



## **The Organic Trade Association's (OTA) Farmer Advisory Council (FAC)** **A powerful trade/lobby group purporting to represent working farmers**



**Listed below are the members of the OTA Farmer Advisory Council (just your average organic farmers — “representing the interests” of families whose livelihoods depend on the economic viability of their farming operations?):**

**Perry Clutts** owns an organic dairy operation in Ohio. His milk is marketed under the Horizon label. Horizon built their commanding market share by procuring, and continues to procure, a great percentage of its milk from CAFOs milking thousands of cows each. When the Horizon label was owned by Dean Foods (WhiteWave division), Mr. Clutts acted, on more than one occasion, as a lobbyist on behalf of the company before the NOSB and in other venues. Both of the vertically integrated CAFOs currently or formerly owned and operated by Dean Foods/WhiteWave are presently under investigation by the USDA for illegalities.

After a lucrative Wall Street spin-off, WhiteWave Foods is now an independently listed corporation. Their CEO and other upper management are the same executives that led Dean Foods. Their chief lobbyist regarding organic policy, Kelly Shea, sits on the OTA Board of Directors.

**Samantha Cabaluna** is a marketing executive at the Earthbound Farms unit of WhiteWave Foods. Rather than operating its own farms (remember, this is a farmers council), the Earthbound brand purchases virtually all of its produce from contract growers in California and Mexico. They buy *from* farmers — can they simultaneously represent the interests *of* farmers?

**Nate Lewis** is an employee of the OTA.

**Jon Bansen** operates a family-scale grass-based dairy in Oregon. Mr. Bansen for many years has been compensated by CROPP/Organic Valley as a paid spokesperson.

**Grant Brians** is a California farmer who was nominated to sit on this panel by CCOF.

**John Brunnquell** owns Egg Innovations, a vertically integrated marketer of conventional and organic eggs. Mr. Brunnquell, despite serving on the Board of Directors of the “Organic Egg Farmers of America,” does not own or operate a farm that produces organic eggs. He contracts

with dozens of farmers, as is customary in the conventional poultry industry, supplying the pullets and feed in a vertically integrated process. Mr. Brunnquell is much more representative of the business owners in the organic industry rather than of “farmers.”

**Doug Crabtree** is a certified organic farmer from Montana. His organizational affiliation is listed as the Organic Trade Association. He is an active member of the trade/lobby group and has acted, and continues to act, as a spokesperson.

**Kristina Hemstead** grew an acre or two of winter squash on her family’s farm in 2013. No organic vegetable production was visible in 2014. Ms. Hemstead is a full-time employee at CROPP/Organic Valley, where her mother is the cooperative’s Chief Operating Officer. Her organizational affiliation is listed as the CROPP Cooperative.

**Steve Koretoff** is a respected California organic almond grower. His affiliation is listed as CCOF. Mr. Koretoff is also the general manager of Purity Organics, a business marketing organic food.

**Phil LaRocca** is a longtime organic wine producer and president of CCOF.

**Jenny Lester Moffitt** also was nominated to sit on the OTA Farmer Advisory Council by CCOF. In addition to her family’s operation growing walnuts, they also purchase from 70 to 75 different growers and are in the processing and marketing business.

**Roger Peters** sits on the FAC as a representative of the Organic Egg Farmers of America. He is a highly compensated member of the CROPP board, as was his father. He also is compensated to sit on the boards of a number of its affiliated arms. The CROPP board is closely aligned with management and all board members receive tens of thousands of dollars in compensation annually (in a number of cases likely eclipsing the net profit from their farming operations themselves).

**Steve Pearson** is a dairy farmer-member of the CROPP Cooperative and also a member of their Board of Directors. He serves as a representative of CROPP.

**Bob Quinn** represents the OTA on this Council. In addition to owning farming interests in Montana, he owns and operates Kamut, which has contractual agreements with many farmers around the world.

### **Participating Organizations:**

#### **California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)**

CCOF is chartered as a trade association. Although CCOF certifies many family-scale farmers it is also a dominant certifier of the largest industrial farms in the U.S. and many corporate marketers as well.

The USDA pays lip service in terms of assuring that certifiers are carrying out their duties independently, and without bias. CCOF maintains *separate* certification and nonprofit

organizations (although they are maintained in the same office). An example of what could be perceived as a conflict of interest, CCOF certifies Driscoll's, the giant berry marketer. And, in addition to the fees that Driscoll's pays to be certified, it writes a large check and is listed as the sponsor funder of CCOF's annual conference. As does the OTA itself, as well as a number of other large corporate members such as WhiteWave/Earthbound Farms, Grimmway (the world's largest cured producer) and Bolthouse Farms.

It should be noted that, to widespread organic community criticism, a representative of Driscoll's, a company that does not actually grow any organic berries, was appointed to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) in a seat designated by Congress for someone who "owns or operates an organic farm." This NOSB member has one of the [lowest voting scores](#) compared to positions advocated by NGOs supporting the organic movement.

At a time when virtually every nonprofit organization, representing organic farmers and consumers, has vociferously condemned the power grabs by the USDA, diminishing the authority of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), the head of CCOF certification stated, "It's the best NOP we've ever had!"

### **Oregon Tilth (OTCO)**

This is another trade organization, with similar dual business and nonprofit operations, accepting corporate funding for its nonprofit work from the same corporations it certifies. The organization has also been publicly supportive of the USDA in these controversial times.

Oregon Tilth has a "prime vendor" relationship with the giant cooperative marketer Organic Valley, a dominant influence at the OTA and its Farmer Advisory Council.

### **Organic Egg Farmers of America**

This trade group was organized by Organic Valley staff and is led by the Organic Valley employee who runs their egg program. It includes a number of businesses, like Organic Valley, that market eggs but do not actually own or operate any farms. The group includes a number of vertically integrated businesses and even some that operate giant CAFOs that are under investigation by the USDA.

### **Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA)**

Unlike the other two regional trade groups representing organic dairy farmers, in the Midwest and Northeast, WODPA includes a number of giant CAFOs, milking thousands of cows each, in addition to many family-scale farmers.

### **CROPP Cooperative (Organic Valley)**

This farmer-owned marketing cooperative, which was forecasted to exceed \$1 billion in revenue in 2014, is probably the most politically active in the organic industry.

Like Driscoll's, one of its employees was appointed to the NOSB in a seat designated for someone who "owns or operates an organic farm." Although the employee's family owned a farm at the time, it was not announced until three years after her appointment that it had become certified organic. In the fight for judicious enforcement of organic livestock standards,

this employee voted to require a minimum of 2 ft.<sup>2</sup>, outdoors, for organic laying hens (a favorable position supported by many of the dominant members of the Organic Egg Farmers of America). Cynical? Hypocritical? It should be noted that Organic Valley itself requires 5 ft.<sup>2</sup> outdoors of its poultry farmers. In the European Union 43 ft.<sup>2</sup> is required.

OV's NOSB member has one of the [lowest voting scores](#) compared to positions [advocated by NGOs supporting the organic movement](#).

In addition to being a dominant participant in many other trade organizations, CROPP's chief legal counsel currently serves as the president of the OTA.

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