. In the end, we awarded over \$11,000 worth of conference scholarships to over 65 people (mostly young people).

Farm- and Garden-Based Educators

Retreat: Our second annual retreat for farm- and garden-based educators took place this fall. Attendees work with children and youth on biodynamic farms and/or in Waldorf School gardens to deepen their connection to food, farming and the natural world.

The purpose of the retreat is to foster collegiality, share curricula and best practices, and explore ways to advance this emerging vocation.

Advancing Biodynamic Research

Nine researchers from across the county, each unique in background, convened at the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute for two days this past June. Their purpose was to form a collegial working group, assess current research needs and opportunities, and set a course for the future.

After reviewing the results of an online research survey that the BDA had sent out to the wider biodynamic community, the group engaged in a conversation on research priorities and goals. Although individual scientists brought diverse research interests to the table, some consensus began to emerge around the following research needs: the effect of biodynamic practices on food quality, long term comparisons of conventional, organic and biodynamic farming systems, the role of nutrient cycling within biodynamic farming systems, as well the role of the biodynamic preparations and their potential modes of action.

The group also discussed the urgent need for increased animal and plant breeding efforts to provide new varieties specifically adapted to the needs of biodynamic and organic agriculture. This effort holds great potential to unify a large number of different interests and approaches, from raising food quality, improving nutrient use efficiency and weed control, to exploring morphological and Goethean approaches to plant and animal selection.

The researchers also embraced the idea of developing regional research groups. These groups would involve growers in the research process and result in the development of case studies documenting the functioning of successful biodynamic farms. They would also provide interested growers with a forum to begin to answer their own research questions. A need to make existing biodynamic research more available, including translating work not currently available in English, was also highlighted.

By the end of the meeting, the group had agreed to form an ongoing **Biodynamic Research Working Group** that will reach out to new members, meet annually, and develop a presence on the BDA website. The BDA will help this group move forward and seek out new funding sources for this important work.



Growing the Food Revolution continued

Zinniker Farm and Nourished by Nature

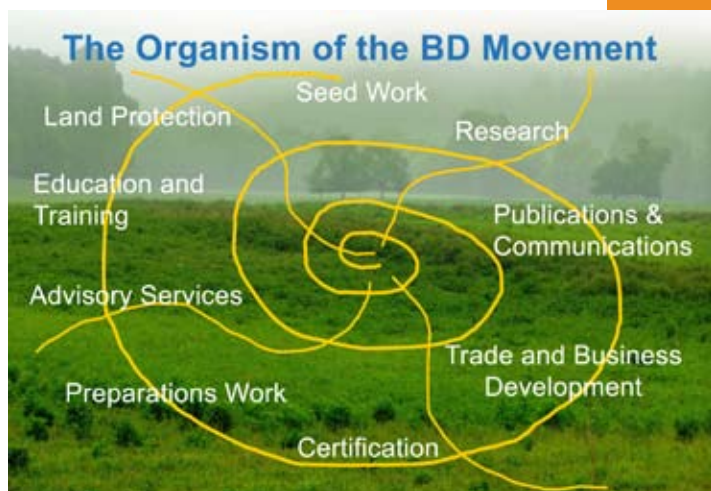
In 2009, Zinniker Farm, the oldest biodynamic farm in the country, had their raw milk operation shut down by the state of Wisconsin. Besides raising over \$8,000 to help the Zinniker's survive during this difficult time, the Association also secured a \$10,000 grant to help pioneer a new type of consumers association that is helping forge a new future for the farm and for similar operations around the country. Nourished by Nature LLC (NbN) is a member-owned LLC designed to purchase and hold agricultural assets to support family farmers and protect consumer rights. NbN now has 54 members and owns the Zinniker dairy herd. The Association is now supporting the development of a business plan that we hope will allow both NbN and the Zinnikers to flourish with a host of new farm-based enterprises.



Augusta Chronicle photo

Envisioning the Future

The forming of a new strategic plan is a key focus of board and staff at this time. Although not yet complete, it is coming into form, representing the fruit of hundreds of conversations that our Executive Director and board members have had with members, friends, local groups, and partner organizations across the country in the last eighteen months.



We are taking the time to listen and integrate your comments into our strategic planning process because we want to use our planning process to tap the deep sources of wisdom and transformation that live in our community. This is why we are taking the step to open up our strategic planning process even further to the wider community.

You can now visit our website to view a video of Robert Karp making a presentation about our emerging plan at our national conference. There you will also be invited to take a survey and give your comments about the planning process. Please also feel welcome to contact Robert or any one of our board members with your questions, ideas, or concerns.

Biodynamics in One Minute on CNN: What would you say?

A glimpse into the next generation of biodynamic farmers

“CNN is going to interview me tomorrow about biodynamic farming. I will have less than one minute to describe it. I need some inspiration. What would you say?”



Natt McFee Photography

Daron Joffe, a biodynamic farmer and entrepreneur from Atlanta, posed that question to a panel of young farmers at the opening night of our national biodynamic conference.

The audience buzzed as each panel member prepared to speak. It was a challenging question for everyone.

Andrew, a soft-spoken, young herdsman from Seven Stars Farm in Pennsylvania, was the last panel member to answer. He spoke simply, modestly. “Well, what I’d say is: In conventional farming, you are taking more from the earth than you are giving back. In organic farming, you try to give back the same amount as you take out. But in biodynamics, you give more back to the earth than you take out.”

So simple, so clear, so to the heart.

This is an example of what nearly a hundred young people brought to our national conference: urgency, directness, fresh forces. *A great conference became a turning point for the whole biodynamic community...a turning to the future...*

(By the way: When Daron Joffe was interviewed on CNN the next day, his remarks *were* inspired by what Andrew said. You can watch the video by searching for “joffe” at www.cnn.com).

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