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Agriculture of the Middle:
New Strategies to Support America's Mid-sized Family Farmers

Presenter Profiles

Regina Beidler, dairy farmer and owner in Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative

Regina Beidler and her husband, Brent, milk 35 cows on a 150 acre dairy farm in central Vermont. They purchased their farm in 1998 and immediately started transitioning the land to organic production and have been certified organic since the spring of 2000. The Beidlers are farmer owners at Organic Valley/ CROPP Cooperative, the largest organic cooperative in the United States with over 1600 farmer owners. Regina is the regional coordinator for Organic Valley's Farmer Ambassador Program on the East Coast. This program connects farmers with consumers and retailers. Regina comments, "This role has allowed me to see the clear partnership that exists between farmers who produce organic products and the consumers who buy it." In addition to organic dairy, the Beidlers raise a small number of acres of small grains for local flour sales and seed sales to farmers.

Diana Endicott, founder and coordinator of Good Natured Family Farms

Diana and her husband Gary moved back to Southeast Kansas to farm. Gary's grandfather, Earl Endicott, had the number one homestead in Southeast Kansas in the 1800s. Diana and Gary's major goal was to make the farm self-sustaining; in the late 1990s, Diana began to reach out to a local grocery chain, Hen House Markets, to sell tomatoes she grew on farm. From there, she developed the Good Natured Family Farm Alliance with other small family farms to market natural and organic local foods to all of the Hen House Markets in Kansas City. Today she and her husband raise both cattle and chickens and own and operate a USDA inspected meat-processing plant. The brand now includes over 40 farmers, who sell both through the coop, and through other channels.

Karl Kupers, farmer and co-founder of Shepherd's Grain

Karl Kupers began as a conventional grain farmer in Harrington, Washington. As the price of wheat fell steadily, Karl faced the choice of finding another line of work, or buying up more land and expanding. Neither of these choices seemed satisfactory, so instead, starting in 1996, with a small SARE grant, he began to test alternative growing methods including diversified cropping, and direct-seeding, "no-till." As he began to transition his farm to more sustainable growing practices, he also began to think about how to move from a "price-taker" to selling his product directly to bakers in the region at a price that covered the cost of production. In 1999, he co-founded Shepherd's Grain, a cooperative which now



includes 33 farmer-owners who market their wheat throughout the Pacific Northwest. In April 2010, Karl was honored with the Natural Resources Defense Council's Business Leader Award for his work with Shepherd's Grain.

Gary Pahl, farmer and owner of Pahl's Farm and Market

Gary Pahl grows flowers, sweet corn, cabbage, green beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, squash, and pumpkins on 1,110 acres Apple Valley, Minnesota. His family owned and operated business was established in the early 1900's and has been in the family for five generations. In the late 1970s, the family began to move the farm from Bloomington, MN, south of the river to Apple Valley, Minnesota and started to sell farm-fresh produce out of the back of a truck. In the 1980s, Pahl's Market was established. Over the years, the market has grown to include a full scale Garden Center, Landscape Department, Homegrown Produce, Gifts, Seasonal Decorations, and much more. Today, Pahl's is famous both for its unique retail market and its homegrown produce, which is sold seasonally direct to consumers at Pahl's Market and also through regional distributors to institutions including schools in the St. Paul area.