

1/27/11

Overviews:
Agriculture
in Alaska

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Agriculture in Alaska</SUBJECT><COMM>HEDT27</COMM></TARGET>

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRADE,
& TOURISM



Representative Bob Herron, Chair

State Capitol Building, Room 411

Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Phone (907) 465-4942

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Rep.Bob.Herron@legis.state.ak.us

Rep. Peggy Wilson, Rep. Berta Gardner, Rep. Kurt Olson, Rep. Wes Keller,
Rep. Cathy Muñoz, Rep. Neal Foster, Rep. Steve Thompson, Rep. Chris Tuck

Date: January 20, 2011

To: Suzi Lowell, Chief Clerk

From: Rep. Bob Herron, Chair

Re: House Economic Development, Trade, and Tourism Committee Schedule

Schedule for House Economic Development, Trade, and Tourism

Tuesday, January 25th at 8:00 AM in House Finance Room 519

Joint with HCRA: DCCED Overview on Division of Economic Development

+ Teleconferenced

Tuesday, January 25th at 10:15 AM in CAP 124

Committee Goals and Priorities

+ Teleconferenced

Thursday, January 27th at 10:15 AM in CAP 124

Agriculture in Alaska: Opportunities and Innovations

+ Teleconferenced

[After Souix-z, I'll fade away and Pete Fellmen will come up and do the last two presenters: McBeath (powerpoint then questions) and Wrigley (movie and then questions).]

Economic Development, Trade, and Tourism Committee (EDT)
Thursday, January 27th at 10:15 AM
Agriculture in Alaska: Opportunities & Innovations

1. **Tim and Lisa Meyers**, Meyers Farm, P.O.Box 30, Bethel Alaska 99559
meyersfarm.net; meyersfarm@gmail.com 907.543.1270

Tim and Lisa have been farming in Bethel since 2003 and have learned to grow large quantities of organic vegetables in their Arctic climate. They use fish waste from the Kuskokwim river for fertilizer and built an underground root cellar that can hold 200,000 pounds of vegetables. They use alternative energy to keep the root cellar warm in the winter and cool in the summer, allowing storage and selling of vegetables year round.

They will be planting about 10 acres of land this year and hope to harvest about 50,000 pounds of crops. They are currently shipping vegetables to some of the villages and hope to sell to many of the villages year round. In a year or two, they should be able to supply a portion of the Delta with much healthier organic food.

A few more farmers with similar operations would go a long way toward food security for Alaska.

2. **Sioux-z Humphrey Marshall**, Northern Latitudes, Hydroponically-grown MicroGreens nlcea.com Siouxz@nlcea.com 907.240.6363

Sioux-z Humphrey Marshall is co-Owner and CEO of Northern Latitudes Controlled Environment Agriculture (NLCEA). She holds an MBA from Alaska Pacific University and a Bachelor's degree in marketing from San Diego State University. Her expertise is in business start-up and entrepreneurial education. Her professional background includes IT and business consulting and project management for numerous Alaska clients, including CTG, Qivliq, and TKC Communications. She is founder and CEO of her own 20-year business and project management firm, Strides, and has lead implementation teams in enterprise software, small business and joint venture start-up, federal schedule management, and business analysis.

Northern Latitude CEA (NLCEA) is a "controlled environment agriculture" indoor farm servicing the Alaska marketplace 12 months a year. The first crop is the very popular Hydrolicious micro greens: a nutrient rich, early-growth, hydroponically fed, potpourri of micro red, yellow, and orange beets, pea shoots, sunflower shoots, corn shoots, micro cilantro, micro chervil, micro arugula, micro carrots and micro celery.

NLCEA is currently selling Alaska Grown-certified greens at numerous restaurants in Southcentral Alaska. Their produce is available retail at the indoor farmers' market every Wednesday at the Northway Mall in Anchorage. NLCEA may soon provide technical expertise as one of its products and is exploring the idea of marketing custom-made micro green kits for communities who want to provide their own greens.

3. Dr. Jenifer Huang McBeath – Alaska Seed Potatoes Export to Asia

jhmcbearth@alaska.edu 907.474.7431

Jenifer Huang McBeath was born in Chengdu, China. She received a B. S. degree in plant pathology and entomology from National Taiwan University in 1965, a M.S. degree in plant pathology from the University of California, Davis in 1970, and a Ph.D. degree in plant pathology from Rutgers University in 1974. Presently, she is Professor of Plant Pathology and Biotechnology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. McBeath was one of the first plant pathologists in Alaska to study diseases in agricultural crops. She excels in innovative, effective and environmentally benign means of plant disease control. For more than thirty years, she has tirelessly educated students, farmers and policy makers on plant pathology principles and impacts to the Alaska economy and environment. McBeath was recognized by her exceptional achievement in the development of lab-tested, disease-free seed potato for export. She was the only academician to negotiate and co-authored the phytosanitary protocols for exporting U.S. (Alaska) seed potatoes at the US/China bilateral talks on agricultural products. The cold-tolerant, *Trichoderma atroviride*, discovered and developed by her, proved to be efficacious in the treatment of snow mold and other pathogens in both cold and temperate climate regions. Among her many awards are the prestigious ‘Usibelli Distinguished Professor’ and “U.S. Embassy Scientist Fellowship award.”

Dr. McBeath will address the history, challenges and prospects of exporting Alaska seed potatoes to China and other Asian countries.

4. Bryce Wrigley, President, AK Farm Bureau

biwrigley@gmail.com 907.687.9924

Bryce Wrigley farms 2000 acres in Delta Junction. He moved to Delta Junction in 1983 and has raised hay potatoes, hogs, barley and wheat over the last 28 years. Delta is the largest grain-producing region in Alaska and supplies most of the in-state livestock market with barley and straw.

Mr. Wrigley is the president of the Alaska Farm Bureau, an agricultural advocacy organization that represents over 350 farm families in Alaska. Their mission is to promote the development of agriculture to increase the food security of Alaska.

Mr. Wrigley’s presentation will focus on some current opportunities for agriculture in Alaska, increasing our food security, and using agriculture as an economic development engine in rural Alaska.

Indoor winter 'farm' is producing micro vegetables

By STEVE EDWARDS
Daily News correspondent
(01/04/11 20:58:42)

In Alaska, giant cabbages and other huge plants generally rule the garden.

But a couple of local growers are going the opposite direction -- they're cultivating micro produce. Sioux-z Humphrey Marshall and Rusty Foreaker have teamed up to create Northern Latitude Controlled Environment Agriculture.

In a 1,300-square-foot warehouse on Arctic Boulevard, they are growing "micro greens" indoors in a custom-designed hydroponic system. Among the greens they produce are broccoli, pac choi, arugua, beets, cress, endive, basil, cilantro, radish, pea shoots and corn shoots.

"People are familiar with sprouts," Marshall says. "If you wait a little longer, you have micro greens. You harvest them when they are between five and 20 days old.

"You're harvesting baby plants, but they taste exactly like their full-grown vegetable counterparts. Actually, sometimes you have really intense flavors. The radish has a crazy strong, fabulous flavor."

Like many new food trends, Marshall says, the micro green concept can be traced to California. In fact, a California company was supplying the micro greens in Alaska. However, Marshall says wholesaler Food Services of America is now using Northern Latitude's produce.

While most people probably haven't used micro greens at home, they might have tasted Northern Latitude's foods at several of Anchorage's restaurants, including Hot Stixx, Bear Tooth Grill, Ginger, Kincaid Grill, Marx Bros. and Southside Bistro.

"We've been selling to local restaurants since August," Marshall says. "We've kind of been experimenting with shelf life and such."

Right now, she says, the produce lasts about two weeks if properly cared for in the refrigerator. The company is selling 4-ounce containers to local restaurants for \$18.

Marshall says they hope the company will grow and create a unique Alaska product.

"We think this has the ability to make a profit and serve a real need here," she says. "This is something that can be sustainable in rural Alaska. You can turn a closet in a school into a small place to grow micro greens. People won't be getting an apple, but they will be getting fresh produce."

For more information about the company, visit www.nlcea.com.

Steve Edwards lives and writes in Anchorage. If you have a suggestion for a future Market Fresh

column, please contact him at sedwards@adn.com.

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(www.adn.com)



ALASKA FARM BUREAU, INC.

Bryce Wrigley, President
bjwrigley@gmail.com

Jane Hamilton, Executive Director
janehamilton99737@yahoo.com

February 2, 2011

Representative Bob Herron, Chairperson
Economic Development and Trade Committee
Alaska State Legislature
120 4th Street, State Capitol, Room 3
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Representative Herron,

Thanks for the opportunity to speak to you and the members of the Economic Development and Trade Committee last week.

Agriculture is extremely important to the health and food security of every Alaskan. We are encouraged by the interest that the industry is beginning to attract from our citizens as well as the legislature. There are great opportunities for growth - from increasing the amount of locally grown food for our kitchen tables to producing our own flour and exporting seed potatoes. These will bolster the income of agricultural producers and provide new job opportunities across the state.

Your interest in agriculture is greatly appreciated and the Alaska Farm Bureau looks forward to working with you. We need to remove some of the obstacles that prohibit growth within the industry as well as provide some of the infrastructure that will increase the amount of food grown within the state for the enjoyment and health of it's citizens as well as the security of our state as a whole.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about agriculture, our food, or the food security of our state.

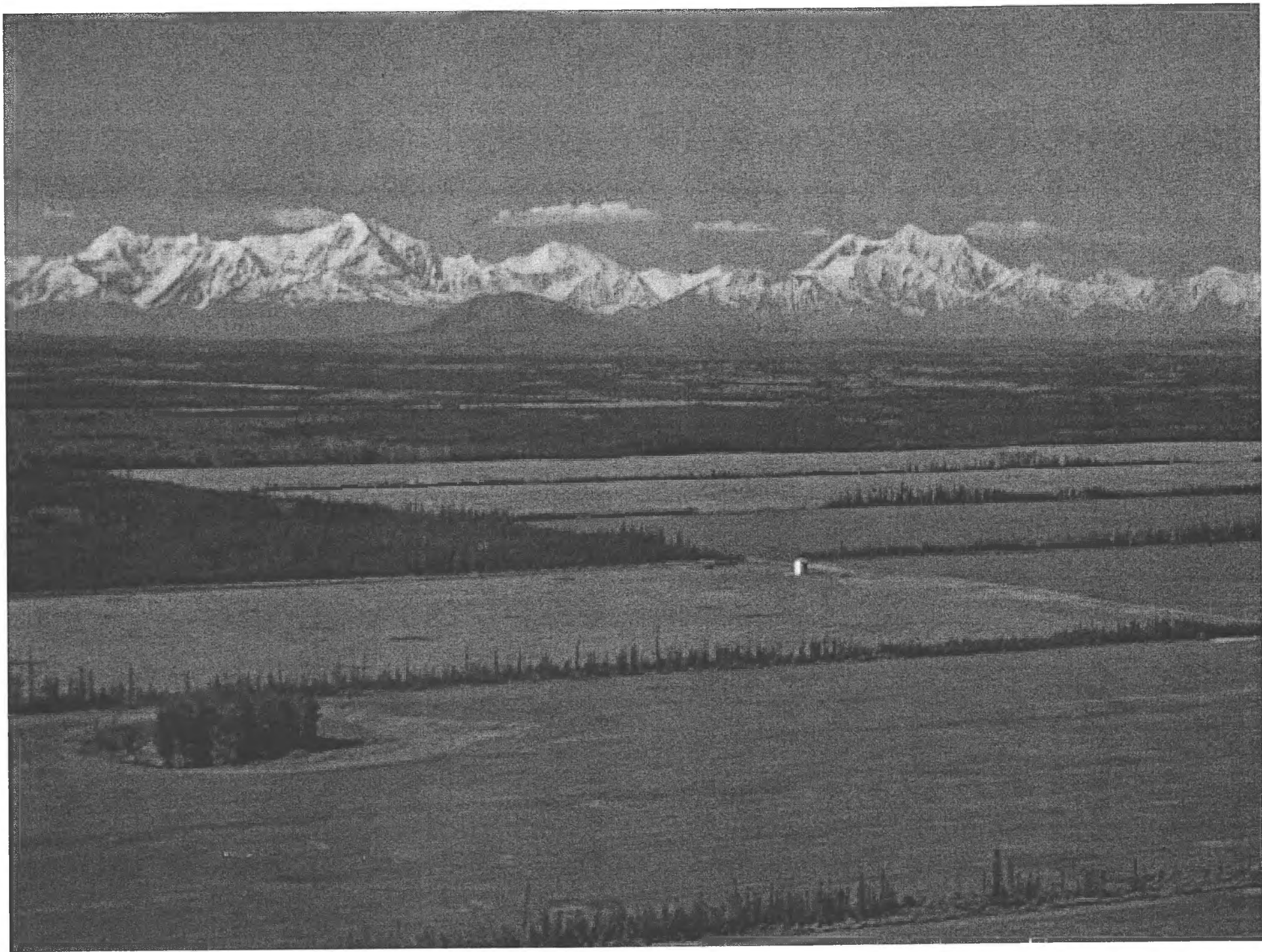
Best regards,


Bryce Wrigley,
President

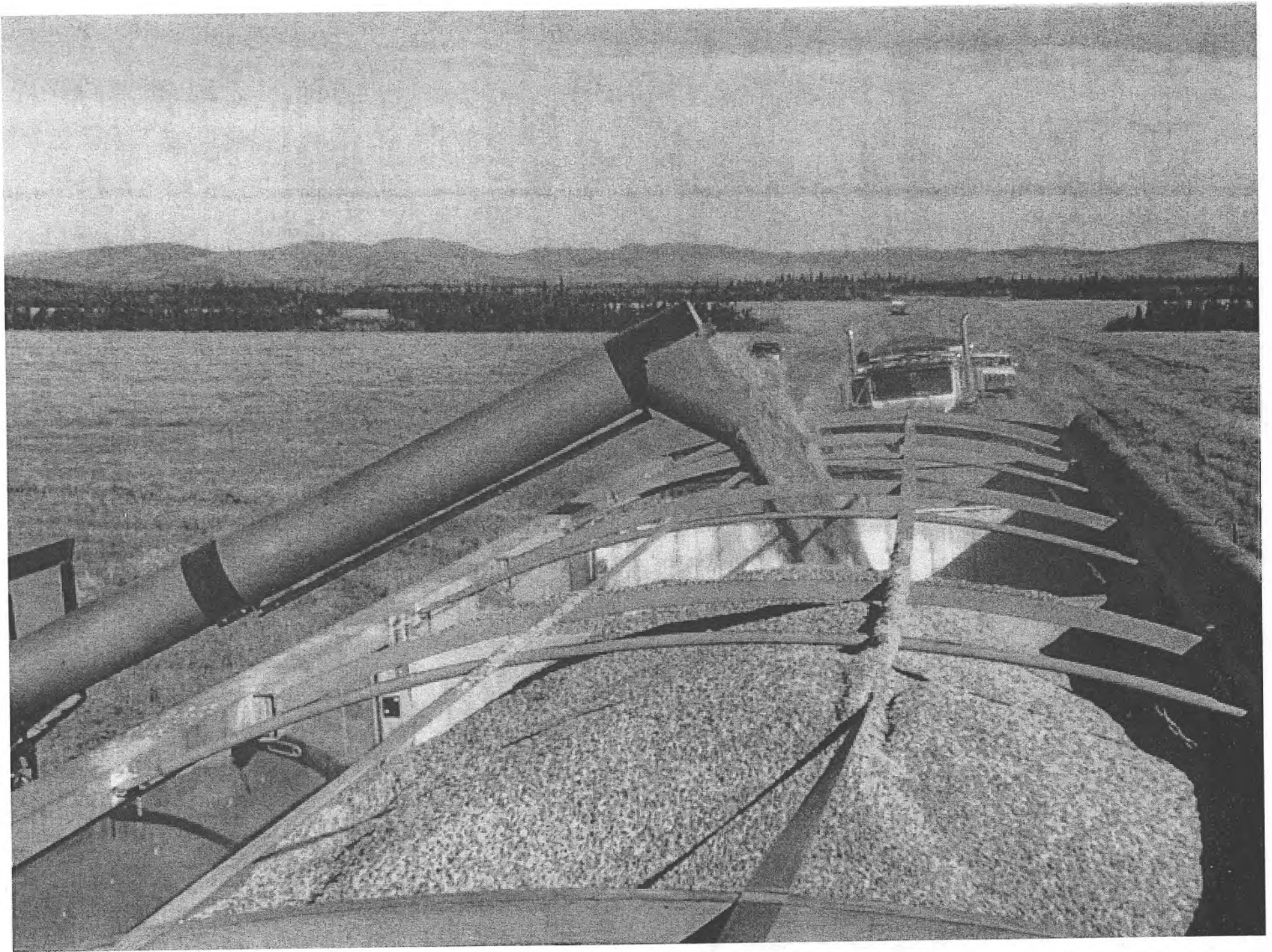
PO Box 760 Delta Junction, Alaska 99737 Telephone: (907) 895-4752

