

Otter Hook Farms

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Traditional Family Farming



Week of September 8, 2009, Harvest Week 14

This week's share includes: Sweet Onions, Summer or Spaghetti Squash, Potatoes, Garlic, Greens and Sweet Basil

Next week should have: Winter Squash, Potatoes, Garlic, Sweet Basil, Parsley, Greens and ?

As I was writing this week's newsletter, I got an email with the following story. If anyone would like the whole article just send me an email. It's crazy how great minds think alike.

Food Is Power and the Powerful Are Poisoning Us by Chris Hedges

TruthDig.com

Monday, September 7, 2009

Our most potent political weapon is food. If we take back our agriculture, if we buy and raise produce locally, we can begin to break the grip of corporations that control a food system as fragile, unsafe and destined for collapse as our financial system. If we continue to allow corporations to determine what we eat, as well as how food is harvested and distributed, then we will become captive to rising prices and shortages and increasingly dependent on cheap, mass-produced food filled with sugar and fat. Food, along with energy, will be the most pressing issue of our age. And if we do not build alternative food networks soon, the social and political ramifications of shortages and hunger will be devastating.

We hope everyone had a nice holiday weekend and enjoyed the beautiful weather of the past couple of weeks. This week Samantha and the boys are visiting Samantha's sister, Lindsay, in Kansas City. So, I'll be writing the newsletter this week. Last week Samantha talked about food security a little and this week I'm going to expand on this issue, but from a different stand point.

This past week and weekend I was helping Pete of the Kriel Farm finish making hay, this is usually done by now but with the rainy summer we had it was impossible to get in the fields in a timely manner, plus every other day we had rain, not good weather for making dry hay. Anyways, as I was going around and around the fields on very large tractors all I could think about was how much land you can work with these large machines, then I started think about the soil compaction (because the tractors are large) and how detrimental that is to soil life. And finally, I thought about the amount of diesel we had burned in the span of a week. I bring this up last because we are all use to relatively cheap fossil fuels, so the question then becomes what happens when fossil fuel is no longer cheap? The answer is that we need more small farmers working an appropriate amount of land, using smaller equipment, hand tools and a lot more physical labor. Richard Hienberg of the Post Carbon Institute says we need at least 50 million farmers; today we have 2.1 million, so we have a long ways to go.

Another issue of food security I have been thinking about is the availability of seeds. This past spring our main seed supplier, Fedco, ran out of certain varieties of seed and really early in the year. They said that this year they had more early orders and more orders in general then ever before, that's 30 years of business history! I view this as a double edged sword. I think it is great that more folks were trying to grow their own gardens; this is a real step toward food security. But, if I can't get the seeds I need for each year, I can't do business. Now, hopefully more farmers will start growing crops for the seed and will fill the demand.

There is a small seed company in the Hudson Valley called Turtle Tree Seed, they do a great job and we are starting to order more seed from them but we can't always get the large quantity that we want and that is an issue for us. So, what can we do about this? Well, Samantha and I are starting to grow the simple crops out for seed; lettuce, mustards, beans, tomatoes and squash. We are starting at a real small scale, just a little each year. The really nice thing is that plants produce a huge amount of seeds each year, so we don't have to grow every variety each year. The issue is that certain plants need isolation, basically they can be the only variety that is grow in one area that year or you get a hybrid, which can be good or bad. So, for now we stay small, grow a few varieties each year and experiment a little each year.

And lastly, small farmers, me included, need appropriate infrastructure for what we want to do. In the coming years we want to grow small grains, things like wheat, rye, and oats. We can plant these crops on the land and harvest them with some equipment that we will be purchasing in the coming years. The problem is that we have no where to have the grains milled. Yes, we could sell whole grains and let folks grind into flour, but how many of you have a grain mill? How about a local baker who wants to use local ingredients, do they have the money to purchase a mill? Or how about some where to process vegetables that are grown for that purpose or extra produce at the end of the season? We have quiet a few orchards that have extra cull apples that could be made into all kinds of products, if we had some where to process. This will be an issue local communities will have to address, we all have to eat and we better get to the task of building relationships and infrastructure.

I want to end on a good note. As many obstacles we have to face in the future years ahead, I'm hopeful that we can meet these demand head on. We are hard working folks, with good minds, strong backs and a common goal of a bright future. It won't be easy, it won't be a short amount of time, but we can work together; we must work together. I'm hopeful that local foods will move from the next fad to everyday life.