



# The Missouri Rural Crisis Center

A Voice for Family Farmers and Rural Communities

July 2006

## **Farmers Unite to Defeat Corporate Biotech Bill, Protect Democracy!**

“They’re gonna do what?” was the most common response from farmers when they heard about the Seed Bill.

Another attack on local democracy was waged by corporate lobbyists during the 2006 legislative session. Supported by St. Louis based Monsanto along with Bayer, Dupont, Syngenta, and the Missouri Farm Bureau; Senate Bill 1009, commonly called The Seed Bill would have stripped the power of local governments AND THE STATE by giving sole decision-making power over Missouri’s seed industry to the *Federal Government*. SB1009 would have eliminated the authority and ability of state and local elected representatives to protect the economic interests of Missouri’s family farmers.

“Pre-empting state and local authority advances neither conservative nor liberal values,” says Bill Christison, a corn and soybean farmer from Livingston County. “It only promotes corporate interests over the interests of family farmers and Missouri citizens.”

MRCC members and rice farmers from the Missouri Rice Association joined forces to defeat this dream legislation for biotech companies. “If (SB 1009) had passed, we’d have had no say about what could or couldn’t be planted,” says Sonny Martin, a bootheel rice producer. Last year the Ventria corporation attempted to plant pharmaceutical rice near commercial rice

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## **2005 Victory Creates Opportunities in 2006**

You can add Macon, Nodaway, Adair, Knox and Ralls to your list of counties that have enacted health ordinances to protect their citizens from the potential threat posed by Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

Missouri now has a total of 16 health ordinances, with 5 of those being enacted after the 2005 legislative session.

In 2005, MRCC’s and it’s 5,500 members won a major victory against

corporate agri-business and their allies (Farm Bureau and commodity groups) by defeating the CAFO Bill,

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*200 farm & rural citizens attend Missourians for Local Control forum on CAFOs in Kirksville Missouri.*

## **MRCC Annual Meeting, August 5th**

Join your neighbors and other MRCC members in planning the future of agriculture and rural communities in Missouri at MRCC’s 21st annual meeting in Chillicothe, Missouri on Saturday, August 5th. This years theme is “**Organizing to Win: Impacting Issues that affect our Farms and Communities**”

MRCC’s 2006 Annual Meeting will consist of a mix of workshops, farm and food policy panels, planning sessions, and, of course, Patchwork Family Farms pork (lunch will be provided).

MRCC’s Annual Meeting is a chance to, not only, get reacquainted with other members from around the state, but also a chance to provide input into MRCC’s programs and policy priorities.

**See insert to register and page 7 for more information.**

### **MRCC’s Annual Meeting**

**Saturday, August 5th  
9:30-3:00**

**Calvary Baptist Church  
206 Locust Street  
Chillicothe, Missouri**

**(Lunch will be provided)**

***Victories cont'd from page 1***  
 which would have taken away a county's ability to enact health ordinances, and thus protect their citizens.

MRCC organizing resulted in the only victory, in a final House floor vote, for working people, and for environmental, social, and economic justice in the 2005 Missouri state legislative session.

As the *Kansas City Star* said on May 15, 2005, the 2005 session produced the largest amount of business-aligned legislation that any lawmakers or lobbyists could remember. ***“For business interests, it was almost like finding a magic lamp on the steps of the Capitol: Rub. Wish. Repeat.”***

“All of the powerful industry groups were against us, but we won because we organized a powerful statewide coalition, and we had the facts!” said Margot McMillen, MRCC member and livestock farmer from Calloway County.

Since the win in 2005, MRCC knew it had to keep family farmers and rural community members involved in the CAFO and Local Control issue. Cargill also kept the anti-CAFO fervor relevant by claiming 30 new factory farms in Northern Missouri in 2006.

In response, MRCC along with other family farm and environmental groups formed Missourians for Local Control (MFLC), a network of organizations and individuals who believe that decisions about our communities should be made at the most local level possible—the level at which the very people who are impacted can best participate.

MRCC also distributed thousands of copies of *The Facts about CAFOs, Local Control and Health Ordinances* to rural communities threatened by Cargill and other factory farm corporations. In response to the public outcry of communities being targeted by factory farms

in North Missouri, MRCC held and spoke at numerous public meetings, which helped organize rural citizens in their own communities so that they could fight back against the potential health, economic and environmental harm posed by CAFOs.