Alaskans Feeding Alaska









Agricultural Bio-mass for Fuel

- Barley
- Hay
- Straw
- Canola Oil



Economics

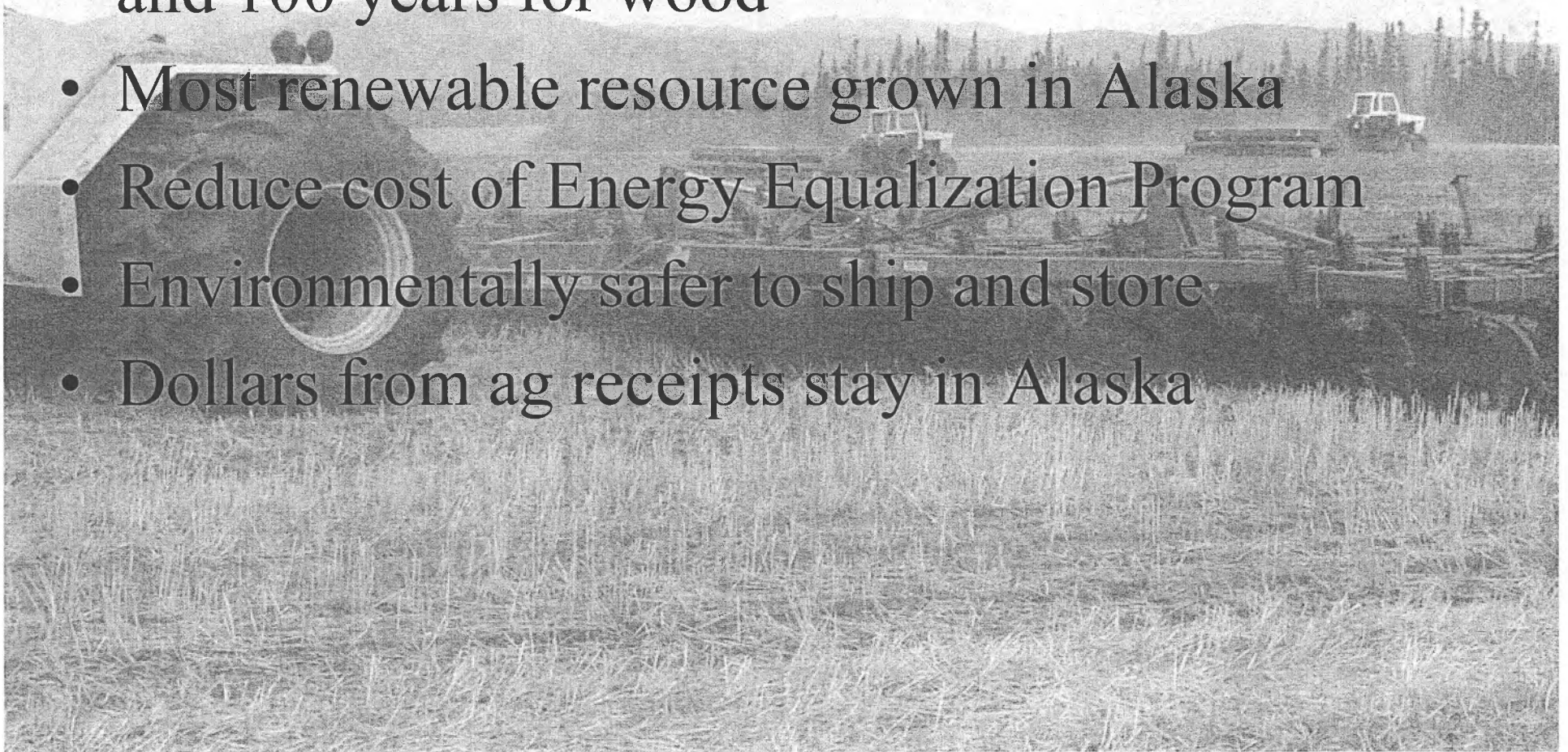
Cost per million BTU

$$1,000,000 / 393,600 \times \$5.52 / .85 = \$16.50 \text{ (barley)}$$

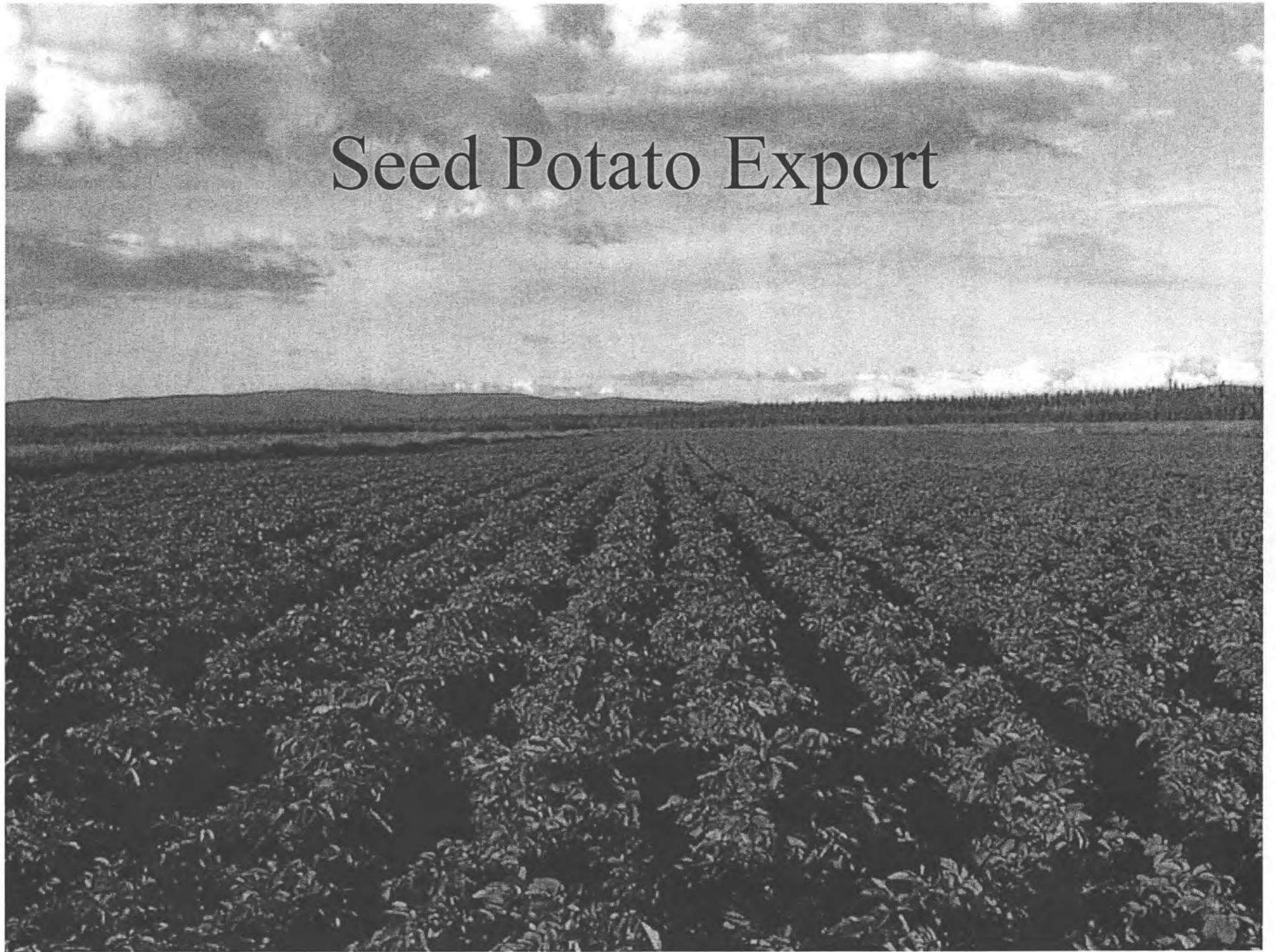
$$1,000,000 / 142,393 \times \$2.96 / .85 = \$24.46 \text{ (fuel oil)}$$

Benefits of Barley Fuel

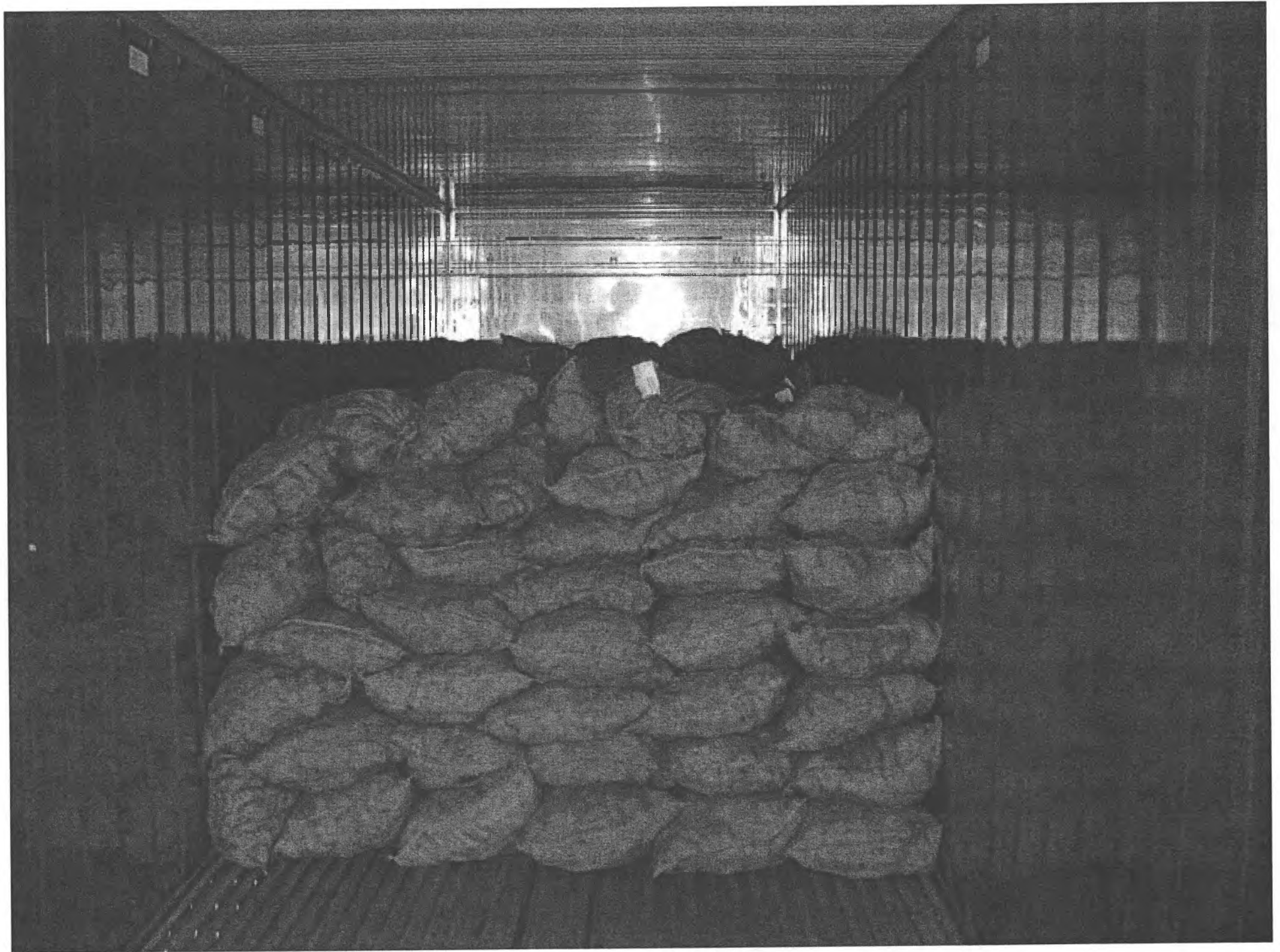
- 1 year harvest cycle vs. 40 million years for oil and 100 years for wood
- Most renewable resource grown in Alaska
- Reduce cost of Energy Equalization Program
- Environmentally safer to ship and store
- Dollars from ag receipts stay in Alaska



