



LAKEVIEW ORGANIC GRAIN
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SPRING 2009 NEWSLETTER

It's a beautiful day outside today, so pleasantly warm and the fields are drying fast! It is just the kind of day that makes us think that Spring is not far off!

And with that, our thoughts turn to seed! Here at Lakeview, our seed supplies are moving briskly, so we thought it would be wise to send you an updated seed price list. We still are well supplied with corn and soybeans, but small grains are dwindling fast. We can cover most needs with untreated conventional seed when we run short of some items, but you will probably need to get approval from your certifier before you purchase conventional seed. As the spring goes along, we'll be regularly posting new information on our website about seed availability and additional options. You might want to check out the website anyway for lots and lots of useful agronomic information about growing organic crops.

We also want to alert our dairy customers to new grain pricing. We're ending up the winter rather long on triticale and barley, so we've dropped our price on both, plus on the oats, to give you a little feed savings. Now triticale is priced below corn, making it very good value – triticale is similar in feed value to corn, but with a slightly higher protein (10-11%) and an average NEL of 0.77-0.80. When you order feed next, you may want to discuss with Daniel ways to incorporate more triticale in your ration – it WILL save you some money!

Often we get asked where we get our organic grain from, so here's the scoop on the feed grains we're selling at Lakeview–

Corn – 100% grown in New York and purchased directly from farmers (about 5% grown on our own farm)

Soybeans – 100% grown in New York and purchased directly from farmers

Small grains (triticale, barley, oats) – 100% grown in New York (well, a smidgen of the oats grown in Pennsylvania) and purchased directly from farmers

Sunflower meal – 100% US grown, pressed in Colorado by Sunopta

Peanut meal/Soybean meal – grown in Argentina by a co-op of organic farmers. Our friend, Lloyd Kerwin of Once Again Nut Butter in Nunda, NY has worked with these farmers for a long time and connected us to this excellent product and delightful group of farmers. We import it directly – no brokers involved, so the farmers make the profit

Soybean meal – manufactured by our friends at Sheppard Grain in Phelps, NY, right up the road from us!

And then, a few other things to think about. We had a truly excellent winter's season of NYCO meetings, thanks to Fay Benson, Cornell Univ/Geneva Experiment Station, our great speakers, and all the farmers who participated. It is a wonderful group! The theme of the meetings was "Risk Management in Challenging Times", a fairly pertinent thing to think about right now, and each NYCO newsletter addressed different aspects of Risk Management on our farms. Taken from those newsletters, here are 12 tips for making a profit on our farms this year (the entire newsletters are posted on the website)-

1. When starting a new farm or expanding an existing one, as much as possible, save your money until you have enough to buy something worth having. Borrowing may be unavoidable, but use debt carefully, don't be tempted to over-extend yourself. Interest is expensive, and getting out of debt is much harder than getting into it. Use as much of your own money as possible and use only modest estimates of likely production to determine how much debt you can comfortably repay.
2. Each year, accurately calculate how much money you will need for the

essential 'core' costs and then how much you will have left over for improvements and emergency reserve. Whenever possible Ω anticipate your costs, and make sure your core costs are covered before buying non-essentials.

3. Raise a crop of something uncommon with solid market potential. Such products will usually sell easily and bring a good price. Some experts call this 'niche marketing'. But as organic farmers, this really is what we're doing when we produce organic soybeans, milk, chickens, or cucumbers. Putting some of your acreage into some food-grade or direct-marketed products can add diversity to your farm potential. Often food-grade products bring higher income than feed-grade products, but the risk is higher, the labor/equipment demands may be expensive, and high quality is much more important.
4. Try to hit the market with your product in a way that takes advantage of scarcity. For vegetable farmers, this may mean producing extra-early sweet corn. For grain farmers, it can mean putting up grain bins so you don't have to sell everything out of the field at harvest. For dairy farmers, it may mean planning your peak production to miss the spring flush. Even in organics, the rules of supply and demand apply. Be very aware of the over Ω production or shortage status of your product in the current marketplace and try to determine whether that will change when your crop is ready to sell. It is possible that organic supply will sometimes exceed demand, especially if consumer buying patterns change due to the faltering economy. If that happens, what will you need to do to adjust?
5. When harvest comes, you've only just begun. Work just as hard and creatively at marketing it as you did at raising it. Educate yourself on the market, learn what buyers want and need from you. Figure out what you can do to become a more valuable supplier to them. Ask not (only) what your buyers can do for you, ask (also) what you can do for them Ω cooperation, trust and mutual benefit are important for stable long-term marketing relationships.
6. Determine how much you need to save from the profit on your crop for future operational costs. Sometimes it is hard to remember that the income from this fall's corn must be saved for next spring's corn, but that should be the goal. When planning improvements/purchases on your farm, determine first what you can do that is basically free (cleaning up, improving rotational grazing, maintaining equipment) and cheap (soil testing, tile drainage, liming, improving fertility of pastures and fields) before spending a lot of money on costly inputs, Always keep your equipment in good repair Ω breakdowns at inconvenient times are almost always more costly than keeping up with routine maintenance.
7. Whenever possible, buy quality. Some bargains are 'good deals' but many are not Ω learn how to tell the difference. Are you tempted by cheap livestock? Cut-rate inputs? Real steals at the auction? Ask the right questions, look things over carefully, and avoid impulse purchases. For animals, demand disease and parasite tests before buying. Try to determine whether you are really looking at a bargain, or at someone else's problem they're trying to unload.
8. Take excellent care of your plants and animals, daily - day and night if necessary. Unless they survive and thrive, you have no profit.

Selling low-quality products doesn't get you repeat customers. The old adage that 'the best fertilizer is a farmer's footprint' is still true, both for crops and animals. That means your footprints, not just your employees. Be attentive to detail and to quality.

9. Constantly learn about your product field. Subscribe to periodicals, read books, study resources on-line. Join farmer and trade associations, attend meetings, take classes, keep learning! Consult your banker, insurance agent, vet, nutritionist, seed/feed/fertilizer supplier and other professionals for advice, before there is a crisis. Learn all you can from their expertise and experience.
10. When you have questions, talk to others who are farming like you are or like you want to. In the organic world, there are many people who are eager to help and encourage. Don't stumble in the dark or repeat mistakes or there are lots of people who would be happy to help you.
11. Keep close track of your expenses and income so you can see exactly how you're doing and what you need to change. Pay all your bills on time so your credit-worthiness is top notch. That way, when you need a line of credit, loan or just a little extra time to pay, you can more easily get it.
12. Enjoy your profession! Farm with real interest and enjoyment. Stay interested and connected. And don't neglect to carefully cultivate the most important 'crop' you are growing on your farm or your strong and healthy relationships with your family, your spouse, your friends, your employees, and your community.