

Belfast Co-op News & Commentary

A natural food and products store serving Midcoast Maine since 1976

JAN./FEB. 2008

Maine's Fedco Seeds has deep co-op roots



By Erica Buswell

While the weather outside remains frightful, the garden growers amongst us are already envisioning plans for the coming growing season. If the work of art and feast of information that is the Fedco Seeds catalog hasn't yet showed up in your mailbox, be sure to pick up a copy at the Co-op.

Another Maine cooperative

Fedco is a cooperatively organized seed company that specializes in providing seed selections that show some heartiness for cold climates. In addition to providing seeds, Fedco also offers seed potatoes and onion sets through Moose Tubers; hand tools, soil amendments, pest controls and educational resources through Organic Growers Supply; trees, shrubs, fruits and perennials from its tree catalog; and flower bulbs and garlic through the bulb catalog.

Long relationship with Co-op

The Co-op has had a mutually supportive relationship with Fedco since our beginning. Fedco Seeds got its start in 1978 as a project of the Maine Federation of Coopera-

tives (Fed-Co), which also operated a cooperative food warehouse.

The Co-op utilized the federation on a regular basis to acquire the healthy and wholesome products that our members needed, as well as procuring seeds from its annual seed preorder.

The food warehouse folded in 1985, but Fedco continues to carry on its work through the seed business, meeting the needs of gardeners, growers and farmers nationwide.

Union of workers, consumers

Fedco is made up of a joint membership of its workers and consumers (60 percent worker- and 40 percent consumer-owned). As a consumer, you can join Fedco by submitting a \$1 refundable deposit and a note saying something to the effect of "sign me up." Membership benefits include the opportunity to vote for the board of directors (remember our 2nd Co-op Principle: Democratic Member Control) and a profit-share in the form of a patronage dividend.

Fedco's unofficial spokesperson and the brainstorm behind the seed division, C.R. Lawn, reports that the benefits of utilizing a cooperative business model are many. For one, co-ops allow for the financial and decision-making benefits to be spread out. There's not just one person sharing in the profits, but many. There's not just one person taking responsibility

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Winter specials a tradition here

The Co-op can help you beat those winter blues again this year. Besides all the meaningful community interaction you get while shopping, we've got some winter-only incentives to get you out of the house.

Our **Blue Monday Drawing** is back by popular demand. From now until April 1, we will be running a special promotion for our Monday shoppers: if you purchase \$10 or more in Co-op merchandise, we will enter you into a drawing for a \$25 gift certificate or the occasional gift basket at the end of the day. Every Monday is a new chance to win!

On Tuesdays, come on down to the deli and enjoy a deal on a **Soup and Sandwich Combo** between 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. For \$4.50, you can get half a grilled cheese and tomato sandwich and your choice of a cup of soup. It's a warming lunch!

The **Empty Mug Music Series** is coming back this winter as well. Look for information throughout the store and on our web site about the performers we have on tap and when they will be playing in our cafe. The event is free, but we pass the mug at the end of the night for whatever you can give to support our local musicians. A jamming night out!

Our biannual **SuperSales Day** is coming up in March. Shop on Wednesday, March 5 and enjoy a members-only 10 percent off all purchases excluding beer, wine and cigarettes. We do suspend the Member Advantage Program that day, in keeping with our policy of no double discounts. Don't despair, though. Sometimes the 10 percent off deal is a better way to go. Mark your calendars and get ready to stock up!

Belfast Co-op Store

123 High St.

Belfast, ME 04915

Phone: 207-338-2532

Fax: 207-338-5234

Web site: <http://belfast.coop>

E-mail: info@belfastcoop.com

Store Hours:

7:30 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily

Closed New Year's Day, Easter,

Thanksgiving and Christmas

General Management Team

Erica Buswell

Ronald "Goldy" Goldstein

Sanford "Pepper" Bush

Board of Directors

Kip Penney, board president

Debbi Lasky, co-vice president

Bindy Pendleton, co-vice president

Allen Ginsberg, treasurer

Susan Lauchlan, secretary

Kate Harris, staff representative

Zafra Whitcomb, staff representative

Karen Aveni

Richard Brown

Lorna Crichton

Scott Giroux

Wayne Kraeger

Michael Marino

Jerry Savitz

Paul Sheridan

Peri Tobin

Newsletter

Erica Buswell, editor

Mary Ruoff, copy editor, graphic designer

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ganizations doing the challenging and rewarding work of making it easier to produce and eat local foods. The discussion continues at the Maine Feeds Maine Open House on Jan. 15, part of opening day of the Agricultural Trade Show at the Augusta Civic Center. Drop by exhibit No. 149.