Seed Potato Export







Economic Activity for Delta

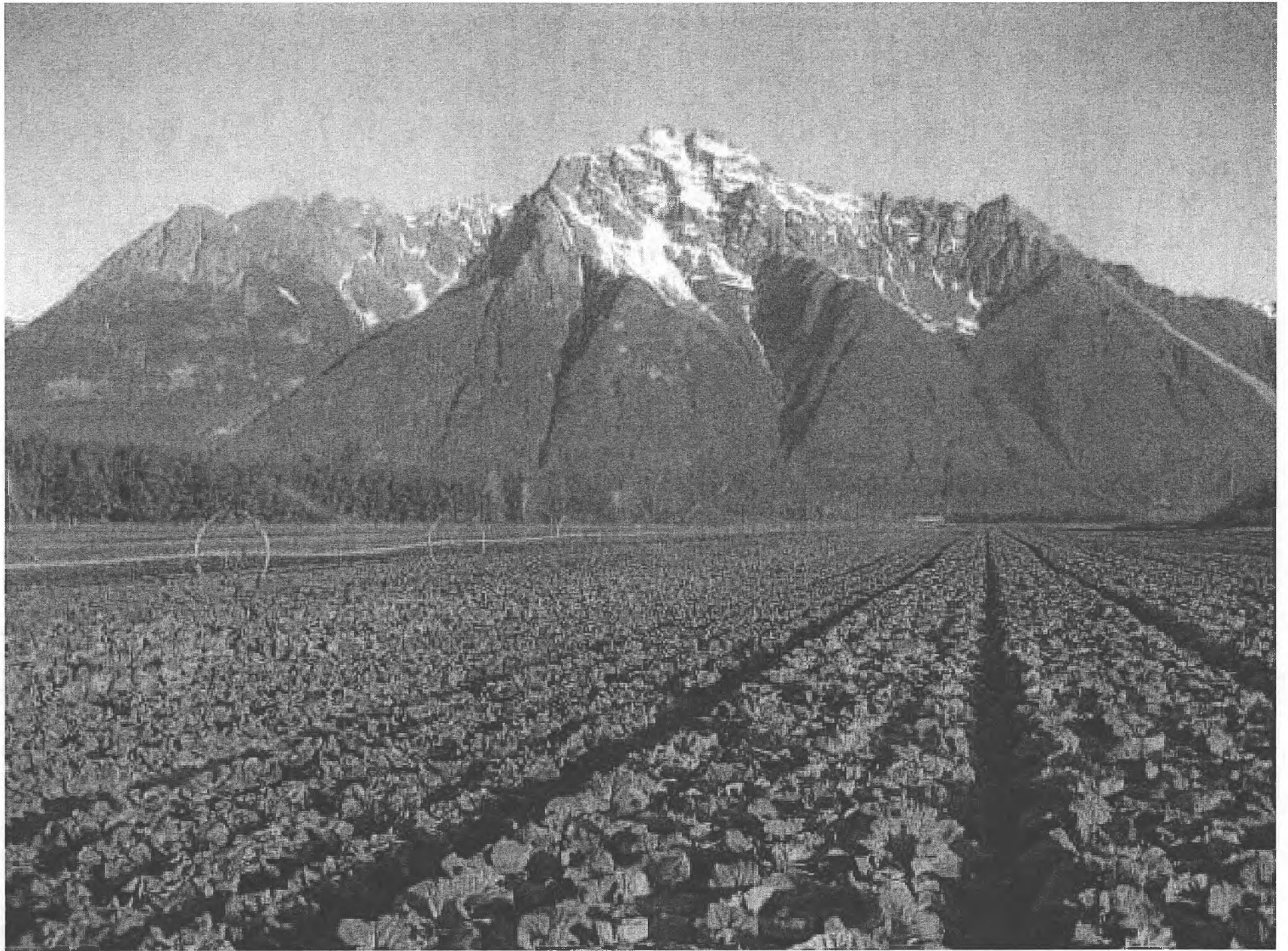
	2010 Farm Gate Value	2015 Farm Gate Value	2020 Farm Gate Value
Crops and Livestock	\$9.5 Million	\$12.7 Million	\$24.7 million
Seed Potato Export		\$30 Million	\$108 Million
Total Farm Sales	\$9,500,000	\$42,700,000	\$132,700,000
Total Economic Activity	\$76,000,000	\$341,600,000	<u>\$1,061,600,000</u>



Food Security

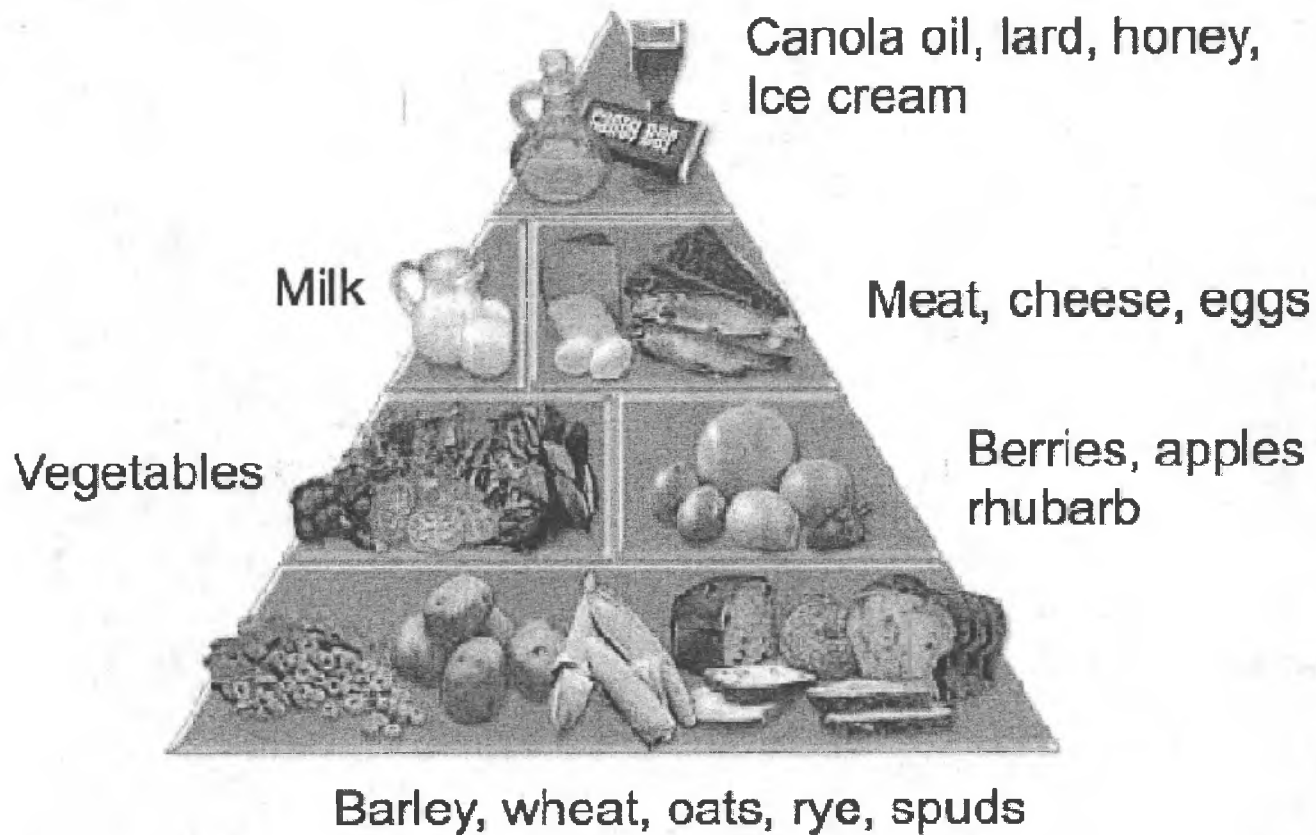








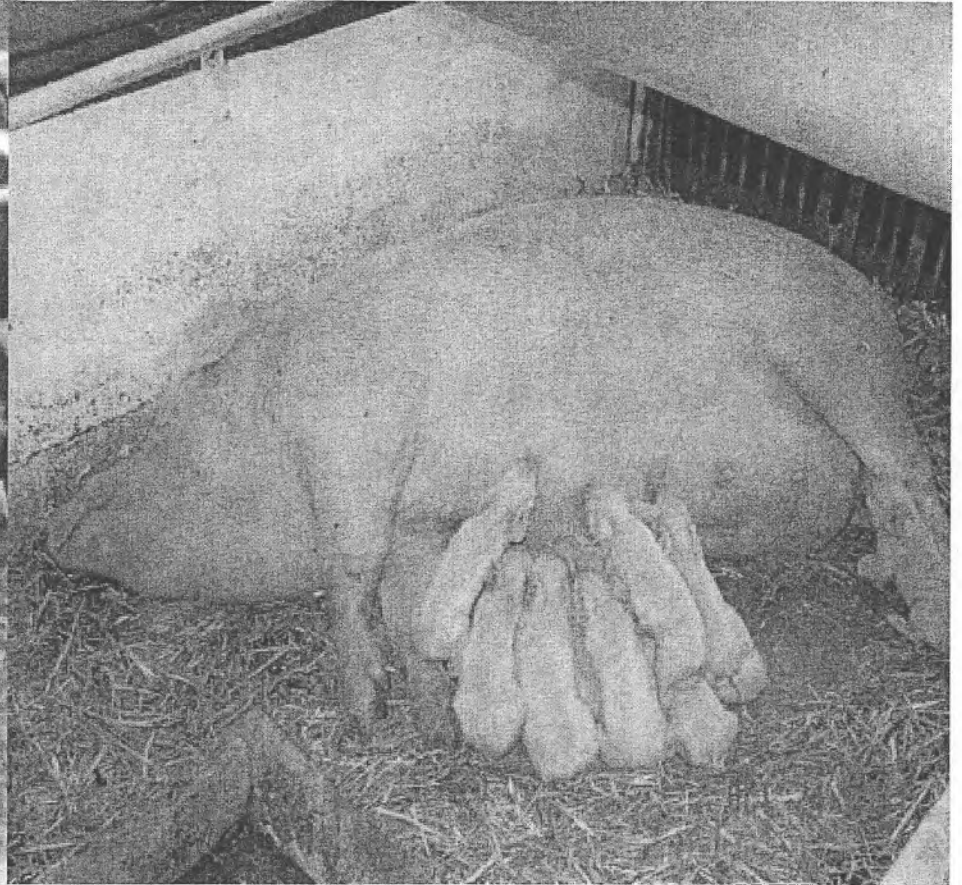
Alaska Food Pyramid









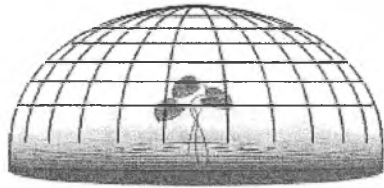


Goals of the Agriculture Plan

- Broaden the economic base of the state
- Stabilize real food costs by increasing local food.
- Provide alternative job opportunities
- Improve rural life by developing an economic base through agriculture.
- Increase food security for Alaska

Challenges

- Small ag industry
- Market competition from Outside sources
- Government policies and regulation
- Infrastructure
- Lack of Ag culture



NorthernLatitude
Controlled Environment Agriculture

Presentation to:

House Economic Development, Trade & Tourism
Special Committee

January 27, 2011

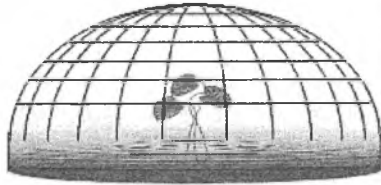
Our Team:

Sioux-z Humphrey Marshall, Chief Executive Officer siouxz@nlcea.com

Rusty Foreaker, Chief Production Officer rusty@nlcea.com

Our Location:

5801 Arctic Blvd, Unit E Anchorage, Alaska 99518 www.nlcea.com 907-891-2832

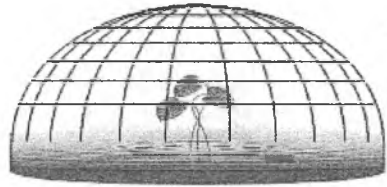


NorthernLatitude
Controlled Environment Agriculture

Our Mission

- To be commercial indoor agriculture production leaders in the Northern Latitudes
- To help northern communities gain food security and independence
- To grow local, clean, and nutritious food



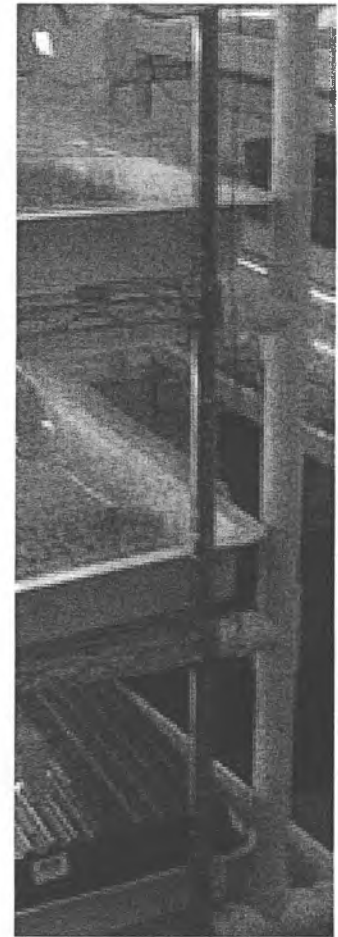


NorthernLatitude
Controlled Environment Agriculture

What is a CEA?

CEA = Controlled Environment Agriculture

- Nutrient Film Technique (NFT)
Hydroponic System
- Fluorescent Grow Lights
- Temperature Controlled
- Air Circulation System
- Nutrient Controlled



Hydrolicious Micro Greens



Why did we choose to grow Micro Greens?

- Micro Green is a stage of growth – popular green option
- Micro Greens contain high concentrations of nutrients
- Short growth cycle (5 to 20 days)
- Could use a “rack” system to increase yield with small footprint
- Amazing flavors
- It pencils out!

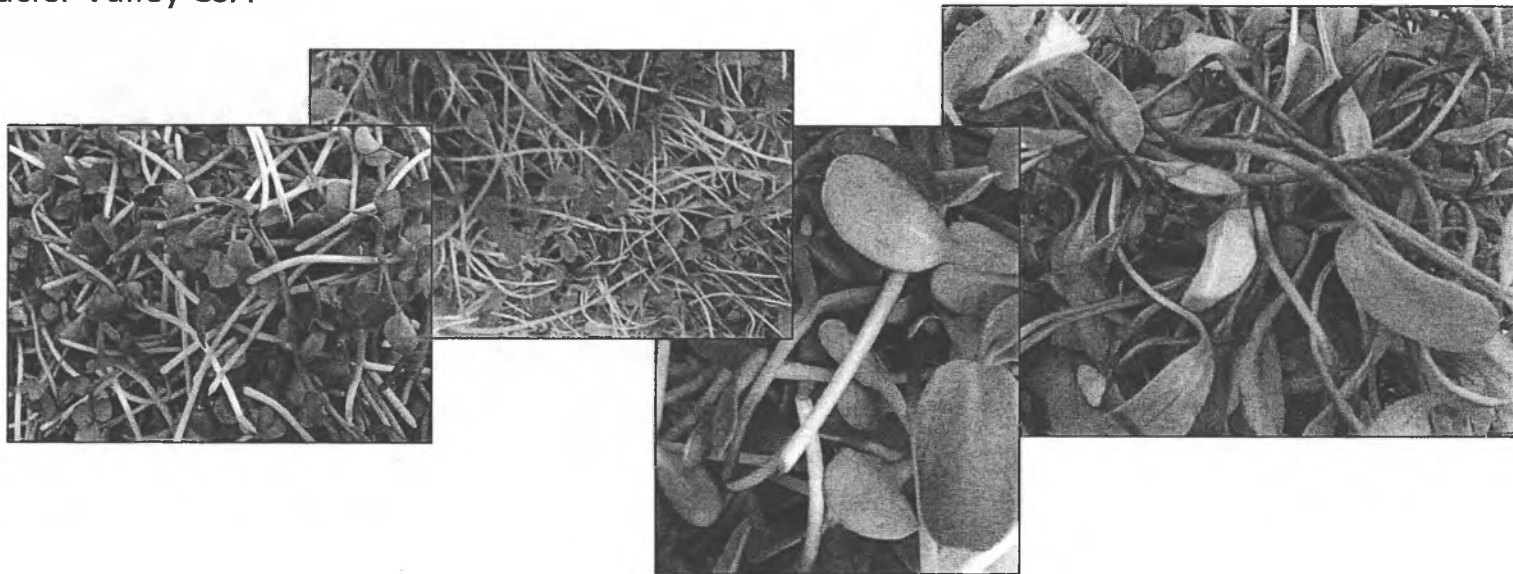


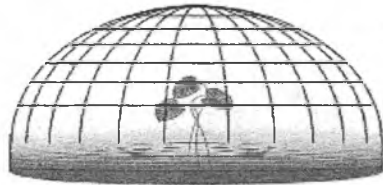
Where we are today...

