

September 2007 SFI E-zine

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1. Up-coming Meetings and Events

18-19 Sep 2007: All Fresh conference, Capetown, South Africa; details at www.allfresh.co.za

24-25 Sep 2007: Soil Foodweb Canada presents The 2 Day Soil Biology Course.

24-28 Sep 2007: SFI Europe seminar series. Introduction to the Soil Foodweb (2 days), Compost (1 day), Compost Tea (1 day), Hands-on Microscope (1 day). For details please contact: lab@laverstokepark.co.uk

12-16 Nov 2007: Near Davis, Ca. Intro class, Compost, Compost Tea and Microscope courses. Details soon to be available at www.soilfoodweb.com/04_news/calendar.htm.

Section 2. Updates from SFI and SSI

a. Apologies

I am sorry that I have been remiss in getting the e-zines out for the summer, but I have been traveling so much that there are times I wake up and don't know where I am in the world. It is a little disconcerting, and I need to slow down in the traveling department.

Joe Whaley has returned to teaching middle school and is no longer with SSI. The person replacing Joe Whaley will be less of a director of SSI and more a personal assistant for me. With that change in personnel, seminars will now be run through each lab, not through the central SSI office in Oregon. Book sales will be through Earth Fortifications.

I want to concentrate on the SFI Advisors, on Natuurbordery, the SFI Programs and getting all the labs working on programs. I want to have an agronomist associated with each lab who will be responsible for running programs in their area of expertise. Clearly, there may be several agronomists associated with each lab, one for each different type of growing situation in an area.

We have a new lab opening in California, and for the "grand opening", the November series of

classes will be held at that site near Davis, California. More information will be forth-coming as soon as the details become available. The Sept. e-zine should contain that info.

b. Cleaning Issues in Brewers

We are documenting that people aren't cleaning adequately. Whenever the first tea you make in a brewer was the best, and then the teas get worse and worse from then on, the take-home message is:

NOT CLEANING PROPERLY.

Think about your tea as if you were getting ready to make something that you are going to drink. If your cleaning isn't up to making the container something you would drink from, you are going to have problems with the quality of your tea. Run your hand over the surface of the brewer after you have water-blasted the tank "clean".

Is it "slimy"? Then get the 10% bleach or 2 - 5% hydrogen peroxide or OxyClean or ammonia – alcohol solution out and get to work washing down the tea brewer until the slime is gone.

Remember, ANYTHING that has been inside the brew has to get washed as well. The INSIDES of any part that was in the tea brewer has to be cleaned. That means the INSIDE of any pipes, diffusers, bags, containers, aerators, or whatever you have in the brewer.

Monitor the quality of the tea you make with the small microscope. You can figure out activity by monitoring with time. Once the biomass of bacteria, or fungi, or protozoa does not increase in time-series samples, the organisms are not growing rapidly anymore. If numbers, or biomass, maintains at a certain level over time, the number of reproducing organisms equals the number becoming inactive (running out of food, oxygen, space, or being eaten). If biomass or numbers is decreasing over time, then death is occurring.

As your tea quality goes from good to ok, to poor, to bad, the take-home message is that you have an anaerobic bio-film someplace. You are going to have to find it. And get rid of it.

Section 3. Items in the News

a. Internet Sources about Sustainable Ag

AFSIC is the global leader for reference information on all aspects of alternative agriculture, and the feature packed AFSIC web site (<http://afsic.nal.usda.gov>) contains hundreds of reference publications which can quickly lead you to the answers you need!

Here are a few of the AFSIC web site features which can provide the information you need to apply for a SARE Grant, start a new research project, learn more about specific subjects, or just explore:

Tracing the Evolution of Organic/Sustainable Agriculture: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/tracing/tracing.shtml>

This 1988 classic AFSIC bibliography has been expanded and updated to include almost 200 cited books and annotations. The document also includes a directory of Online Libraries of Historical Agricultural Texts and Images and a listing of references to articles and books about sustainable agriculture used in compiling the bibliography.

Sustainable Agriculture Automated Database Searches

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/agnic/susagsearch.shtml>

A simple click allows you to conduct automated, real-time, searches of online databases, Web sites and catalogs to locate current resources on sustainable agriculture. When you select one of the automated search strategies, your browser will access the designated Web site or database, perform a search of that site using selected subject terms, and display the search results.

Top 10 Research Journals: Sustainable Agriculture

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/agnic/susagjournals.shtml>

Ten journals are ranked by number of relevant articles published 2004-2007. Each listing includes publication frequency, where the journal is indexed and publisher information.

Educational and Training Opportunities in Sustainable Agriculture, 17th edition

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/edtr/EDTR2006.shtml>

This is AFSIC's recently updated directory of U.S., Canadian and international programs, curricula, classes, distance learning and field days at academic institutions and non-profit organizations.