Plan for this to be to an annual event

Eat Local Challenge a success

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Eat Local Challenge and celebration dinner. We've deemed the challenge a huge success, with over 100 people in attendance at the celebration dinner on Dec. 5 at Belfast's Unitarian Universalist Church.

Everyone at the potluck dinner and contra dance brought a delicious dish to share made from entirely or nearly entirely 100 percent local ingredients (exceptions were made for spices and processing ingredients like rennet and

yeast). We had quite a feast!

How great it was to see a variety of growers and community members coming together to celebrate the year's bountiful harvest, and to hear comments like, "You really CAN grow lettuce in December in Maine." An educational, enjoyable time was had by all.

Another Eat Local Challenge is in the works for March. Details will be announced in the store and on our web site.

Co-op won't join cooperative grocers group for now

Thanks to those of you who shared your views regarding our possibly joining the National Cooperative Grocers Association. As of now, there is not strong support from our board or staff to pursue membership in this organization, so we are tableting our consideration of this opportunity. For more information about NCGA membership, visit their website, www.ncga.coop, or read an archived article in our July/August newsletter, available on our website, www.belfast.coop. You can still weigh in on this issue if you like: send comments to erica@belfastcoop.com, or drop board members a note at the store. We appreciate your participation.

Co-op Events: Jan.-Feb.

Café Gallery Art Shows Jan. 3-31: Co-op Staff Art Show featuring the colorful oil paintings of Michael Scott.

Wine & Food Tastings 7-9 p.m., Fri. Jan. 18 and Fri. Feb. 8 in the Co-op Café. 10% off wine purchases at tastings. You must be 21 or over to attend.

Belfast Co-op Board of Directors Meetings 6:30-8:30 p.m., Thurs. Jan. 24 and Thurs. Feb. 28, Waterfall Arts, 256 High St.

Movie Showing of "King Corn" Free (donations accepted), 1-3 p.m., Sat. Jan 26, Belfast Free Library, 106 High St.. A discussion facilitated by Logan Perkins from Food for Maine's Future follows the movie. In "King Corn," Ian Cheney and Curt Ellis, best friends from college, move from the East Coast to the heartland to learn where their food comes from. With the help of friendly neighbors, genetically modified seeds, and powerful herbicides, they plant and grow a bumper crop of America's most-productive, most-subsidized grain on one acre of Iowa soil. But when they try to follow their pile of corn into the food system, what they find raises troubling questions about how we eat and farm. Co-sponsored by the library and the Co-op.

SEAWEED TALK 1-2:30 p.m., Sat. Feb. 26, Belfast Free Library, 106 High St. Larch Hanson, owner of the Maine Seaweed Co. (www.alcasoft.com/seaweed/index.html), will give a free talk on seaweed, a very local food that he has been sustainably harvesting for 33 years. He will show a brief film on the harvest, hand out recipes, and share his years of experience harvesting and eating seaweed. Co-sponsored by the Co-op and the library.

For more information call Fran Clemetson at the Co-op, 338-2532, or e-mail her at education@belfastcoop.com

Buy a new specialty license plate to . . .

Support Maine agriculture when you register (and drive) your car

Maybe you have seen colorful new license plates cruising by. But did you know that the individuals who own these plates are making a statement that they support local agricultural education?

The Maine Agriculture in the Classroom Association (MAITCA) worked for three years to garner support for issuing this specialty license plate. The process required the organization to collect 2,000 names and signatures from supporters and raise \$40,000 in prepayments.

Available since the fall

On June 28, Governor John Baldacci signed LD 986, An Act to Establish an Agriculture Education Registration Plate (sponsored by Representative Wendy Pieh, chair of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry) into law. The plates became available Oct. 1.

The new plates were designed by artist and University of Maine Cooperative Extension Educator Charles Armstrong.

The brightly colored orange and yellow background depicts the sun rising over a coastal farm. In the foreground, a farmer walks hand in hand with his granddaughter, a nod to the idea that farmers contribute to the quality of rural life and need our support.

Maine has more than 7,000 farms

At the unveiling of the plates in October, Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap promoted the plates by saying, "I am pleased to know this plate will help to increase awareness and recognition for the over 7,000 working farms across Maine."

You can buy the plates for passenger, farm and commercial vehicles. They cost \$20 in addition to the regular motor vehicle registration

fee. Of this \$20, \$10 is transferred to a special fund for agricultural education programs, administered by MAITCA.