Harvested Weekly, 100% Natural, No Pesticides, No GMOs

Find us at:

- Local restaurants
- Food Services of America – we have displaced a micro green import!
- The Winter Farmers Market inside the Northway Mall
- Glacier Valley CSA



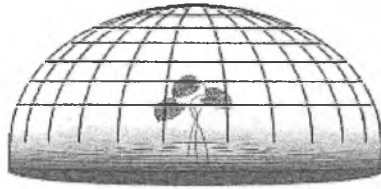


NorthernLatitude
Controlled Environment Agriculture



Where are we going?

- Hydrolicious in a retail store near you
- NLCEA custom micro green systems
 - Growing Kits
 - Custom Racks
 - Technical Support
 - Target Market: Rural Alaska and other Northern Latitude communities
 - Systems are small enough to fit in a corner of a room – very small footprint
 - Opportunity for community to get hands-on with the growth and harvest of greens



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Controlled Environment Agriculture

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Prospects and Challenges of Alaska Seed Potatoes Export to Asia

Dr. Jenifer Huang McBeath

Plant Pathology and Biotechnology Laboratory (PPBL)

Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (AFES)

University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)

Agriculture Information

- Land classified suitable for agriculture: 12 million acres
- Land in agricultural use: <50,000
- Agricultural areas: Interior and Southcentral regions primarily
- Growing Conditions: short but intense, arid
Season: 95-100 frost free days
Daylength: 22-24 hours
- Major crops: barley, hay, potatoes, vegetables

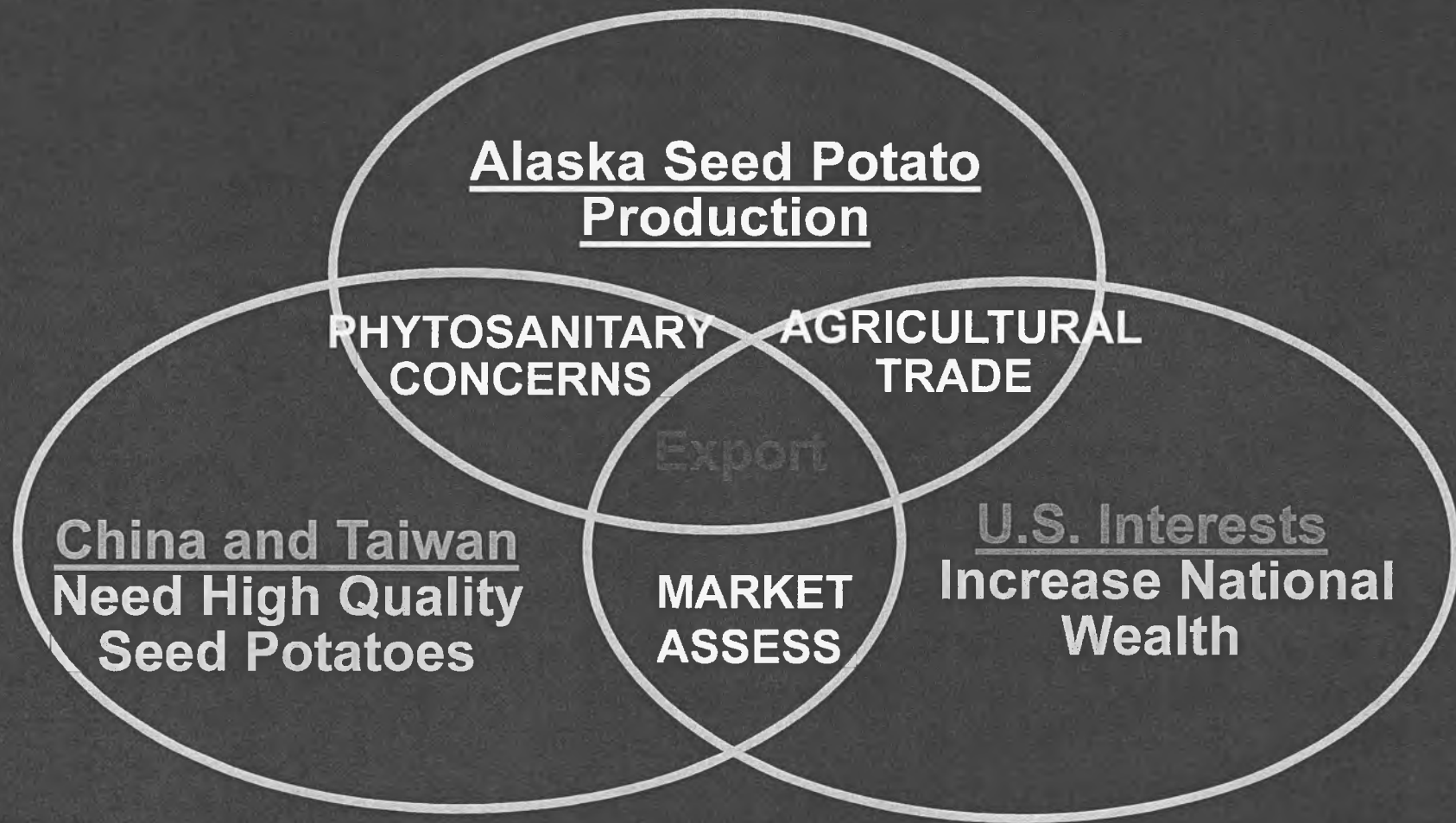
Challenges to agricultural development

- **Natural environment:**
 - Isolation—high costs of operation, transportation, etc.
 - harsh climatic conditions
 - Farm has to be established from wilderness
 - Small domestic market for agricultural products
- **Politic climate:**
 - Inconsistent agricultural policies
 - Dependency in multi-national corporation in the development of natural resources
 - Reluctance in investing state funds in agricultural development and research
 - Ignorance of diseases and pests problems
 - Lack of infrastructure—road, storage facilities, etc.
- **Producers:** small number of professional farmers

Development of a Lab-test based Verification system

- This new concept was developed in 1989
- Purpose: to develop Alaska agricultural products for international markets
- The program began in 1996
- Products—Alaska premium lab-tested, disease-free seed potatoes and other crops
- This concept has expanded to other Alaska agricultural crops

Relationships Among Alaska Seed Potato Production, US Interests and Interests of China and Taiwan



How did Alaska seed potatoes and other agricultural products gain access to China and Taiwan (1988-2003)

Background: In 1988, bacterial ring rot (BRR, a quarantined diseases) epidemic occurred on potatoes in Alaska. In 1989, farmers and the president of the Alaska Stockgrower's Association (=Alaska Farm Bureau) requested McBeath's assistance in: 1) solving BRR problem, and 2) facilitating potato exports.

- 1990 Established field sampling and lab testing protocols for 6 viruses, BRR, late blight, root knot nematode. Results: Alaska lab-tested, disease-free seed potatoes. Presented this concept to Taiwan (1991) and China (1992).
- 1991 – 1994 Provided government of Taiwan, through USDA, information they requested for pest risk assessment for Alaska seed potatoes, including field sampling and lab-testing procedures.
- 1994 Taiwan signed the export protocols for Alaska seed potatoes. Alaska became the first (still the only) state in the world to be able to export seed potatoes to Taiwan.
- 1995 PPBL was inspected by quarantine official from Taiwan as part of the pre-sale clearance procedure.

How did Alaska seed potatoes and other agricultural products gain access to China and Taiwan (continued)

- 1995 Obtained export protocols for Alaska table stock potatoes (one of the five US states), carrots (one of the two U.S. states) and asparagus (one of the two U.S. states).
- 1997 and 1998 Obtained from Chinese government special import permits for Alaska lab-tested disease-free seed potatoes.
- 1999 Provided China, through USDA, information they requested for pest risk assessment for Alaska seed potatoes, including field sampling and lab-testing procedures.
- 2000 – 2003 McBeath, as a member of the US Negotiation Team, negotiated with China for exporting Alaska seed and table stock potatoes.
- 2000 – 2004 PPBL was inspected by four teams of quarantine officials from China, including pre-sale clearance inspection.
- 2003 China signed export protocols for Alaska seed potatoes. Alaska is the first (still the only) state in the U.S. as well as the world to be able to export seed potatoes commercially to China.

Accomplishments of the Lab-tested based Certification System

- Alaska is the only state in the world permitted to export seed potatoes to Taiwan (1994)
- Alaska is the only state in the world permitted to export seed potatoes to China (2003)
- Alaska is one of the five US states permitted to export table stock potatoes to Taiwan (1995)
- Alaska is one of the two US states permitted to export asparagus to Taiwan (1996)
- Alaska is the only state in the US permitted to export carrots to Taiwan (1996)

Key Requirements in Exporting Seed Potato Export to China

- Seed potatoes must be tested by the Plant Pathology and Biotechnology Laboratory at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.
- Seed potatoes must be lab-tested disease-free, which also provide the basic information for phytosanitary certificate.
- Alaska seed potato Certification.
- Minimal amount of soils (Chinese and Taiwanese officials understands that seed potatoes can not be washed).
- Minimal numbers of commercial diseased potatoes (dry rot).

List of Pathogens and Pests Routinely Surveyed and Lab-tested at PPBL, UAF

- Potato Viruses (X, Y, A, M, S, potato leaf roll, and potato latent)
- Bacterial Ring Rot: *Clavibacter Michiganans* pv *Sepedonicus*
- Late Blight: *Phytophthora infestans*
- Phytoplasmas: witches' broom, aster yellows, purple top wilt, etc.
- Nematodes: *Meloigogyne* spp., *Globodera* spp., *Trichodorus* spp. *Ditylenchus* spp.

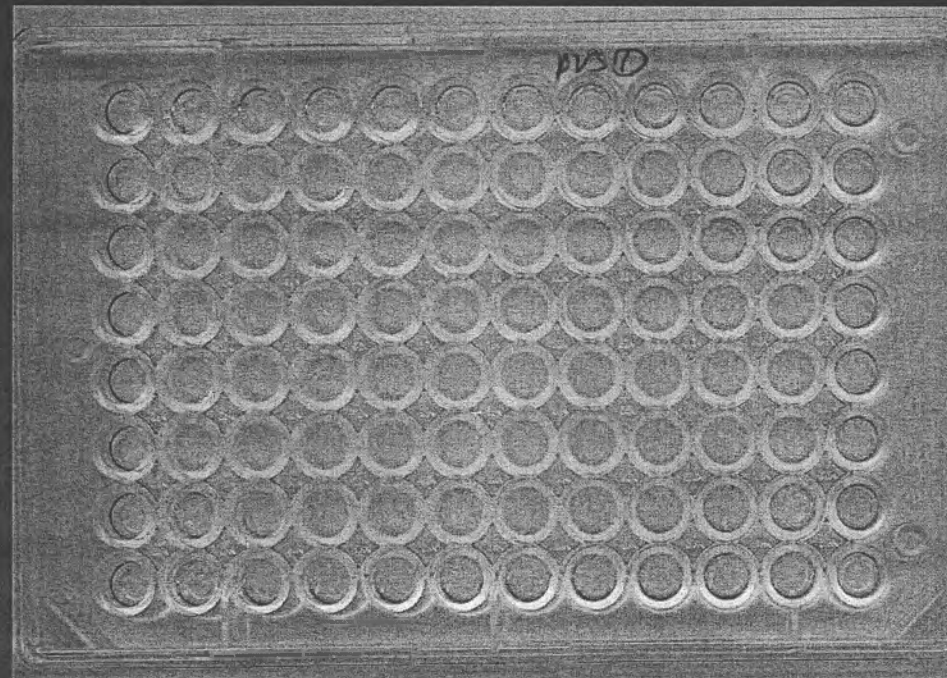
How to Produce Lab-Tested Disease-Free Seed Potatoes in Alaska through PPBL, UAF

- Seed potato farmers obtain disease-free plantlets or mini-tubers from Alaska Plant Materials Center, Cornell Univ., etc. and plant them in the ground to produce the Generation 1 (G 1) seed potatoes. State inspection. Sampling and lab-tests by PPBL (intensity: 100%).
- Seed farmers plant G1 to produce G2. State inspection. Sampling and lab-tests by PPBL (intensity: 50% - 75%).
- Seed farmers plant G2 to produce G3. State inspection. Sampling and lab-tests by PPBL (intensity: 30%). Lab-tested disease-free seed potatoes are qualified for export.
- Seed farmers plant G3 to produce G4. State inspection. Sampling and lab-testing by PPBL (intensity: 20%). Lab-tested disease-free seed potatoes are qualified for export.