After Macon County passed their health ordinance, the majority of citizens rejoiced at seeing the affects of real local democracy. “If MRCC didn’t fight and win the CAFO Bill in 2005, then the voice of the Macon community would never have been heard through this health ordinance,” said Janie Ellerbeck, MRCC member and Macon citizen. “We would have only smelled the power of factory farm corporations.”

### **What the Industry Doesn't Want You To Know about CAFOs**

- A Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) is an operation with over 1,000 beef cows or 2,500 hogs in confinement.
- Current state standards allow up to 17,499 hogs within 2000 feet of a residence.
- CAFOs can decrease property values up to 50% for neighboring property owners.
- Out of 106,000 farming operations in the state, only 388 of these are CAFOs. This is less than 1/2 of 1 percent.
- The smallest Class 1A CAFO can generate approximately the same amount of manure and feces, untreated, as a city of more that 70,000 people.
- Since 1985, the number of hogs produced in Missouri has virtually stayed the same, but the number of hog producers has decreased by 90%.
- Since 1985, The retail price of pork has increased 72% from \$1.62 to \$2.79, while during the same period, producers share of the retail dollar has decreased 25% from 44 cents to 33 cents.

## THE 2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### Bringing Farmer Voices to the Capitol

It is not everyday legislators see a bunch of farmers and rural folks walking around the capitol building lobbying for their communities and livelihoods. When they do see these farm-faces around their offices, they know that there must be serious business going on.

MRCC's Local Control Lobby Days did just that...they showed their elected representatives that rural citizens were not simply going to lay down and see their local county control slowly stripped from their hands.

This year, the capitol saw literally hundreds of farmers voicing their opposition to legislative bills, pushed by the corporate ag and pharmaceutical companies, that would have potentially affected their economic livelihoods, and thus way of life.

"Local Control is a Farm and Rural Value" read the stickers the family farmers and rural citizens wore as they went from office to office telling their legislators that they do not want the power to make decisions about their communities taken from them, and getting them to sign a *Local Democracy Pledge*.

"The Missouri Rural Crisis Center brings farmers' faces and voices to the State Capitol. Their presence was critical in defeating this anti-democratic bill," said Wes Shoemyer, State Representative 9th District, in reference to the CAFO Bill.



Linn County Commissioner, Jim Libby, Family Farms for the Future representative, Terry Spence, and MRCC program director, Rhonda Perry applaud as Representative Wes Shoemyer signs the *Local Democracy Pledge*

### Family Farm Wins and Losses

#### **SB1009 (The Seed Bill)-WIN!**

This bill would have prohibited any attempts to regulate any matter relating to the registration, labeling, sale, storage, transportation, processing, distribution, notification of use, use, or planting of seeds and other propagules

#### **National Animal Identification System-NAIS (HCR 33/SCR 31)-Win!**

Rep. Mike Dethrow and Senator Chuck Purgason introduced House and Senate resolutions both urging the federal government to keep the National Animal Identification System a voluntary program. Both resolutions passed.

#### **HB 1147-The Environmental Audit Privilege Bill (The Dirty Secrets Bill)-Win!**

This bill would have allowed industry to conduct self-audits, close any information contained in the audits from the public & employees as well as grants the polluter immunity from prosecution.

#### **HB 1010 (The Farmers Market Nutrition Program)-Win!**

The Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which provides vouchers for family farm raised produce to low-income seniors and WIC mothers, was reinstated in the 2007 state budget.

#### **HB 1149 (CAFO stormwater runoff defined as non-point source discharge)-Loss.**

The amendment redefined "point source" discharge to not include agricultural stormwater discharges and return flows from irrigated agriculture.

## LOCAL FOOD SUPPORTING LOCAL FARMS

Members of two MRCC programs have joined forces with the University of Missouri to promote family farm raised food. The *Show Me Local* campaign is designed to promote the consumption, distribution and marketing of safe, regionally grown food that will encourage sustainable agriculture and help to maintain farmers, who will sustain rural economies. We will continue to build on this project to increase the availability of healthy, fresh local produce and Patchwork Family Farms meat to both rural and urban Missouri citizens.