Educating about the environment

The organization administers teacher training programs that focus

The new plates were designed by artist and Cooperative Extension Educator Charles Armstrong. The brightly colored orange and yellow background depicts the sun rising over a coastal farm.

on agriculture and the environment and also connects classrooms with farms around the state to provide hands-on learning opportunities for students in grades K-12.

The renewal cost for the specialty plate is \$15 in addition to the regular registration fee, \$10 of which goes to the MAITCA fund. The remainder of the cost for both initial registration and renewal goes to the administration and production of the plate.

Buy plates through farm group

Due to the legal requirement that it find financial sponsors for the specialty plate, MAITCA still has vouchers that can be ordered through the organization.

While you can get the plates through the vehicle registration division of your town office, the \$10 in administration costs will go directly into the agricultural education fund if vouchers are purchased from MAITCA as the license plate's sponsoring organization.

To download an order form and view a sample of the new specialty plates, go to: <http://www.maineagriculture.com/aginclass/agtag.htm>

Co-op helping to lead talks on agriculture

Representatives from the Co-op recently took part in two events focused on promoting Maine agriculture and local foods.

In November, members of the Co-op's board and staff were part of a panel that discussed improving vendor/consumer relations at the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) Farmer to Farmer Conference.

Growers told us that it's hard to get vegetables from the farm to consumers as processed or packaged foods. Fewer people know how to cook meals from whole ingredients or preserve food. Consumers want foods they can prepare in 10 minutes.

Finding a market for excess is tough, too. Farmers also noted that our educational system isn't bringing more young, well-trained people into farming. Farms struggle to find adequate, affordable labor at peak harvest times.

As cooperators, we advocated for the creation of more producers co-ops. By pooling resources—capital, equipment, labor, transportation, production and educational facilities—perhaps we can overcome all the obstacles.

We heard about similar concerns and obstacles at the Maine Feeds Maine (MFM) discussions sponsored by the Cooperative Development Institute and made possible by the Maine Distance Learning Project. Co-op staff and a board representative also attended this event, where participants brainstormed about how to create more food and farm security for our state.

What we learned is that our state has many communities and or-

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CO-OP BOARD COMMITTEES

Call the contact person listed below for more information and meeting times. Not all committees meet regularly.

Board Development Committee Oversees board orientation, training, handbook and meeting process. Susan Lauchlan, 338-0406.

Bylaws Committee Reviews Co-op bylaws. Kip Penney, 722-3112.

Charitable Giving Reviews charitable giving policy. Ronald "Goldy" Goldstein, 338-2532.

Community Interaction Committee Responds to communications, especially complaints and grievances, directed to the board. Bindy Pendleton, 338-4256

Deli Committee Advises on deli operations. Jerry Savitz, 338-1492.

Elections & Annual Meeting Committee Plans and carries out elections and annual meeting. Debbi Lasky, 589-4546.

Environment Committee Advises on the store's physical environment. Scott Giroux, 323-0609.

Finance Committee Serves as financial advisor to management, oversees Co-op's finances. Allen Ginsburg, 338-1757.

Long-Range Planning Steering Committee Guides long-range planning process. Richard Brown, 338-3408.

Management Oversight Committee Meets regularly with general management team and evaluates team members. Bindy Pendleton, 338-4256.

Membership Education and Outreach Committee Advises on membership policies and matters, including member education. Susan Lauchlan, 338-0406.

Purchasing Committee Reviews our purchasing policy and process. Richard Brown, 338-3408.

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for the big decision-making, but many, as evidenced by the company's commitment to involving multiple staff members in the decision-making process.

Cooperative ownership has many financial benefits: tax laws let a percentage of a co-op's profits to stay in the hands of members in the form of patronage dividends, rather than in the hands of government as taxable income. The cooperative structure allows a continued source of working capital and cash flow, as tax laws let co-ops indefinitely defer a percentage of the dividends owed.

Pays out 20 percent of dividends

Fedco, by law, must pay out 20 percent of the dividends owed. If monies aren't needed to grow and maintain the business, the remainder of the deferred dividends that are still on the books get paid back. If any dividends get paid back this year, they will be for dividends that were deferred in 1994, followed by deferred dividends from 1995, etc. In addition, the co-op business model benefits the consumers of Fedco by concentrating buying power, allowing those who use its services to get quality products at reasonable prices.

C.R. reports that choosing to incorporate the seed business as a co-op was a no-brainer. The federation was

already up and running, with a labor force and warehouse space already in place. In addition, the need for quality seed was already established in the community. Fedco's earliest customers were other cooperatives looking for large lots of seed to preorder for customers.