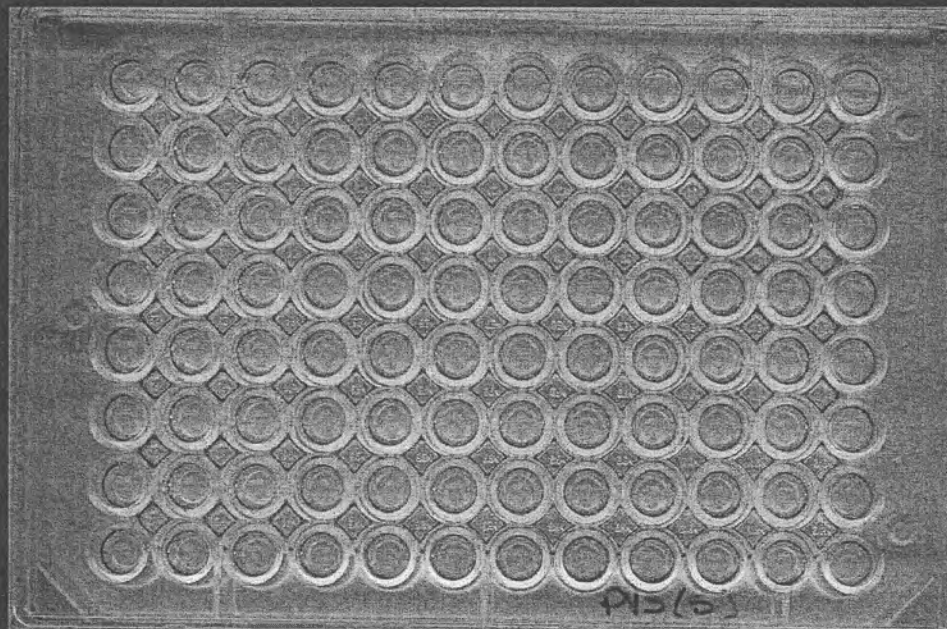




3/24/1998



Seed
lots
tested
free of
PVS

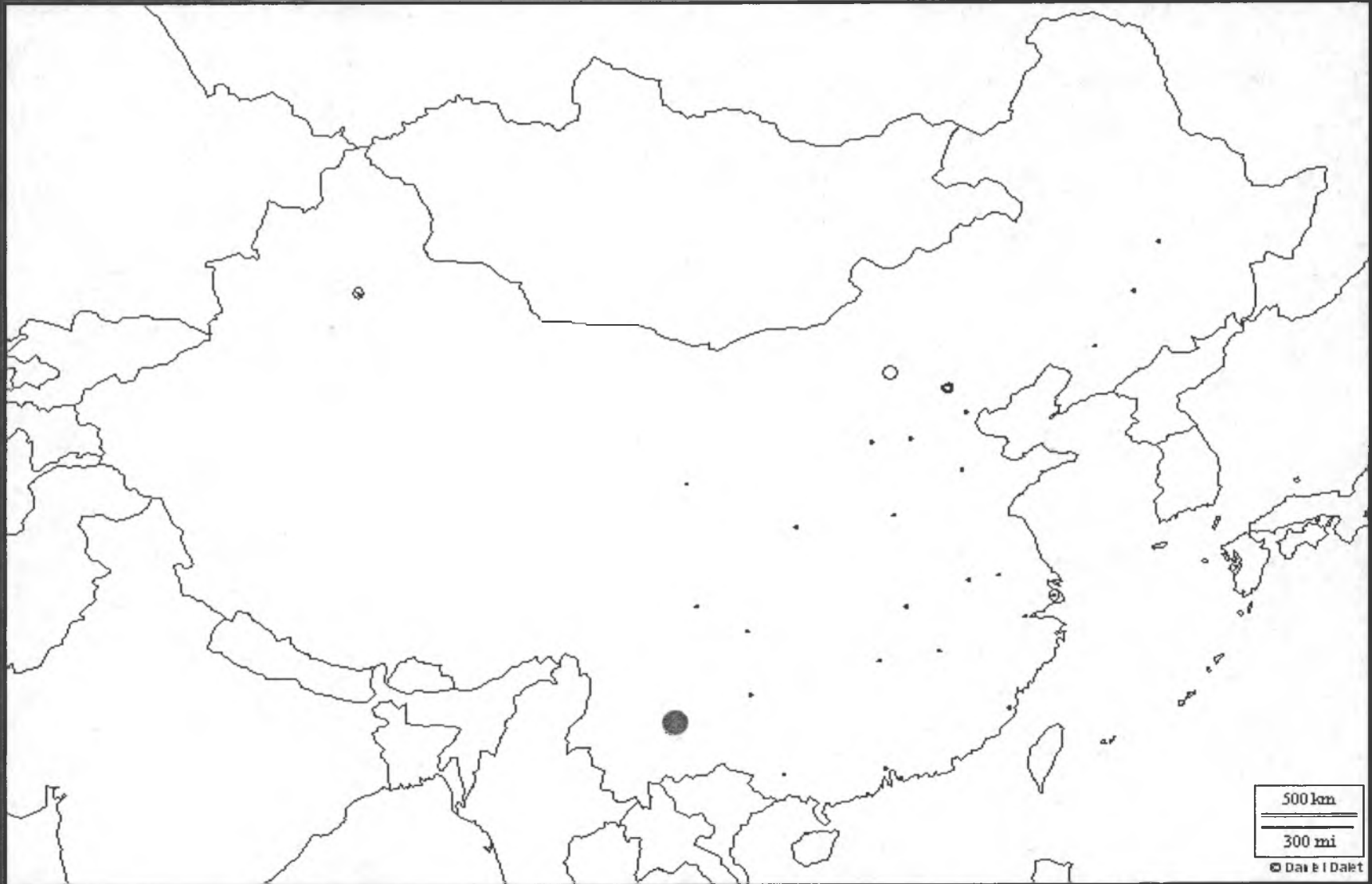


Potato
seed lots
tested
positive
of PVS

Progress of Alaska lab-tested disease-free seed potatoes exporting to China, 2003-2005

- 2003 Phytosanitary protocols for U.S. Alaska Seed Potato Exports to China was signed by the U.S. and China and make China accessible for Alaska seed potato exports.
- 2004 McBeath, U.S. Embassy Science Fellow, represented U.S.A. at the World Potato Congress held in Kunming, Yunnan
- During the Congress, McBeath negotiated with Yunnan Provincial government on exporting Alaska seed potatoes to Yunnan.
- 2005 Exported 20 tons of Alaska lab-tested disease-free seed potatoes to China—the first shipment of seed potatoes fo foreign origin entering China through commercial channels since the establishment of PRC in 1949.

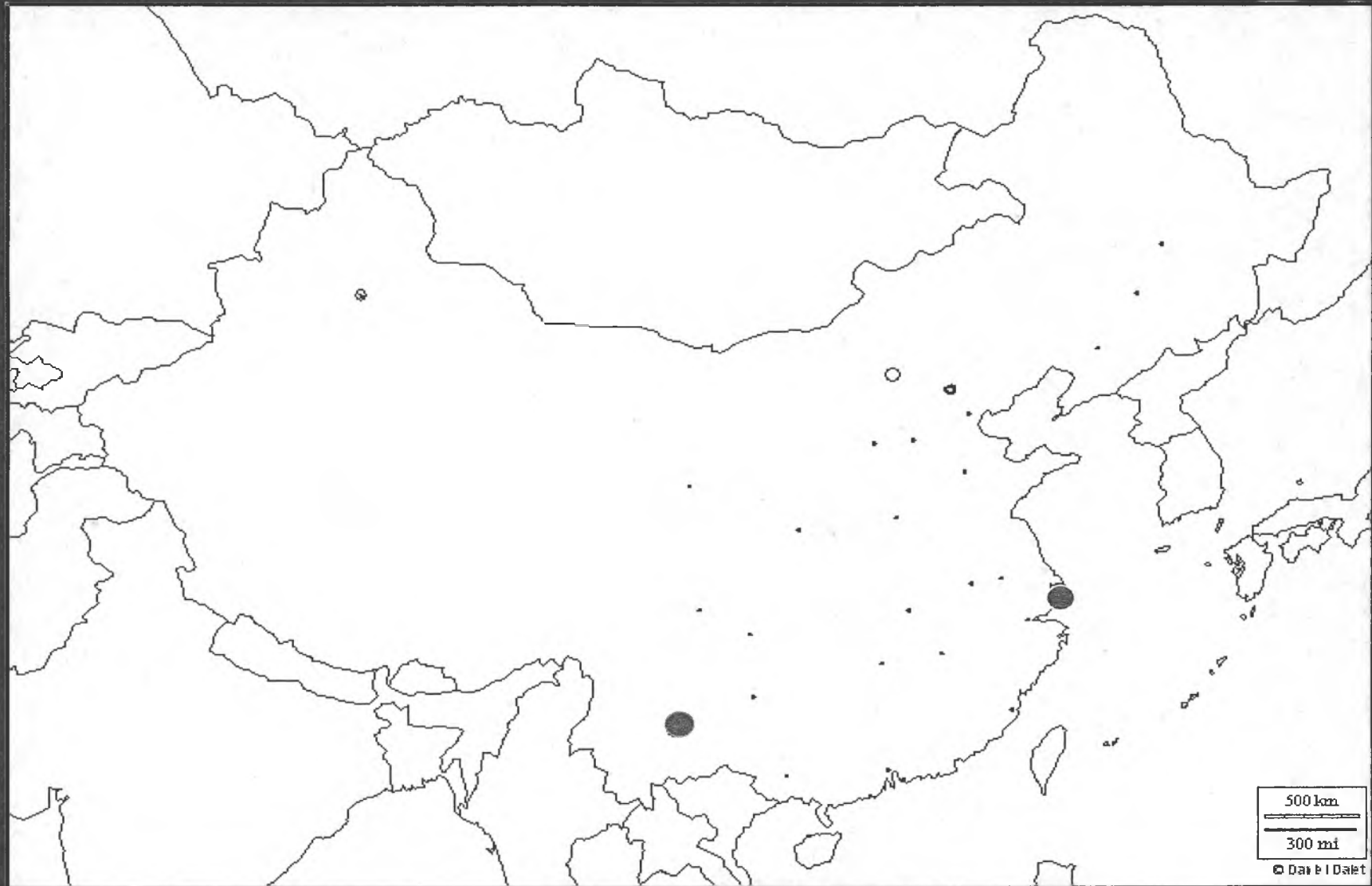
2004-2006, Yunnan, China



Progress of Alaska lab-tested disease-free seed potatoes exporting to China, 2007-2009

- 2007 McBeath was invited by Dongtai government to give a talk on biological control of plant diseases, after presenting a keynote address at the China Vegetable Network in Hangzhou.
- 2007 McBeath, touting the advantages of growing Alaska seed potatoes to officials and Shen (associate of Feng)
- 2008 McBeath met Feng, who owns 24,000 acres of prime, reclaimed farmland in Dongtai.
- 2008 and 2009 Shen and Feng ordered 40 tons of seed potatoes. No seed potatoes was available due to lack of funds for tests.
- 2009 Feng met Richard Larsen through Stanley Huang and intertaining the idea of to come to Alaska to get seed potatoes.

2007-2009, Yunnan and Dongtai, China



Progress of Alaska lab-tested disease-free seed potatoes exporting to China, 2010-

- March, Feng, Larsen and the group came to Alaska and decided to work with Alaskan farmers to grow lab-tested disease-free seed potatoes for export.
- April, funding made available for McBeath's lab to test 22 seed lots (11 were found lab tested disease-free).
- July-Sept, McBeath's lab performed field sampling and lab tests on farms in Palmer and Delta; 1,756 greenhouse samples from PMC and 86,000 progenies of minitubers.
- December, 140-160 tons of lab-tested disease-free seed potatoes are scheduled to be exported.
- Current export projection: 1,100 tons by 2012.

Challenges and Solutions

- **C:** Limited minituber production in Alaska (~300 lb in 2010). **S:** Imported 86,000 minitubers from Michigan in 2010. Production of 500 K to 1 M plantlets/seedlings, McBeath's lab(10/10-5/11).
- **C:** Limited acreage on seed potato production. **S:** Purchasing land in AK for increasing seed potato production.
- **C:** Limited storage. **S:** Building modern potato storage in 2011.
- **C:** Shipping large quantities of potatoes in a short time period. **S:** establish center in areas of different growing seasons.
- **C:** Short growing season in AK. **S:** Extend the season by treating potatoes with Plant Helpers to promote the growth.
- **C:** Unseasonable harvesting season. **S:** Kill vine in August and harvest early.

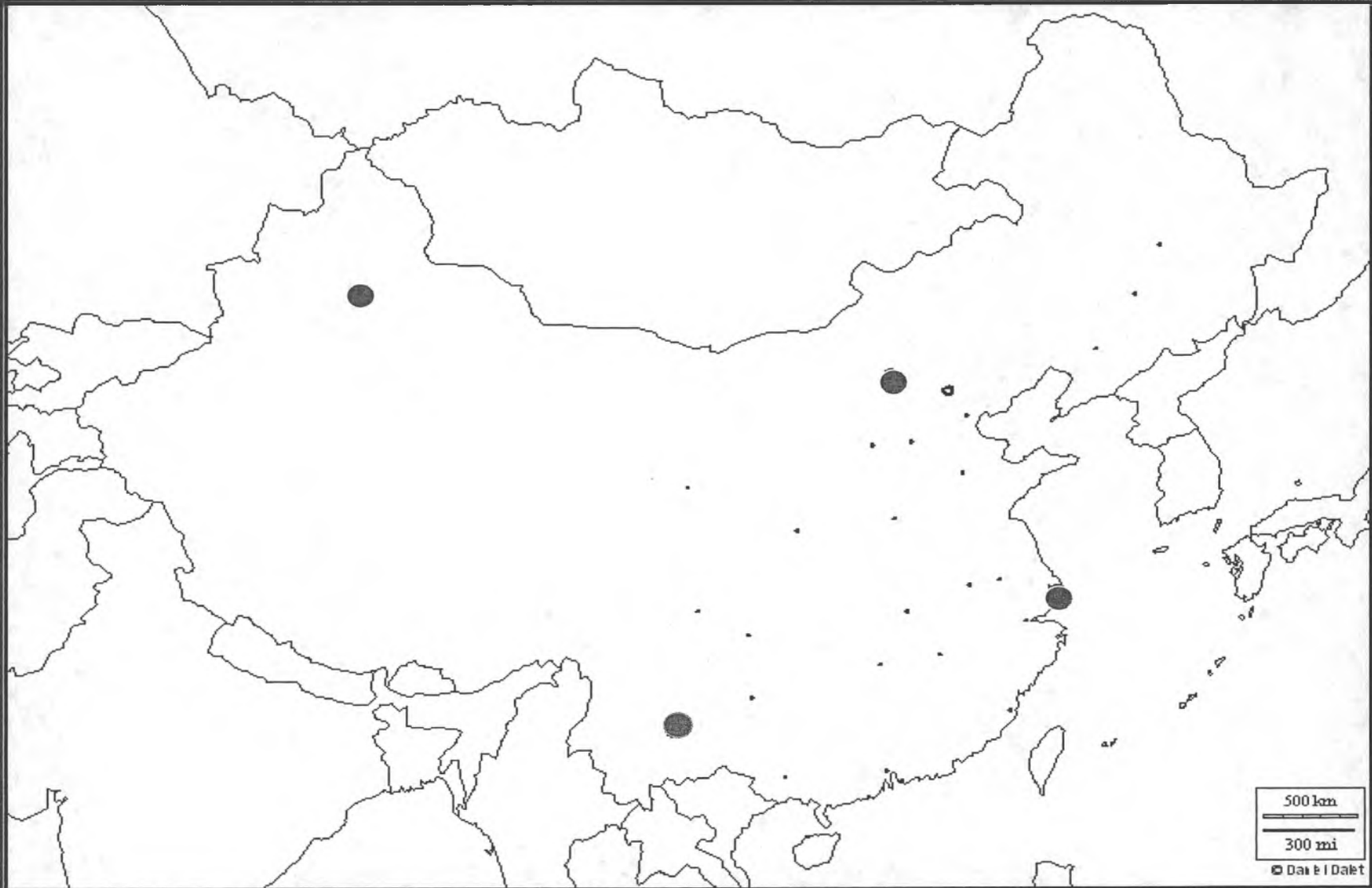


Seed piece treated with Plant Helper (formulated *Trichoderma atroviride*)