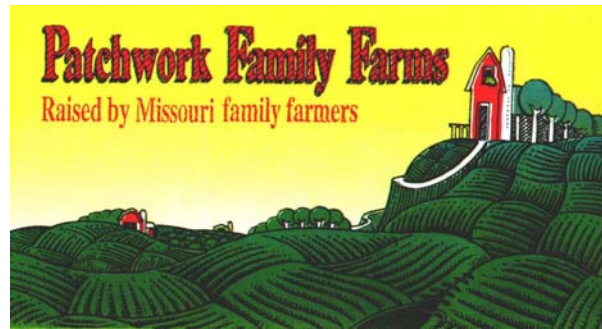
### **Patchwork Family Farms**

MRCC's economic development project, Patchwork Family Farms, provides a family farm alternative to the corporate food system by producing and cooperatively marketing sustainably raised pork products to consumers, restaurants and grocery stores in Mid-Missouri. Patchwork provides fair prices to their hog farmer members, while providing high-quality meats at an affordable price to Mid-Missouri consumers.

### **MRCC Food Cooperatives**

MRCC's Food Cooperative is a volunteer-run program designed to respond to the economic crunch in rural Missouri. MRCC helps to fill the need with nine food cooperative chapters that pool both financial and human resources, bringing reasonably-priced, high-quality food to areas hard hit by a contracting rural economy. Five hundred families participate in the program each month.

Participants in both programs are committed to increasing the amount of high-quality local food available to Mid-Missouri families of all income levels.



"In the last year, I have participated in MRCC's local food project to try to get more local food into our communities," said Charlotte Gaden, MRCC member volunteer. "Our coops are committed to helping Patchwork Family Farms grow and to try to get more locally raised products out to our members."

### **A few highlights of the project in the last year...**

- distributed 21,800 pounds of family farm raised produce to 1,800 rural Missourians, and over 110,000 pounds of sustainably raised pork to local restaurants and consumers.
- led a successful effort to get the Farmers Market Nutrition Program reinstated in the state's budget.
- added nearly 2,000 in-season apples per week to Patchwork Family Farms distribution network to the University of Missouri Dining Service.
- created an active network of over 2,000 local food supporters.

We have been very successful at increasing the amount of food being raised for local markets and the number of families that have access to that food, but there are many challenges still to be addressed. Because the growing season in Missouri lasts 4-5 months, MRCC will obtain the materials and equipment needed for freezing and canning of local produce, and making it available to our chapters for cooperative use over the non-growing season. Look in upcoming issues for information about MRCC trainings on local food storage, preparation and processing.

## Why Buy Local?

### 1. Local food supports local farm families -

Farmers now get less than 10% of the retail food dollar. Local farmers who sell direct to consumers get full retail price for their food - which means farm families can afford to stay on the farm.

### 2. Locally grown food tastes better -

Food grown in your own community was probably picked within the past day or two. It's crisp, sweet and loaded with flavor. Studies show that the average distance food travels from farm to plate is 1,500 miles. In a week-long (or more) delay from harvest to dinner table, sugars turn to starches, plant cells shrink, and produce loses its vitality.

### 3. Local produce is better for you -

Produce loses nutrients quickly. Food that is consumed or frozen/canned soon after harvest is actually more nutritious than some "fresh" produce that has been on the truck or supermarket shelf for a week.



## How to Buy Local.

- Visit your local farmers market for fresh, in-season produce.
- Call the MRCC office to obtain a copy of the *Eat Well, Do Good* guide to buying local.
- Visit <http://foodcircles.missouri.edu/> to learn more about purchasing local food in Missouri.
- Ask your supermarket to carry produce from local farmers or in Mid-Missouri, visit *The Root Cellar*, an "all local" grocery store.
- To purchase Patchwork Family Farms pork products visit [www.patchworkfamilyfarms.org](http://www.patchworkfamilyfarms.org), come by our office, or just give us a call at (573) 449-1336.



Roger Allison serves up samples of Patchwork pork and local produce to customers in downtown Columbia.

To contact us...  
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 production in South Missouri. Rice farmers saw this as a real threat to their markets because there is no market for GMO or pharmaceutical rice, domestically or internationally.

MRCC generated hundreds, if not thousands, of calls to legislators from farm and rural constituents, voicing their concern with the possible negative implications of the Seed Bill.

