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Wow last week was crazy! Mainly because a lot of Fri/Sat members (about 30 as near as I can figure) came on Wed or Thurs and didn't call ahead!! (thanks to the 4 people

that did, though). We ran out of produce at 1:00 Thursday afternoon and had to pull all the field crew off of the important work they were doing and have them pick more produce. This cost the farm a lot of money as they still had to do their other work. And then I have to figure out how to cover that cost in the budget that is already tight.

Please call ahead if you are coming on a day that is not your pickup day. We have to pick the correct amount of produce- can't just reach up on a shelf and get some. Answering machine is always on day or night.

Now for praise – I've hardly ever had to run out with my heart in my throat watching kids running with scissors pointed up at their faces to thwart a possible disaster. Thank you. The basil has been picked expertly by all (well almost- I did see a few plants chopped off). This means more basil for all throughout the season. Thanks! And the greens – people are picking just right. And people picking in the kid's garden are, well, kids.

In the shares: as I mentioned last week, we are between a lot of crops right now, so the shares are not as full as usual. Beans, more carrots, and gold beets (yum) are right around the corner.

Our warm summer: according to the "pick list" from the past two years, everything is about 2 weeks ahead of schedule. We are adding more crops of lettuce and other things to our planting plan so we will have enough of everything in October. We did lose some bok choy and lettuce seedlings cause we just couldn't keep enough water on it while it was small transplants, but other than that, we've been able to keep things alive and thriving. We have 2 wells, and run sprinklers day and night. Our well pressure is not sufficient to run much drip line (we have it in the tomato hoop houses) so we use upright sprinklers with low-pressure heads on them. Even so, we can only run 5 at a time, (each one only covers 2,000 sq ft) so it is challenging to cover the whole 700,000 sq ft of our growing area. Some crops like corn and squash require only two or three deep waterings throughout the season, onions don't need any at this time of year, so that helps.

I was going through the old newsletters from past years, and found a lot of stuff that I can re-print. Here's one I did in 2011 on the question of "why aren't you Certified?"

Organic Certification – to certify or not?

We are fortunate that we have a government run certification program, and although no system is without problems, it works pretty well. It's encouraging to see more stores with organic produce and other products, and that more farmers are farming organically. Some large corporate farms that still use harmful chemicals have an "organic division". Even though they are doing it just because there is increased demand for organics and money is the motivation (if it weren't, those farms would be totally organic), it still brings safer products to more people. Some countries (like China) don't have a government run inspection program for organics. Theirs is overseen by volunteers, which no doubt makes for lots of opportunities for payoffs, but even with such a weak inspection system, those products can be sold in our country as organic.

Up until a few years ago, the U.S. program was run by individual states. Now it is under Federal guidelines through the USDA. For a long while, CSA farms were exempt, with the reasoning being that it was a private contract between the consumer and farmer. Only produce that was sold on the open market had to be certified to claim to be organic. CSA model farms were either a group of consumers who secured land and "hired" a farmer to grow and manage produce production for the group, or a farmer who grew a large variety of produce and recruited members to purchase a share of the harvest. But then CSA original model changed to more of a distribution system, drawing produce from other farms,

brokers and wholesale distributors, with the farm growing less of the produce. The line of "direct from the ground" to the CSA member was broken. More "CSA" operations became on-line ordering systems with "share" packaging going on in facilities that were not even at the farms. So certification was then required even if a farm called itself a CSA, if it was to claim to be organic.

I know of only 2 farms (other than the RC) in this area that still retain the original CSA model. Two of them have never certified, and one was certified for many years and then dropped out of the program. In talking to these other farmers, I have found that the reasons for either not certifying or dropping out are pretty much the same, and can be divided into two categories: financial and philosophical.

The cost of certification is a tax on the gross income. The time (equals \$) to complete paperwork each year increases as the number of different crops are grown, as each crop has to be tracked and paperwork filled out for it. If a farm grows all or almost all of the crops that go into its distribution, that costs more. If a farm buys crops from other sources, the farm does not have to pay the tax on those items, nor do the paperwork. So basically, the way it is set up really encourages farmers to get a lot of it's CSA items from other sources. Erick Haakensen at Jubilee Farm (used to be certified) calls this a "virtue tax". For the Root Connection, I have figured out that it would cost (in fees and man-hour costs) about \$7,800 per year to keep up certification. In assessing the worth to this business, I feel it is negligible, because we wouldn't really be able to charge more for our product. Also, in order to cover the annual cost, I would really be forced to purchase in a lot of the CSA products. (Growing many products in succession is a lot more expensive than growing 5 or 6 main products and purchasing the rest at wholesale prices). Or we could eliminate the "open campus" where members have access to the farm. It is expensive – all those mowed paths (appx. \$2,000) – member relations staff in the farmstore (appx. \$8,000), u-pick areas, etc, etc. But then it really wouldn't be the CSA model that we like.

The philosophical part that I object to is that the fees we would pay to certify basically are paid to the same USDA that allows dangerous chemicals on the market. (In my opinion, the certification cost should be financed by a tax – maybe 1 tenth of 1%? - on farm chemical producers – yah, like THAT'S going to happen!) Recently, the USDA approved for use herbicides (weed killers) that are in a class called "pyridine carboxylic acids". This type of herbicide was banned years ago, but now allowed back. It is mainly for weed control in pasture. The problem with this particular herbicide is that it lasts for up to 6 years in the soil. It also does not breakdown in the digestive tract of animals (think dairy cows), and is in the manure. It also does not breakdown in the composting process, even high-heat processes like commercial compost makers use. Organic farmers in dairy areas that rely on compost made in part from manure have had crops fail due to the presence of this substance. Reputable compost producers have had their businesses ruined. One grower I know in Skagit Valley applied tainted compost to some of his fields and lost all the crops on that portion of his farm. In protest, he decided to drop his certification, even though the rest of his land was unharmed. It's just the principle of the whole thing. Livestock farmers who used this product are seeing illnesses and still-birth rates increase among their animals. (And the poison is now on their land – for 6 years)

A logical question might be: "So why did they use it?" The answer is that they were not told of the dangers – not only that, told just the opposite. And now even the organic farmers are feeling the effects.

The enormous amount of money, lobbying, false studies, false promises, that allow the USDA to bring us things like this, and allow GMO crops like the corn (that THEY even say is a "pesticide", not a "food") into the food chain is beyond moral comprehension to me. So the main reason why I and other farmers won't certify is that we won't pay into that system. Don't get me wrong – we need a certifying process – in general it's better than nothing, but as individual farmers we have a choice. Unfortunately, the USDA "owns" the word "Organic" so we have to give up our right to free speech unless we want to pay to use that word.

And, speaking of 2011 (the year of the "non-summer", remember?) I found I funny one I wrote in late July of that year (on the topic of "slug slime"!) that I will re-print next week. Bet you can't wait.....

More later - Claire