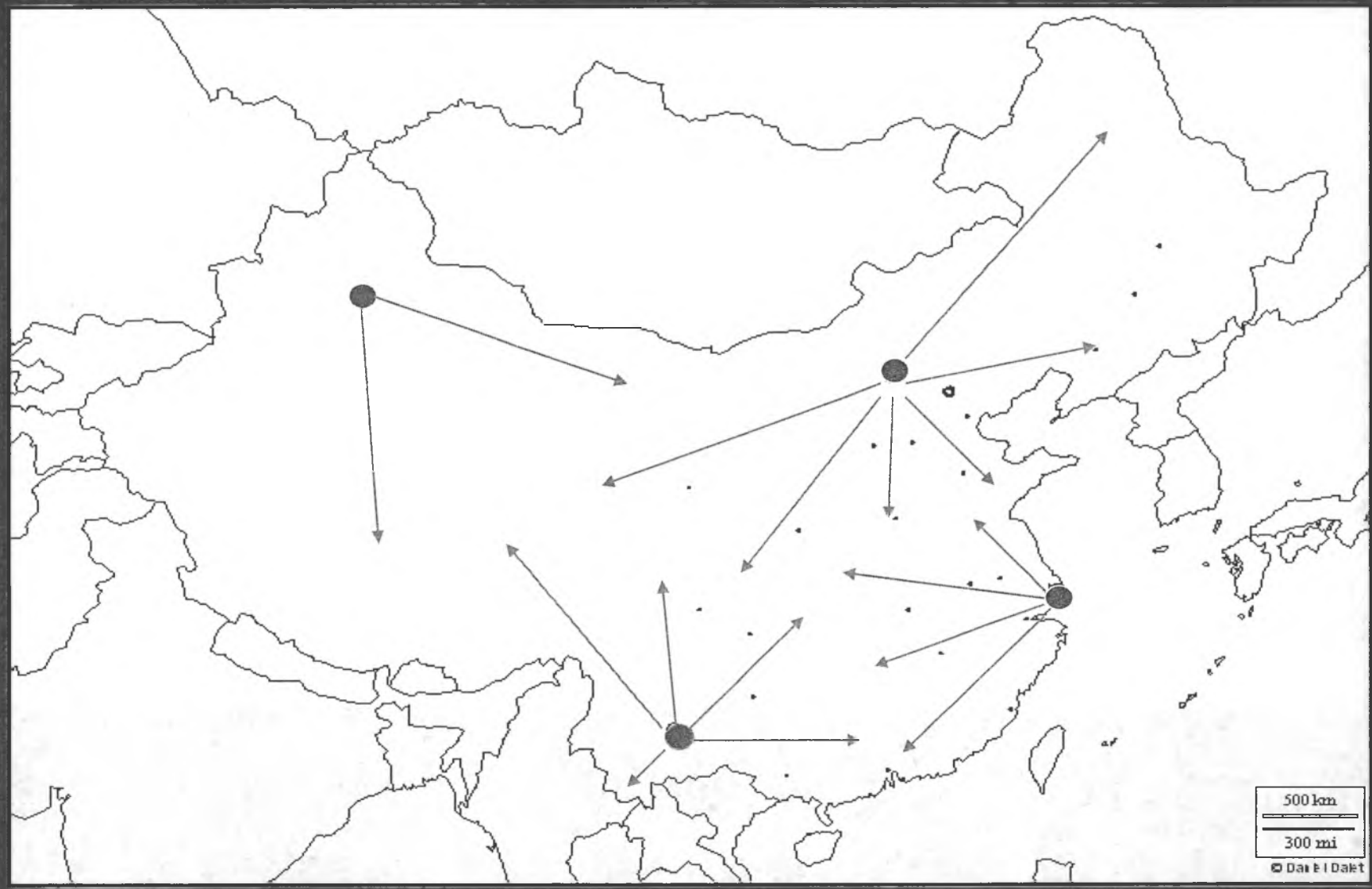
Untreated control

PLANT GROWTH ENHANCEMENT

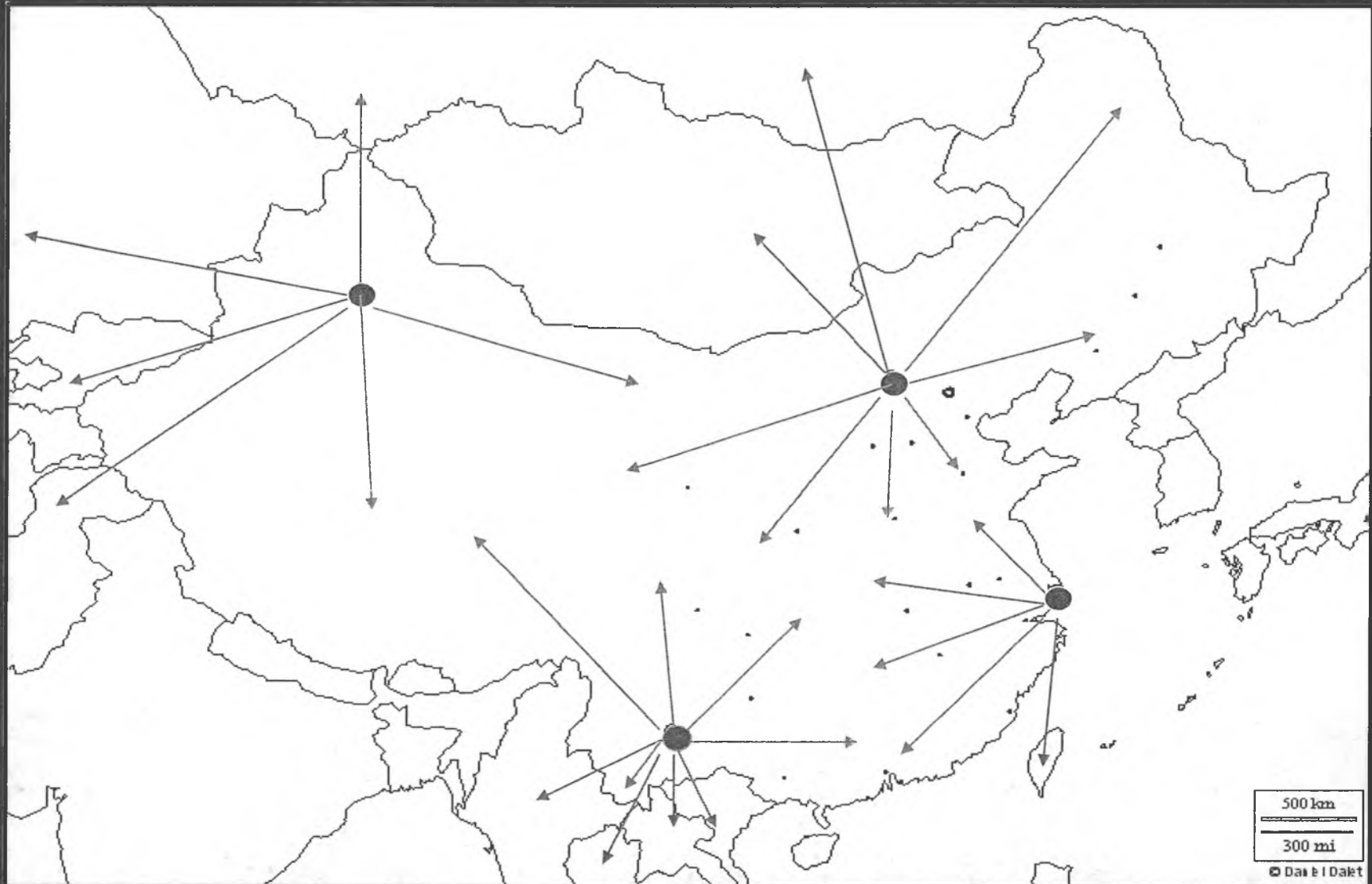
Future Plans for Alaska Lab-tested Disease-free Seed Potatoes in China. Phase 1: selection center sites, 2010



Future Plans for Alaska Lab-tested Disease-free Seed Potatoes in China. Phase 2: distribution network



Future plans for Alaska lab-tested disease-free seed potatoes in China. Phase 3: expansion



Thank You

Alaska State Legislature

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Representative Mike Chenault
Speaker of the House
District 34
February 9, 2011

Representative Mike Hawker, Chair
Legislative Budget and Audit Committee
Room 502, State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Hawker and Member of Legislative Budget and Audit:

This year more funding is being requested for the Virus Free Seed Potato project. State funding for this project started in approximately 1994 with various requests and appropriations moving from Department to Department to continue the project. To date, no obvious return to Alaska has been demonstrated by this project.

I respectfully request an audit of this project which would include answers to the following questions.

1. Provide a schedule of all funding provided by the State of Alaska for the virus free seed potato project specifically or as part of another appropriation. The schedule should identify the amount, the agency receiving the appropriation and the source of funds.
2. Identify if any funding in the Northern Plants Materials Center, the Ag Development Allocation, the Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund and the University Mat-Su Experimental Farm relates to the virus free seed potato project.
3. Identify if expenditures for this program over the last seven years were reasonable and necessary.
4. Identify if resources (i.e. facilities) of the University of Alaska were provided for this project—what and how much.
5. If other funding (grants, etc.) was obtained for this project and University of Alaska facilities were used, was there return to the University through an indirect charge or other mechanism at the approved indirect cost allocation rate.
6. Has there been any return (monetary or otherwise) to the State of Alaska from this project? Has there been any return (monetary or otherwise) to private entities benefiting from this project?
7. What is the intended outcome of this project for the State? Will there be any monetary outcome realized by State government for assisting this project or is this funding a subsidy to farmers who may wish to grow seed potatoes?
8. Are the appropriations for this project being used for essential state services? Is there a longer term cost/benefit of continued state involvement in the business of virus free seed potatoes?
9. Identify any areas that come to light during the course of the audit that would be of interest to the Legislature.

Sincerely yours,

Representative Mike Chenault
Speaker of the House

Alaska Farm & Ranch News

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Farmers call for spending cuts in next Farm Bill



Farm Bureau hires Fellman as lobbyist

By MICHAEL PASCHALL
Alaska Farm & Ranch News

The Alaska Farm Bureau has hired Peter Fellman, former legislative aide to Rep. John Harris (R-Valdez) as a lobbyist. Under the direction of the Farm Bureau, Fellman is to work toward creating a Department of Agriculture.

Alaska currently has a Division of Agriculture within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Farm Bureau leaders have complained that the Division does not receive the attention it deserves under DNR. The Department is currently responsible for oil, gas, and mining as well as other divisions, including Agriculture; Coastal and Ocean Management; Forestry; Mining, Land and Water; Parks and Outdoor Recreation; and other offices.

According to Farm Bureau Executive Director Jane Hamilton, "The Alaska Farm Bureau continues to pursue the creation of a Department of Agriculture per our member's vote during the November 2010 annual meeting. To that end, we have just hired our very first lobbyist."

As many in the industry know, Fellman has been an advocate for agriculture and has an understanding of the legislative system.

During his 12 years working as



File photo

The Alaska Farm Bureau has hired Pete Fellman to lobby the Alaska legislature for the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Agriculture.

an aide to Rep. Harris, "He gained experience and expertise in both the legislative and budgeting process. He understands the need for a Department of Agriculture and the many agricultural issues that need to be addressed in legislation that would create a Department of Agriculture," wrote Hamilton in a statement.

With a new commissioner in the Department of Natural Resources, it remains to be seen how the Department will treat the Division of Agriculture.

See FELLMAN, page 5

7th Annual SARE Conference agenda set

Preconference to feature goat, small dairy cheesemaking workshop

By TAYLOR MAIDA
UAF Cooperative Extension Service

The Seventh Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference is scheduled for March 23-24, 2011, at the Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge in Fairbanks. A special preconference growers/ranchers school is planned for March 22, featuring a variety of goat and small dairy workshops at the Princess Lodge and a farmstead goat milk cheesemaking workshop at the Hutchison Institute of Technology kitchen. Events are open to everyone - from home gardeners to foodies to commercial growers.

More than 200 people from 27 different communities across Alaska have attended the conference in past years. This year's workshop on goat and small dairy will feature a panel of national and state speakers who will discuss the considerations of running a small dairy. Each speaker will present a different component of the discussion. Speakers include Lorrie Conway of Conway Family Farm, Camas, Wash.; Dr. Susan Kerr of Washington State University Klickitat County Extension; Gene Wiseman of the Missouri Department of Agriculture; and Dr. Robert Gerlach of the Alaska Division of Environmental Health.

of Environmental Health.

Other topics to be presented by state speakers include root cellars and extending crop availability, funding opportunities, CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) around Alaska, agriculture research from around the state, different methods of fertilizing organically, employment strategies, small fruit and berries, and the rhubarb industry.

Dairy goat farmer and cheese maker Lorrie Conway of Conway Family Farm will be the keynote guest speaker. She will share how raising dairy goats and making cheese can be successful on a small family farm. She and her husband Shaun, along with daughters Ashley and Amber, have raised Nubian goats and Leicester sheep on their five acres for more than 15 years. Having built the farm from the ground up themselves, Conway Family Farm is now a Grade A raw milk licensed dairy through the state of Washington.

In addition to raising goats and making cheese, the Conways also raise sheep for their wool, keep honeybees, and maintain "u-pick" blueberry and lavender fields. The goats and sheep also provide the Conways with grass-fed meat year-round.

In 2006, Lorrie and her family were nominated for the Western Region SARE Patrick Madden Award for Sustainable Agriculture. They were recognized for their efforts in sharing their knowledge of small scale, sustainable agriculture with the public through e-mails, farm visits and tours, phone calls, community events and speaking engagements at conferences. Lorrie holds a bachelor of science degree in business and management, which she combines with her lifetime experience of farming to operate her own business management and accounting practice.

All interested individuals are

See SARE, page 7

Is this your last issue of Alaska Farm & Ranch News?

If you receive your Alaska Farm & Ranch News as a benefit of membership in the Alaska Farm Bureau, this may be your last issue. If you have not renewed your membership to the Alaska Farm Bureau, you may not receive the February issue.

Check the address label for the date. If your subscription has run out, you need to pay for your 2011 membership or submit your subscription request.

Under a new program instituted by the Alaska Farm Bureau, members must submit a form to renew their subscription to Alaska Farm & Ranch News.

For more information e-mail Alaska Farm & Ranch News at editor@alaskafarmandranchnews.com or contact the Alaska Farm Bureau at janehamilton@99737@yahoo.com or call the Farm Bureau at 895-4752.

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CALENDAR

January 27 - Delta Junction

Delta Farm Bureau Chapter Annual Meeting

Program will be held at the Trophy Lodge. Call Jane Hamilton, chapter secretary, at 907-895-4752.

January 26-27 - Anchorage

Alaska Greenhouse and Nursery Conference and Polar Grower Trade Show

More information is available by calling Cooperative Extension at 907-745-3360 or online at www.uaf.edu/ces.

January 28-29 - Anchorage

Alaska Peony Growers Conference

More information is available by contacting Rita Jo Shultz at 907-355-8768 or online at www.uaf.edu/ces.

February 16 - Wasilla

Mat-Su Farm Bureau Chapter Annual Meeting

To be held at the Elks Club at Finger Lake, 6-10 p.m. RSVP to Marie Damer at daugmarie@gci.net or 907-745-6561.

March 12 - Anchorage
5th Annual Spring Garden Conference

More information is available under Events at www.alaskabg.org

March 22-24 - Fairbanks

7th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference. Preconference workshop 3/22: Goats, Sheep, and Farmstead Cheesemaking.

Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge. Information: <http://aksare.wikispaces.com> or call Taylor Maida at 907-474-2422.

Farm shows animal-human bond

By NANCY TARNAI

UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences

All the while Cat Whitney worked as a veterinary technician, she became more and more aware of the bond between humans and animals.

Now she is demonstrating that bond herself at Turning Light Farm, a nonprofit learning facility off Chena Hot Springs Road. The 40-acre farm is home to Icelandic sheep, yaks, and poultry.

"It was founded to model human-animal interdependence," Whitney said.

The inspiration to start this type of farm struck in 2007 when Whitney worked as the interim livestock manager for Heifer International's learning center in Massachusetts. Two years later she started Turning Light and dreams of it eventually becoming an official Heifer facility.

Growing up in the suburbs of New York City, with Martha Stewart (yes, that Martha Stewart) living up the street, Whitney considered herself the "black sheep" of the family. Feeling that she didn't fit in led her to flee the East Coast for Alaska at the age of 18. She earned degrees in English and biology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and then studied to become a veterinary technician in Denver.