Cooperation among co-ops (6th Co-op Principle) is still of the utmost importance in Fedco's business practices. C.R. cites that he would like to reach out and supply seed to more co-op storefronts outside of Maine. Fedco also buys some seed from the cooperatively organized enterprise Southern Exposure Seed.

Small farmers produce seeds

Fedco is also committed to procuring seed from small farmers and growers. Small growers provide 20 percent of its seed, particularly the uncommon seed varieties offered. Some of your neighbors might even be growing for Fedco, as our local growers are supplying the cooperative with various seed for dry beans, tomatoes, peppers and squash.

You can support Fedco's cooperative efforts by purchasing its seed at any of your friendly Maine food co-ops, or by ordering directly from www.fedcoseeds.com. Pick up a copy of Fedco's seed catalog here at the Co-op, or by calling (207) 873-7333.

In the Waldo Independent *Co-op has newspaper column*

We've heard from members that you are enjoying seeing our "Co-op Connections" articles in the new Living Green section of the Waldo Independent. We are grateful to the weekly newspaper for providing us with this new forum to promote the cooperative advantage, and to bring you news about sustainable agriculture, food politics and healthy living. In cooperative fashion, we want this to be a resource that meets your needs and gives you an opportunity to connect with other members of your Co-op community.

As this is a community-owned column, all members are welcome to write for it. If you have an issue you want to let your Co-op community know about, please consider using this forum. The column runs every two weeks and can accommodate articles between 700 and 900 words. Please submit articles to general manager Erica Buswell at erica@belfastcoop.com. We'll pass them onto the Independent. You can link to Living Green from our homepage, or visit: http://mainecoastnow.com/living_green/columns/the_co-op_connection



Book Club Book Review:

"Deep Economy" by Bill McKibben

Read by the Belfast Co-op Book Club

Reviewed by Fran Clemetson, education coordinator for the Co-op and Co-op member

What a fun time we've had this summer and fall having the Belfast Co-op Book Club meet at Board Landing Farm in East Belfast. A guinea hen, llamas, chickens and other farm animals graced our evenings on the back porch. When evenings grew cool we retreated indoors to comfortable couches to discuss the world food economy.

Our latest book selection, "Deep Economy" by Bill McKibben, provided insight about the value of small local farmers and how undervalued they are in the eyes of those in power who look at numbers based on economic growth. We had great conversations about communities around the world coming up with sustainable, innovative solutions to challenges like getting water and energy.

Innovative biogas digester

To me, the most impressive solution McKibben highlighted was the biogas digester. "If you have a cow, you can shovel its manure into a cement tank, where it ferments giving off enough gas to heat your shower and fire your wok . . . The residue from the fermentation is ideally suited for fertilizer, so the process is a closed loop. Which contributes to dignified lives without contributing much to the GNP [gross national product]."

There are so many benefits to sustainable systems, such as the biogas digester, that don't get valued by our capitalistic economic system, since they aren't marketable commodities. This also ap-

plies to our food system, where the value of the sustainable small farmer is greatly undervalued by our government. That is evident in the present farm bill, which supports big agribusiness.

Buying food from the local farm has immeasurable value, such as the sense of community one gets when going to a farmers' market. As McKibben notes, ". . . Sociologists studying shopping behaviors reported recently that consumers have ten times as many conversations at the farmers' market than they do at supermarket."

Interaction at farmers' markets

At a farmers' market we are more than a consumer; we are participating in our food system because we can speak face to face to the person growing our food. The same interaction is part of public radio and food cooperatives. The experience of participating in such enterprises nourishes us and ensures a localized system that better meets the needs of the community.

As much as we have enjoyed discussing books like "Deep Economy," we'll be shaking things up in the new year. In January we'll show the movie "King Corn" at 1 p.m. at the Belfast Free Library, 106 Main St. A facilitated discussion with Logan Perkins of Food for Maine's Future will follow. The event, co-sponsored by the library, is open to the public (our book club has space limits).

In "King Corn," Ian Cheney and Curt Ellis, best friends from college, move from the East Coast to

the heartland to learn where their food comes from. With the help of friendly neighbors, genetically modified seeds, and powerful herbicides, they plant and grow a bumper crop of America's most-productive, most-subsidized grain on one acre of Iowa soil. But when they try to follow their pile of corn into the food system, what they find raises troubling questions about how we eat and farm.

Come February we will turn our attention to gasoline consumption. As we all know, this is a timely topic, with gasoline as well as heating oil prices so high. Our society got hooked on grain-fed meat just as it got hooked on gas-guzzling automobiles. Big cars "made sense" only when oil was cheap; grain-fed meat "makes sense" only because the true costs of producing it are not counted.