Senator Barnitz, Purgason and Mayer stood up against the Seed Bill on the Senate floor and spoke eloquently on the importance of local control and the protection of markets for Missouri's farmers. Please call these Senators and thank them for their opposition to the Seed Bill.

MRCC does not foresee any plans to regulate biotech seeds in the near future, but if they try another Ventria debacle, with rice or any other crop, that could destroy markets for farmers, our elected officials must have the authority and ability to protect our economic interests.

"This win for family farmers clearly demonstrates that Missourians do not want decisions that will impact our economic livelihoods being made by corporate lobbyists and bureaucrats who have no accountability to Missouri's family farmers and rural economies," said Rhonda Perry, program director of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center.

But the fight is not over. According to an industry spokesperson, they intend on bringing the bill back in 2007.

## The Real Winners & Losers of US Farm Policy

It should be no surprise to see who really benefits from current ag-policy; after all, we are experiencing the best farm policy corporate money can buy, and boy, they are getting their moneys worth.

The 1996 & 2002 Farm Bills have led to low farm prices and the need for billions of dollars in federal payments to prevent a total collapse of the farm economy. Between 1996 and 2001, we saw government payments triple and net farm income (including government payments) decline 16.5%.

In 2004, four corporations control 84% of the beef slaughter and 64% of hog procurement, and the producer share of every consumer dollar has dropped to 10%.

The current system benefits multinational corporations such as giant exporters and processors and retailers who profit by buying the cheapest commodities from all over the world, processing them and selling them in markets with no real competition. Under-priced corn and soybeans are the two main sources of manufactured feed. Since feed costs account for 48% of industrial hog production costs, this gives corporate livestock producers a competitive advantage using cheap grain to the detriment of diversified family farmers.

### The Answer

The goal of US farm and food policy should be

economically and environmentally sustainable production, processing and distribution of an adequate supply of quality food at affordable prices.

MRCC believes that the independent family farm system of agriculture is the most efficient way to ensure healthy rural economies and communities, a safe and abundant food supply and preservation of our natural resources and biodiversity.

Current farm policies are no accident. They were created by our elected policy makers and can be changed by elected officials.

MRCC works with and plays leadership roles in a number of national farm and food organizations including the National Family Farm Coalition, the Rural Coalition, the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, the Community Food Security Coalition and the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment (CFFE).

Currently, MRCC and other member groups of the CFFE are working to unite sustainable ag and family farm organizations by launching a campaign around the 2007 Federal Farm Bill that is designed to protect the environment and provide economic stability for family farmers, instead of letting the agribusiness giants once again dictate the direction of the Federal Farm Bill.

We are currently gathering petition signatures for reform of US farm policy in the 2007 Farm Bill. *See insert to sign.*

### What you can do:

- Sign the inserted petition. You can get additional copies sent to you by contacting our office at (573) 449-1336.
- Join our Federal Farm Policy action alert list.
- Attend the MRCC Annual Meeting on August 5th .

### MRCC Federal Farm Policy Positions

- Demanding a fair, open and competitive marketplace for independent family farm producers, including: enforcing current anti-trust laws, banning meatpacker ownership of livestock, ensuring that all livestock contracts are publicly traded, stopping mandatory animal ID, and labeling imported meat so US consumers can choose to support US livestock producers.
- Addressing the issue of cheap grain prices. Farmers should receive more of their income from the marketplace and be less dependent on commodity subsidies. As long as corporate agribusiness has access to grain far below the cost of production, independent family farmers who raise their own grain to feed their livestock will be at a definite disadvantage.
- Fully implementing the Conservation Security Program to the extent that it can significantly increase

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## Think Medicaid Cuts Don't Affect Your Community?

Think again. According to a study by the University of North Carolina, Medicaid cuts are particularly significant in rural areas because of higher levels of poverty, more rural elderly, less access to employer sponsored insurance and potential transportation barriers. In addition, rural providers are more dependent on Medicaid reimbursement than their urban counterparts. Unfortunately, there has been little focus on the rural impact of Medicaid cuts.

MRCC food cooperative member, Janet Hubbard, agrees. "Rural people are often forgotten. People think this is an inner city issue, but people in rural Missouri need medical care too."