For 12 years, Whitney moved to various towns, using her vet tech skills, but in 2005 a longtime goal came true when she went to Uganda as a volunteer with a non-governmental agency. Helping widows of the AIDS crisis raise cattle, Whitney began to see how animals are not only a protein source but provide material wealth and dairy products.

Whitney has found the job as Turning Light's steward challenging.

"Farming is not a task to be done by a 100-pound woman," she said. "We do the best we can."

Another obstacle to overcome is building community awareness,



Photo by Nancy Tarnai

Cat Whitney cradles a baby chick in her hands at Turning Light Farm.

which Whitney believes is crucial to the farm's success.

The upside is an office that encompasses the great outdoors.

"I'm outside every day and I can see the subtle changes of the season," Whitney said. "It's amazing how your sense of time changes. The direct connection with the land is the best part."

Connecting people to the land is another bonus. "When you pick up an egg that is still warm from the hen and put it in a child's hand, they connect," Whitney said.

She is working with AmeriCorps VISTA to start a youth incentive program where high-risk students could do farm work to fulfill requirements and learn literacy skills for high school graduation. Another plan is to invite young people sentenced in youth court to perform service hours at the farm.

Meanwhile Whitney, 36, is charged with caring for the critters, from milking the sheep to butchering lambs to spinning the yak hair into fiber. The yak help out as draft animals and have learned to pull carts.

At this time her two yaks are

CONTACT INFO

Visit Turning Light Farm on Facebook

E-mail: berrymewhole@gmail.com

Telephone: 750-5109

both castrated males but she eventually hopes to raise yak for meat.

Turning Light has a 300-square-foot garden and apple trees. Whitney is open to a community supported agriculture venture but needs someone to run it.

When not working the farm she teaches a distance course in veterinary medical terminology for UAF. For fun she does spinning and knitting and writes novels, short stories and poetry.

In January, Whitney will give a public presentation about the farm at the Noel Wien Library and will begin selling animal shares. Whitney said each animal will have its own Facebook page. An open house for the public to visit the farm is also under consideration.

"It's exciting. There are so many opportunities on this piece of land. People love the idea."

Whitney's philosophy is to simply keep moving forward. She is confident the farm will be successful and become a valuable community educational site.

"It will work," she said. "And it will work in its own timeframe. People want to be involved with the land."

Back East, her family is still concerned for her sanity, but Whitney just laughs it off. "This is the place for me. People here are nice and quirky. You can just be yourself."

This column is provided as a service by the UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences and the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. Nancy Tarnai is the school and station's public information officer. She can be reached at ntarnai@alaska.edu.

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OPINION

What Humane Society of the United States has to say

EDITOR'S NOTE: This information is presented to keep farmers and ranchers informed about the positions promoted by the Humane Society of the United States.

Taken from the blog of Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of The Humane Society of the United States

We've had a strong year on animal protection in state legislatures, just the latest indicator of forward movement in the policy-making realm for our cause. This year, 97 new state laws and regulations were enacted to protect animals, and since 2005, it's been 537 laws passed and a number of other rules and regulations.

The reforms fall into a wide variety of categories - upgrading of animal fighting laws, disaster planning legislation, restricting the keeping of exotic pets, equine protection, farm animal welfare, puppy mills, and others.

Today, I want to list what I think are the 10 most important policy gains of the year at the state level.

California banned the sale of eggs from laying hens confined in battery cages, as a follow up to the passage of Prop 2 in November 2008. Prop 2 phases out the extreme confinement of veal calves, breeding sows, and laying hens, and the 2010 law means that all shell eggs sold in the state must conform to Prop 2's standards. Both take effect in January 2015.

Missouri voters approved Prop B, cracking down on puppy mills. Given that Missouri is the number one puppy mill state in the nation - with perhaps 3,000 mills, and 30 percent of the entire industry - this was the most important puppy mill measure ever. Some lawmakers in Missouri want to repeal the measure, so we'll need to be vigilant in protecting Prop B. The second and third biggest puppy mill states - Oklahoma and Iowa - also passed legislation to improve care of dogs.

Alaska lawmakers passed legislation to significantly upgrade the state's anti-cruelty law by making

the most egregious acts of cruelty to animals a felony on the first offense and also prohibiting the sexual abuse of animals. Prior to this bill's passage, Alaska was the only state in the nation that allowed felony-level penalties for animal cruelty only after two prior convictions.

Louisiana, which only banned cockfighting in 2008, made it a crime to be a spectator at a cockfight.

In response to the infiltration of the Everglades by tens of thousands of exotic Burmese pythons, lawmakers in Florida banned the import into the state, breeding, sale and possession as pets of many large constricting snakes.

We worked to defeat Prop 109 in Arizona, which would not only have established a constitutional right to hunt, but would have blocked future wildlife protection initiatives in the state.

Lawmakers in Hawaii banned the horribly cruel and wasteful practice of shark finning. This was a widespread practice in Hawaiian waters, so it has special significance in our effort to ban the activity globally.

It was a regulation, but the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission outlawed fox penning in the state - where coyotes and foxes are run down and torn apart in a fenced enclosure. It's an ugly blend of canned hunting and animal fighting and we want it outlawed everywhere.

Lawmakers in New Hampshire and Rhode Island outlawed greyhound racing in their states, following up on the ballot initiative win in Massachusetts in November 2008.

Illinois lawmakers banned the keeping of primates as pets.

Legislatures will reopen for business in most states in January.

The only way we'll get good laws passed is if we work hard on reforms in the new year and continue to educate the public so these measures get the momentum they deserve.

We'll keep you updated, and we'll count on your help.

OUTPOST AGRICULTURE

By PHILIP A. LORING

Permafrost Pig Roast

A month or so ago I participated in a ritual that filled my soul with hope for the future of American food culture and health. It was an experiment, a pig roast attempted in the perpetually frozen soils of Fairbanks, complete with locally raised swine. For a moment, the feast was a complete disaster, but then suddenly, an overwhelming success. The pig came out of the hole seeming more alive than when it came off of the truck, and even our determined host seemed to resign himself as he prodded different parts of the underdone beast with a meat thermometer. Maybe it was because we were all so hungry, or well lubricated with spirit, but after only the briefest moment of shared defeat we rallied with a vigor, and butchered that animal right onto the grill and then to our plates. We were triumphant, and full, and pleased.

It has me thinking about the origins of food tradition. Not knowing how to eat properly used to be a clear indicator of one's status as a cultural outsider. Food preparation, pairings, place settings, course orderings, table manners, and behaviors are ultimate examples of insider information. We have all laughed at caricatures of unindoctrinated eaters, disadvantaged whether because they come from a "lower" class (My Fair Lady), or some otherwise primitive origins (Encino Man). But how do we explain a nation of insiders who themselves have none of this insider information? That is not to suggest that Americans have no food ritual or culture; surely we do, yet I see no evidence that our food culture achieves anything but making us less healthy.

It cannot be for an absence of material; there is at least as much information in your local bookstore about eating as there is about programming a computer. Is the former, then, so much more difficult to master than the latter? As one with extensive experience in both, both my gut and my reason tell me no. Eating, especially in an abundance of options, should not be hard, is not hard, and only very recently has become hard. Many historical and modern cultures display elegantly adapted food systems in which people are well fed, despite not obsessing or even thinking about counting calories, vitamins, and fatty acids. For that matter, it is impossible to imagine any species surviving nearly as long as Homo sapiens has that cannot eat properly - this is the very antithesis of adaptation. Yet here we are. The problem, it seems, is very new but increasingly ubiquitous.

Robin Fox once wrote that "we eat who we are," suggesting that the hodge-podge of culinary tastes and traditions found across America are a reflection of the ethnic melting pot nature of American society. Surely, foods from a diversity of ethnic traditions, and from countless possible combinations of those traditions, are widespread. The virtues of Tex-Mex, Asian Bistro, and California cuisine aside, however, I think it is self-evident that most Americans do not know how to eat. Given the paradox that we are a nation of people who aspire to body images of malnutrition and who fetishize programs of dietary restriction, yet are for the most part overweight or obese and struggling with any number of diet-related illnesses and diseases, we should probably look back to that original axiom "we are what we eat," adding, perhaps, "because we don't know any better."

Every common food ritual and practice must have started somewhere, however, and surely there were many more trials than errors. I believe that this is why I and my friends were so invigorated by the pig roasting. We fed ourselves, in a very imperfect, messy, and unrefined way. I might even call it primal. But we learned, and spoke for days after of how we would do things better "next time." Cooking makes us human; in both the symbolic and evolutionary sense, and every meal is a ritual, whether we enact it in the privacy of our car or in the expanse of our back yards and in the company of friends. We might ask ourselves, then, each time we enact that ritual, what kind of humanity we wish to cultivate, and through this question, find a direction for rediscovering how to eat.

Outpost Agriculture explores all things food: the science, culture, and politics of its production and consumption. Philip Loring and his wife live and garden in Goldstream. Phil studies the anthropology of food and nutrition at UAF. For citations from this or past articles he can be contacted by e-mail at editor@thefireweed.com.

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BAXTER BLACK

ON THE EDGE OF COMMON SENSE



The Catfish Institute

Several years ago I made a commercial for the Catfish Institute. Their office was in Belzoni, Mississippi. The commercial concluded, "...just write in care of Miz June. That's B-E-L-Z-O-N-I. You learned to spell Mississippi in grade school!"

I have spent most of my life in the mountain west, so trout has been my primary fish source. But I come from deep Oklahoma roots and, from my youth, I have been a frequent visitor to my Okie farmer kinfolks. Each one had a pond stocked with bass and catfish. Catfish almost tastes like meat, whereas trout tastes like fish.

Anybody who lives in the S.E.C., South East College Football Conference, appreciates that catfish beats country ham and red-eye gravy as the supper of choice, most of the time. Catfish is to the south what chile is to the south-west, brisket is to Texas, crabs to the Chesapeake Bay, pizza to middle-school soccer moms, and porridge is to Minnesota.

Catfish on the menu still flourishes, but the local catfish farmer's market is in decline for the 6th straight year. Reason: Cheaper imported catfish primarily from Asia. Sound familiar? Just ask the three shepherders still in the United States, or ask an American Lumberjack if you can find one, or a shoemaker or steelworker.

America is still capable of supplying all our catfish needs but raising them is now being "outsourced." The Catfish Institute blames higher grain prices as a factor, but I'm guessing even if soybeans and corn dropped to less than a dollar and the USDA and EPA removed all the catfish regulations, the Mong, Vietnamese and Chinese could still furnish it cheaper! The Institute is pushing for a mandatory "Country of Origin" labeling law. It seems to be having a dampening effect on our Mexican beef imports.

But if Miz June called me and said, "Bax, what can we do to compete with foreign catfish farmers?" I would point to the most successful "value added" (which means you can charge more) program that I know: Certified Angus Beef. On a private sector level, look at Dole Pineapple, Diamond Walnuts, Omaha Beef, Washington Apples, Idaho Potatoes, French Toast, Belgian waffles, and why are Florida Oranges worth more than Edmonton Oranges or Milwaukee Oranges?

Distinguish your product from imports with name brands like: "Cajun Catfish, raised on Zydeco music!"

"The Crimson Catfish, each granted an honorary degree from University of Alabama!" Talk about a school of fish!

"Bentonville Catfish, with the Wal-Mart Seal of Approval!"

How 'bout "Mississippi River Baptized Catfish, sprinkled for Catholics and dunked for Baptists!"

Right now I'm getting hungry for some good ol' catfish cookies, or a dish of catfish ice cream ... with red eye gravy, of course!

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The Value of Buying Local: A look inside Fairbanks Food Co-op

By **EDGE FUENTES**

Calyssa Farm & Ecology Center

Many of you may have heard about the new Fairbanks Community Cooperative Market, which for the past few years has been a community-building project with high hopes for redirecting consumers as well as producers towards a more local and sustainably-minded shopping alternative: a food co-op. Why? Is there something wrong with the food we are purchasing at our local supermarket? Our local corporate supermarkets are what feed and supply the majority of our community on a year-round basis. Through a harsh winter climate, these supermarkets are a dependable source for anything we could want to consume, right? So why offer an alternative store, which is asking for money from the community to get established, will carry far fewer products, and will struggle to compete with the larger stores' prices?

Let's first take a look at the relationship we, as a community, have with these larger stores. Food and other products are brought in from all over the country and even distant parts of the globe. To the Alaska consumer, whatever is being offered at these few large supermarkets is the only option. But suppose we had an option created by and in the interest of our own community, rather than the large distributors?

The concept of a member-run cooperative that incorporates the views and interests of the involved community to establish a viable market is not new. Several hundred years ago, during the onset of the industrial revolution in England, there existed a group known as the Rochdale Pioneers. This group

of weavers and artisans created a member-run grocery and market that carried food staples and fabric supplies. As many skilled workers found their livelihoods threatened by the surge of mechanization, the community responded to the need to secure their own subsistence. The Rochdale Pioneers paved the way for thousands of member-run food cooperatives, deeply rooted in their communities.

The Fairbanks Co-op Market in its simplest form is a grocery store. In a larger sense it is an organization that is heavily immersed in all aspects of community involvement. It is also a business that will engage consumers as well as contributing producers in experiencing the benefits of integrating local resources. Lastly, it is a shopping venue featuring high-quality products that have been thoughtfully chosen by its own members.

How will it all come together here in Fairbanks? Once the decision had been made that there was enough interest in the community to support such a project, the search for dedicated volunteers began. Essentially, the entire organization will be run by volunteers (not counting the storefront employees). The success of the market will be determined by the extent of community involvement and dedication.

"We are building this business for the community members and they need to be a part of it," said Hans Geier, who sits on the Board of Directors for the market.

Richard Seifert, another board member, describes how the market was founded:

"About four years ago Old Dr.

See CO-OP, page 6

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Farmers call for spending cuts, can't agree where

ATLANTA (AP) – The nation's biggest farm lobbying group supports a balanced budget. It's against tax increases and says the federal government needs to tighten its belt.

Just don't ask its members where the government should trim billions of dollars in agriculture spending – they can't agree.

Despite warnings about belt-tightening and record federal deficits, delegates to the American Farm Bureau Federation left their annual convention recently without making major suggestions on where Congress should trim spending in the next Farm Bill, which sets federal funding for agriculture.

Senior Farm Bureau leaders, a ranking senator, and even U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack signaled that cutbacks are likely as the aftermath of the Great Recession pushes U.S. government deficits to levels last seen during World War II.

"We have a responsibility, even an obligation, as an organization with great political and policy influence, to weigh in and help find solutions to these problems facing our nation," Farm Bureau President Bob Stallman told the convention in his opening address. He urged his fellow farmers to "make choices and establish priorities."

It didn't happen.

"Our delegates did not give us clear direction as how and when and where that should occur," Stallman conceded two days later, after the farmers punted those decisions back to the Farm Bureau's board of directors.

It remains unclear exactly when cuts could be coming. Lawmakers could trim spending approved in the 2008 Farm Bill this year to align ex-

“*This is going to be the most difficult Farm Bill that we've ever had to write.*”

Sen. Saxby Chambliss
U.S. Senator from Georgia

isting spending with the federal government's diminished income. But the austerity debate also could be delayed until Congress starts major work on the next five-year Farm Bill.

"This is going to be the most difficult Farm Bill that we've ever had to write," Sen. Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, the ranking Republican on the Senate agriculture committee, told the convention.