Funding Resources: Sustainable Agriculture Research

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/agnic/susagfunding.shtml>

This extensive fact sheet lists U.S. government and non-government entities that provide funding for research activities related to sustainable agriculture including organic farming and food, integrated pest management, water quality issues related to agriculture, rural community and small farm topics, alternative and value-added marketing practices, and more.

Applying for a SARE Grant?

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/saregrant.shtml>

This resource will get you off on the right foot with heaps of information on how to write a winning grant proposal. Information on the ins and outs of starting on-farm research can be found here, as well as clear guidance on the funding opportunities available from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program.

If you don't find what you need on the AFSIC web site, contact us directly and we will help you find it forthwith.

Alternative Farming Systems Information Center
National Agricultural Library
10301 Baltimore Avenue, Room 132
Beltsville, MD 20705
phone: 301-504-6559
e-mail: afsic@nal.usda.gov
web: <http://www.nal.usda.gov>

a. GMWatch response on propaganda, fraud and libel

From: GM WATCH daily list <http://www.gmwatch.org>

This is the first part of our response to an article attacking GM Watch. Here we deal with the article's general criticism of us and other "activists". In part 2 we'll deal with the specifics of its allegations of libel.
Propaganda, Fraud and Libel - a response (part 1)

An article about the recent row involving the Canadian Government bureaucrat, Shane Morris, ourselves and GM-free Ireland, recently topped the daily bulletin of AgBioWorld's listserv - AgBioView - and was subsequently posted onto websites run by the Hudson Institute and Monsanto, as well as another pro-GM list, Doug Powell's Agnet.

<http://www.cgfi.org/cgficommentary/Anti-biotech%20wactivists%20082307>

Under the title Propaganda, Fraud and Libel, the author - Andrew Apel - paints a picture of Shane Morris as a scientist beset by "Irish activists" who according to Apel, "Apparently, cannot distinguish between scientific opinion, propaganda, fraud and libel".

There is considerable irony in such an accusation from such a source. Andrew Apel was formerly editor of the biotech industry newsletter, AgBiotech Reporter, but these days he is the "guest editor" of AgBioView. This listserv was in the forefront of the notorious campaign to smear the Berkeley scientists David Quist and Ignacio Chapela over their research on Mexican maize contamination.

The AgBioWorld campaign was initiated and fuelled by "anonymous" e-mail attacks on the integrity of the researchers. The attacks were subsequently shown to have been posted out of Monsanto and its Internet PR firm, Bivings. Bivings, it turned out, were also providing AgBioWorld with undisclosed support.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,715153,00.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,723899,00.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,842999,00.html>

The accusations included the suggestion that the research had been constructed by Dr Chapela in collusion with activists for propaganda purposes, and there was even a call posted on AgBioView by Prof Anthony Trewavas that UC Berkeley should be pressed to dismiss Dr Chapela if he failed to give in to demands that he hand over his maize samples for independent scrutiny.

<http://www.lobbywatch.org/profile1.asp?PrId=153>

<http://www.gmwatch.org/archive2.asp?arcid=1691>

Another Monsanto PR attack posted on AgBioView was aimed at Greenpeace UK and its then head, Peter Melchett. When this AgBioView material ended up being published in a Scottish newspaper under the name of Prof Trewavas, it resulted in a successful libel action.

<http://www.lobbywatch.org/profile1.asp?PrId=153>

Andrew Apel's personal contributions to AgBioView have also been highly controversial. Following September 11th, for instance, he made an extraordinary attack on two GM critical scientists: "Vandana Shiva has blood on her hands, so does Mae-Wan Ho. So do others of their ilk."

<http://www.gene.ch/gentech/2001/Sep/msg00154.html>

A few months later Apel sought to link GM Watch founder, Jonathan Matthews, to terrorism, claiming, "He takes money from Greenpeace and has been associated with at least one terrorist group."

<http://www.gene.ch/gentech/2002/May/msg00245.html>

<http://www.gmwatch.org/pltemp.asp?pid=49&page=1>

Shane Morris and his supporters have also repeatedly attacked Matthews and GM Watch, as well as Michael O'Callaghan of GM-free Ireland, in highly personal terms, accusing them, for example, of "FAKE information and Lies!!!". And while Apel seems to regard GM Watch as "Irish activists", Morris has even sought to link GM Watch to the colonial suppression of Ireland!

<http://www.gmwatch.org/archive2.asp?arcid=6330>

Morris and his co-author Doug Powell appear to have a history of aggressive attacks. After a press piece about the Royal Society of Canada's expert report on GM, an editorial in a Canadian farming paper accused them of "offensive" propaganda marked by "irrational views" and "virulent attacks on respected scientists." (Rude Science, John W. Morris, The Manitoba Co-operator, June 21 2001)

According to Apel's article, however, it is the "activists" who engage in aggressive propaganda and libel.

For more on the research at the centre of the row:
<http://www.gmwatch.org/pltemp.asp?pid=72&page=1>