Janet, who lives in Dawn, Mo, is experiencing first-hand the impacts of Missouri's Medicaid cuts passed by the state legislature and signed into law by Governor Blunt last year. Her income is \$7,200 per year and Medicaid is her sole source of health insurance. Even with Medicaid, Janet spends over 25% of her yearly income on prescriptions and doctor co-pays, along with eye and dental care. After paying rent and transportation costs, it is all she can do to simply put food on the table. "Sometimes I just can't do it," says Janet. "Sometimes I have to go hungry."

Unfortunately, Janet is not alone. In a survey by the Missouri Budget Project and the Missouri Association for Social

Welfare (MASW), 34% of respondents say that they will have to cut back on food and 36% said they will cut utilities. Of those saying they will have to cut back on food, 49% were elderly and 45% were people with disabilities. Access to dental and eyeglasses was also hard-hit; 40% lost dental services and 50% cannot get eyeglasses.

Sharon Feltman, director of the Health Access Project for MASW, believes "the state should evaluate the impact of the loss of Federal Medicaid money on the healthcare providers and on local economies."

The impact on rural economies is likely to be significant. In addition to being a major source of health insurance for many low income rural families, Medicaid is also a critical economic player for healthcare providers, including rural health clinics, hospitals, nursing homes and pharmacies.

Some rural nursing homes are getting less Medicaid money per patient than the cost of a double occupancy room. This does not include staff and utilities. This makes it difficult to provide adequate care, decreases the number of jobs and may result in fewer health providers in rural communities. In rural areas, the loss of a few healthcare providers can have a major impact on the health care infrastructure and the local economy, as healthcare tends to be one of the major employers in many rural communities.

Join Us for the 2006  
MRCC Annual Meeting  
9:30-3:00

### Workshop Topics...

- **The futures of CAFOs, Local Control and Health Ordinances.**
- **Federal Farm and Food Policies that affect You.**
- **Add income to your farming operation through Conservation Programs.**
- **Local Food Supporting Local Farms: where to get it, and how to prepare, preserve and store fresh, local produce.**

### *Policy Positions continued from page 6...*

family farm income to those family farmers whose production of livestock, grain and other products provides benefits to the soil, water and natural resources.

- Eliminating taxpayer subsidies to factory farms and holding factory farm corporations financially liable for pollution caused by their operations.
- Promoting independent livestock producers by expanding support for family farm marketing efforts, as well as locally owned processing and distribution
- Redirecting local public food procurement policies to local producers.

## Who is *Really* Behind Animal ID ?

Missouri livestock producers believe it is extremely important to ensure consumer confidence in the safety and health of the US food supply while at the same time ensuring the economic viability of independent livestock producers. Unfortunately, mandatory animal ID meets neither the needs of producers nor consumers.

Producers in Missouri and around the country are realizing that the proposed animal ID plan brings more costs than benefits. In April, over 200 farmers from around the state gathered at the capitol to oppose mandatory animal ID.

To their credit, state legislators responded by passing resolutions opposing mandatory animal ID. **They heard loud and clear that independent producers do not want this program.**

Our organization markets thousands of pounds of pork each year, and consumers buy our meat because they know where it came from and how it was raised. We have never had one request for a pork chop that came from a hog with a computer chip in its ear. The proposed animal ID plan does not provide one shred of information to the consumer. They cannot tell what farm, state or country their meat comes from. All meat, whether raised in Missouri or Japan has the USDA label. **Consumers are not asking for animal ID.** So, if neither consumers nor producers are demanding animal ID, just who is?

Supporters of a mandatory program include the companies selling the equipment, USDA, who wants to pretend to be the watchdog of food safety, some commodity groups who would love for the government to contract with them to administer

the program (for a price) and the meat-packers who want even more information about the location, age and number of livestock coming to the market so they can further consolidate the marketplace. If the USDA would simply do its job by ensuring adequate, consistent inspections, providing honest communication and information to US consumers and potential trading partners and protecting US borders from unsafe imports of beef and cattle, then the threat of disease outbreak would be diminished, consumer confidence would increase and independent family farm livestock producers could avoid yet another challenge to our economic livelihoods.

It is not too late to stop the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) . We should say no to cooperation and NO to mandatory animal ID!

By Rhonda Perry



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