Classic book next on list

With this in mind we'll spend one day discussing "Diet for a Small Planet." We'll compare this classic book to current information. It should be an easy book to borrow or find at the library, so we won't be ordering it through the Co-op.

Suggestions are welcome for March. Perhaps an article, a book, another movie? Something else? Times and dates will be announced, but we hope to start meeting again on Sunday afternoons at Belfast's Unitarian Universalist Church.

To learn more contact Fran at education@belfastcoop.com or call her at the Co-op, 338-2532.

Caldwell Farms: Top organic meat, dairy goods producer

Family farm in Turner was founded in 1944



By Erica Buswell

Whenever my family comes into town, they always want to be sure to get some of that “milk in the glass bottle.” While I love the milk from Caldwell Farms because it is delicious, packaged sustainably and locally produced, I think my parents like it because it reminds them of their childhood. Back then milk was delivered by the neighborhood milkman and perhaps came from a neighbor with a farm down the road.

For them, the glass bottles bring back memories of the community that grew out of food. They inspire a moment of nostalgic reflection, and they fondly recall a time when most of the fresh food available was produced from within the community, when they were on a first name basis with the local butcher and baker, and when three square meals a day were being lovingly turned out of the family kitchen.

Four generations at work

Buying local family farm products, like Caldwell's, at your friendly neighborhood Co-op preserves those opportunities to build and participate in communities. At the Caldwell family farm, four generations of farmers are working to bring you high quality organic and natural beef as well as organic dairy products.

The farm was established in 1944 by Lawrence and Hilda Caldwell on the North Parish Road in Turner. Today, it is managed by the second

generation: Ralph, his wife, Sandra, and their daughter Deedee. Lawrence still offers a hand, as do third and fourth generation family members.

Started out as a dairy farm

Originally run as a dairy farm (Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association-certified since spring 1999), the Caldwells expanded into MOFGA-certified organic and natural beef production in 2000. The cows are grass-fed and have the run of 600 acres of beautiful, pesticide- and herbicide-free fields. Their grazing is supplemented

The Caldwells raise Holsteins on the dairy side and Devon-Angus crosses on the beef side. The cows are not treated with growth hormones or antibiotics.

with locally grown, non-GMO grains, and, true to the standards of organic certification, the cows are not treated with any growth hormones or antibiotics.

The Caldwells raise Holsteins on the dairy side and Devon-Angus crosses on the beef side. The effort and love that goes into the care of these animals is evident in the quality of the farm's products.

Farm is also a meat distributor

In addition to the many cuts of Caldwell natural and organic beef that we offer in our meat department, you may also notice that we carry nitrate-free natural pork with the farm's label in the frozen meat section. Caldwell Farms acts as a distributor for Maine Farms Brand products, which are processed at Luce's Meats in Madison, the same processor that the Caldwells use for their United State Department of Agriculture-approved beef. If you

are looking for a nitrate-free bacon, you can find it in our freezer with the green Caldwell's label on it.

Four varieties of milk

Look for four varieties of Caldwell Family Farm brand milk in our dairy department. The Caldwells produce both raw (unpasteurized, unhomogenized milk) and pasteurized milk products. Ralph tells tale of customers from as far away as Massachusetts driving up to buy his family's milk, as that state bars the sale of raw milk within its borders.

If you want raw milk, look for the half-gallon glass bottles with the white tops or the plastic half-gallons with the red tops. All raw milk is bottled directly at the farm. It is labeled with the date it was bottled on and has a shelf life of two weeks.

Ralph reports that while the sort of customer that buys locally also want sustainable packaging, the plastic jugs offer a nice option for safely allowing a 4-year old to help themselves to a glass of milk.

We also sell quarts of delicious Caldwell raw cream; look for the copper top. Want local, pasteurized dairy products? Try the whole milk (red cap), skim milk (silver cap) or creamline milk (green cap), which is milk that is pasteurized but not homogenized. The creamline option is a favorite of home cheese makers. The pasteurized products are labeled with the sell-by date

Caldwell milk sold statewide

Caldwell's dairy products are available in its signature glass bottles at every co-op in the state and at other natural foods stores. You'll also find the farm's natural and organic beef at Maine co-ops as well as notable area restaurants like Francine's Bistro in Camden and the Badger Cafe in Union. Or come on down to our cafe and enjoy a delicious, natural Caldwell's beef burger cooked to order.

Check out Caldwell Farms' web site, <http://caldwellfarmsmaine.com>, or link to the site by visiting our web site, www.belfast.coop.