Some farmers signaled a willingness to compromise to save the U.S. money. They suggested individual farmers should pick which safety net program they want from the federal government but not take assistance from multiple programs.

Money saved under that plan could be used to expand agriculture insurance and price protection for all farmers, said Craig Lang, who leads the Iowa Farm Bureau and helped draft the proposal. Farmers with better insurance would be protected from problems that hit their wallets but are beyond their control, such as disease outbreaks and drought.

"It protects the assets so you can come back the next year and keep producing either that meat, milk, eggs or crop, or whatever it is," Lang

said.

But the proposal was ripped apart by other delegates, especially Southern farmers. They prefer direct payments from the federal government – one part of the existing safety net – and have complained that insurance premiums are too high for the benefits they receive.

With that opposition, support for the compromise quickly evaporated, and delegates decided to lobby for direct payments, crop insurance and two other programs designed to protect farmers' bottom line.

Wisconsin Farm Bureau President William Bruins, a dairy farmer, worried the lobbying group was asking for too much.

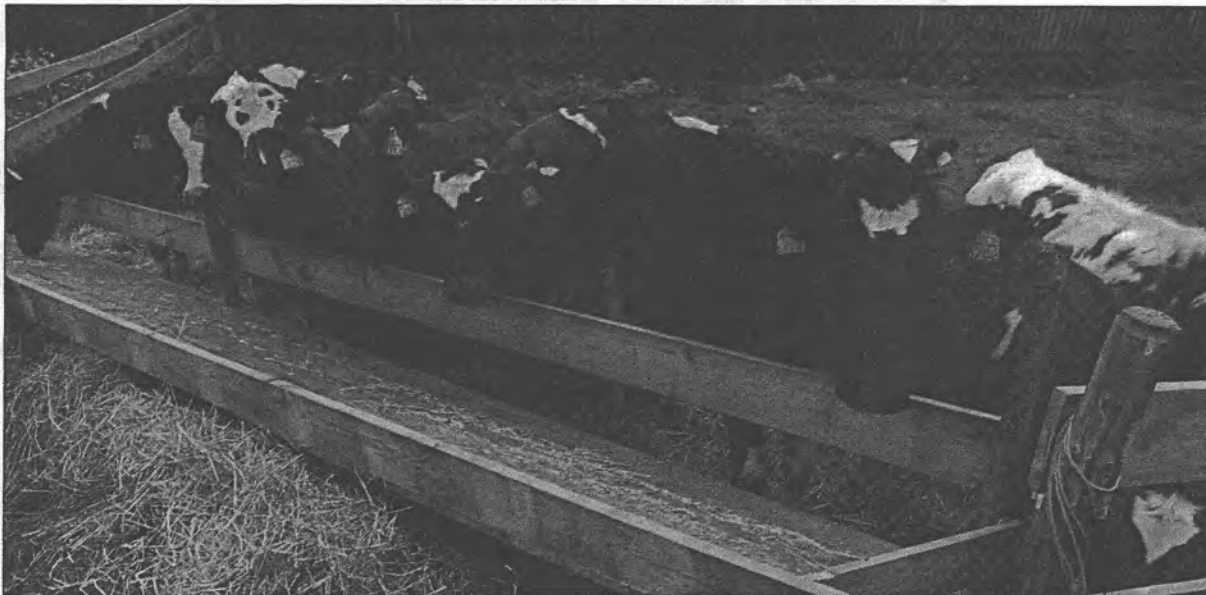
"Let's make sure that each and every program that we support in the Farm Bill is important enough that we want to save some dollars for it," he said. "So let's not simply load the Christmas tree up with ornaments and see how many of those programs we can keep alive."

FELLMAN, from page 1

culture. The Department was scheduled to present a legislative briefing to the House Resources Committee on Jan. 19.

According to Hamilton, Fellman's contract with the Farm Bureau began with the start of this legislative session and will terminate when the session ends in April. He will be in Juneau during this session.

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FB members receive discounts when renting vehicles from AVIS and Budget. Use

AVIS discount code A298802 and Budget discount code Y775702 when renting from either company.

COUNTRY Financial offers Farm, Auto, Financial Planning, and ID Theft Protection policies.



Only Alaska Farm Bureau members are eligible to purchase farm policies, which include farm vehicles and buildings. For more information, please contact your local agent.



Alaska Farm Bureau News

Alaska Farm Bureau offers scholarships

By JANE HAMILTON
Alaska Farm Bureau

The Alaska Farm Bureau offers two \$2,000 scholarships to applicants who are interested in working in an agricultural or natural resource field. Applicants may be graduating high school students who are applying to schools for the fall semester or students and adults already enrolled in a college, trade school or vocational school.

The deadline to apply is April 8,

2011. Applications are available at the Alaska Farm Bureau's website <http://akfb.fb.org> or by contacting the Alaska Farm Bureau Office at 907-895-4752 or by e-mail at janehamilton99737@yahoo.com.

The scholarships are funded through the scholarship auction held each year during the annual meeting in November. One hundred percent of auction funds are devoted to scholarships, and the number of scholarships offered each year

depends on the amount of money raised. Scholarships are offered in \$2,000 increments, with any balances brought forward towards the next year. The November 12, 2010 auction raised \$2,713, which was combined with the account's \$1,460 balance from the previous year.

Thanks so much to the Alaska Farm Bureau members who donated auction items as well as those who made purchases during this event.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Advisory Committee

By JOHN CRABTREE
Center for Rural Affairs

On December 15, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Advisory Committee selected Traci Bruckner of the Center for Rural Affairs as its chair. Bruckner was recently reappointed to serve another two-year term on the USDA advisory board.

The committee advises the Secretary of Agriculture on assisting beginning farmers and ranchers in securing financing, increasing

the number of beginning farmers and ranchers, and creating farming and ranching opportunities. Secretary Tom Vilsack set an agency goal to help 100,000 new farmers and ranchers get started.

The fastest growing age-group of farmers and ranchers are those over 70, the fastest declining age-group are those under 25.

The Center for Rural Affairs created the Farm Bill Helpline to assist beginning and established farmers

and ranchers in a variety of USDA programs. Call 402-687-2100, ask for the Farm Bill Helpline, and you can speak to a someone who is knowledgeable about program rules and can help you understand how to participate in these programs. More often than not, the person a caller will talk to is Traci Bruckner.

Learn more and locate your nearest committee member at www.cfra.org/renewrural/usda-beg-farmer-committee.

CO-OP, from page 4

Dave Lacey, a true man of the sixties, who wore that youthful hope for a better world like a badge of honor, decided one fine day that this community needed a healthy foods, Co-op Food Market. And being a person undaunted by remarkable challenges, he set out to build a coalition of friends and neighbors to do just that. He started it all, called meetings, organized, raised money, signed agreements, and had glorious fundraising parties. But Dave's health failed, and very sadly he never got to see the fruition of his idea."

When asked about the need for such a market in the Fairbanks community, Geier points out that there is a local market of growers and other artisans that is virtually untouched. The co-op plans to carry as many local products as it can find within the community and throughout the rest of the state. "We hope to highlight as many local producers as possible," said Geier, adding, "though the first concern will be to become a successful retail business," which will include selling some out-of-state products.

How does an interested community member become a member of the market? To help cover the

startup costs of a retail business, there is a one-time membership fee. This fee of \$200 is an investment, going directly to establishing the business. There are now almost 1,000 members, about half of whom have paid their membership in full. The co-op is also pursuing other means of raising the needed funds, including a member loan program. Seifert explains:

Building the cooperative spirit through cooperative business ownership is a grand American tradition with a good success record. The camaraderie and example of members helping themselves is a great approach to the future. It is also the only way we can succeed. About twenty solidly committed folks have taken Dave's vision and are now going to the community to try to raise the necessary leverage money. The member loan program has been launched and has raised nearly half of the \$300,000 we hope to receive to finance the market.

The market received a \$25,000 matching loan from the Sprout Fund of the National Cooperative Bank, which the board will match with its member loans. Once the store is up and running, members will immediately begin to receive

benefits such as purchasing products at a discounted price and paying lower tuition for classes offered by the co-op.

Eventually members may receive an annual dividend from the store once total revenue has surpassed the operating costs.

Food cooperatives throughout the nation continue to be created by motivated citizens in search of an alternative to supermarket chains. I for one am proud to support a local organization, which not only includes the community in its view, but also relies on the web of inspired patrons to progress as a valued local business. As an ever-learning student of growing food and a practicing land steward, I am proud to be a part of this effort to redeem the value in food: value that can only be truly appreciated by those individuals who believe that eating well is living well.

To become a member or get more involved, please visit the website at www.fairbankscoop.org, the blog at <http://fairbankscoop.wordpress.com>, or the Facebook group. Edge Fuentes is the Farm Health Manager at Calypso Farm and Ecology Center, where he grows and sells food to the Fairbanks community.

SARE, from page 1

encouraged to attend this exciting and informative conference, which is sponsored by the Alaska Division of Agriculture, Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Western Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, UAF Cooperative Extension Service and UAF Office of Sustainability.

ference - including agenda updates, accommodations and registration details - will soon be uploaded to www.uaf.edu/ces and <http://aksare.wikispaces.com/> Please check these websites often, as plans are underway. Conference contacts are Michele Hébert at 474-2423 or mahebert@alaska.edu, Taylor Maida at 474-2422 or temaida@alaska.edu, and Ronda Halvarson at 474-2450 or rhalvarson@alaska.edu.

More information on the con-

Canning, fresh food on top 10 list

STAFF REPORT

The Food Channel has included canning and purchasing local on its list of top ten trends for 2011 - A favorable trend for small producers and farmers markets. Food preservation or canning is listed as their number one trend for 2011.

"They used to call it 'putting up,' as in putting up tomatoes or corn for the winter ahead.... What it means of course is canning, pickling, and preserving," says the Food Channel.

Why is personal canning of food becoming more popular when the canned food is readily available at the store? The Food Channel thinks it is the increase in the number of recalls and incidents of contamination. According to the Center for Disease Control, there have been

over 400 reported outbreaks of contamination and near 20,000 reported illnesses from contaminated fruits and vegetables.

The Food Channel says, "recent scares over contaminated tomatoes, jalapenos, and eggs have driven people to take more control over what they put on the table."

They also suggest that a tighter economy and the better taste of items purchased at the local farmer's market might be contributing factors in the increase of canning.

Number seven on the Food Channel's list of trends this year is the purchase of items from local butchers and bakeries.

"More consumers are willing to take the time to visit specialty shops for foods of a higher quality, even if it does cost a bit more," they say.



Wednesday, March 23

7:45-8:15 Registration
8:15-8:30 Welcome

Growers' Highlights:

8:30-8:00 Developing Soils in Galena with Green Manures, Paul Apfelbeck, Galena
9:00-9:30 Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) in Homes, Emily Gentry, Twiter Creek Gardens, Homer
9:30-10:15 A Root Cellar for Extending Crop Availability in Bethel, Tim Meyers, Meyers Farm, Bethel
10:15-10:45 Break and Poster Session

Funding Programs:

10:45-11:15 Cost-Share Programs for Organic Farming and Environmental Incentive Programs (e.g., high tunnels and nutrient management), Sunny Ceszka, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Fairbanks, and Lloyd Wilson, USDA Farm Service Agency, Delta Junction
11:15-12:00 Funding Opportunities and Land Sales through the Alaska Division of Agriculture, Patricia O'Neil, Alaska Division of Agriculture, Palmer, and Dan Proulx, Alaska Division of Agriculture, Fairbanks
12:00-1:00 Lunch on Site

Livestock Session:

1:00-1:30 Parasites of Sheep and Goats, Dr. Susan Kent, Washington State University, Kikvidal County Extension
1:30-2:00 Cheese Marketing from Small Scale Goat Dairies, Louie Conway, Conway Family Farm, Camas, Wash.
2:00-2:30 Raw Milk Regulations in Missouri, Gene Wiseman, Missouri Department of Agriculture
2:30-3:00 Break and Poster Session
3:00-3:30 State of Alaska Cheeses and Meat Regulations, Dr. Robert Gerlach, Alaska Division of Environmental Health, Palmer
3:30-4:00 Chicken Tractors and Other Poultry Innovation, Pam Laker
4:00-5:00 Future of Agriculture and Food Security Panel, lead by Mike Emera, Alaska Community Agriculture Association, Ester
5:00 Closing Remarks, Announcements and Evaluation

Preconference Workshops: Tuesday, March 22

9:00-7:00 Goat and Small Dairy Workshop, presented by Louie Conway, Conway Family Farm, Camas, Wash. and Dr. Susan Kent, Washington State University, Kikvidal County Extension. All sessions to be held at Fairbanks Princess Princess Lodge.
9:00-9:30 Stock Selection, Louie Conway and Dr. Susan Kent
9:30-10:30 Feeding Goats, Louie Conway and Dr. Susan Kent
10:30-11:30 Diseases of Sheep and Goats, Dr. Susan Kent
11:00-12:00 Marketing Milk Products, Louie Conway
12:00-1:00 Livestock on Site
1:00-2:00 Reproduction and Raising Practices and Producers, Dr. Kent
3:30-5:00 Fermented Goat Cheesemaking Workshop, presented by Larneal and Stuart, College of Fisheries, Institute of Technology, Bethel

Thursday, March 24

7:45-8:15 Registration
8:15-8:30 Welcome

Research Updates:

8:30-9:00 Update on Fish/Way Composting Project, Jodie Anderson, UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, Palmer
9:00-9:30 Novelty Potato Research, Jeff Smeenk, UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, Palmer

Nutrient Management in Organic Settings in Alaska, Panel Discussion:

9:30-10:00 Organic Fertilizer Research, Dr. Mingchu Zhang, UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, Fairbanks
10:00-10:45 Break and Poster Session
10:45-11:15 Using Local Compost Enhanced with Organic Fertilizers, Susan Willard, Calypso Farm and Ecology Center, Ester
11:15-11:45 Fertilizing Biodynamically, Susan Kennel, Demeter's Wild Rose Farm, Fairbanks
11:45-12:00 Question and Answer
12:00-1:00 Lunch on Site

Miscellaneous:

1:00-1:30 Rhubarb Industry in Alaska, Bruce Bush, Bushes, Palmer, and Carol Kenley, Alaska Vegetable Farm, Palmer
1:30-2:15 Root Cellar Panel, featuring Pete Mayo, Spinach Creek Farm, Fairbanks; Tim Meyers, Meyers Farm, Bethel; and Paul Apfelbeck, Galena
2:15-2:45 Break and Poster Session
2:45-3:30 Small Fruits and Berries for Alaska, Pops, Pops's Greenhouse, North Pole, and Darcy Barney, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Fairbanks
3:30-4:00 Alaska Growers School, Heidi Rader, UAF Cooperative Extension Service
4:00-4:45 Employment Strategies for Small Alaska Farms, TSA
5:00 Closing Remarks, Announcements and Evaluation

LOCATION & LODGING

Fairbanks Princess Princess Lodge
4477 Pikes Landing Road
Fairbanks, AK 99709
907-455-4477 or 800-426-0500

Conference rate: \$75/night + tax, single/double
Call: 1-800-777-1725, Ext. 2
Online reservations: http://www.princesslodges.com/fairbanks_lodge.cfm
Group code: TNBL1080

— Agenda subject to change; please check often for updates! —

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