

## Readings for the LWV Ag Study Suggested for the Oct 9 Meeting of the LWV Downeast

The Oct 9 meeting of the LWV Downeast will be devoted to sharing related readings. Some of these have been suggested by the LWV Ag Study group and some by members of our local League. The following list focuses on health, environmental and sustainability issues of genetic engineering and industrial agriculture. It is indeed a broad subject with many aspects. The following articles are available online or by asking Martha for a print out. You can reach Martha at [marthad@gwi.net](mailto:marthad@gwi.net) or at 667-5863.

1. The **National Academy of Sciences** has a comprehensive assessment of how GE crops are affecting all U.S. farmers, including those who grow conventional or organic crops. Their new report follows several previous Research Council reports that examined the potential human health and environmental effects of GE crops. The full report and a brief are at

<http://www8.nationalacademies.org/onpinews/newsitem.aspx?recordid=12804>

The four-page brief, "The Impact of Genetically Engineered Crops on Farm Sustainability in the United States" is at <http://www.nationalacademies.org/includes/genengcrops.pdf>

2. **Scientific American** September 2013 -- the Food Issue. One article in particular to read is "Are Engineered Foods Evil?" They also have an editorial "Fight the GM Food Scare". Basically their view is that GM foods have been shown to be a boon and are neither toxic nor allergenic. They say that calls for labeling GM foods is a scare tactic that should not be supported. I bought this issue in a digital version and can give printout to anyone who wants it.

3. **Union of Concerned Scientists** has several articles of interest. UCS is an organization of scientists and citizens with reports based on science and a thorough study of the scientific literature.

[http://www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_agriculture/](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/)

"The Healthy Farm – A Vision for U. S. Agriculture" is an eight-page policy brief that includes a page of references. [http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food\\_and\\_agriculture/The-Healthy-Farm-A-Vision-for-US-Agriculture.pdf](http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food_and_agriculture/The-Healthy-Farm-A-Vision-for-US-Agriculture.pdf)

"Genetic Engineering in Agriculture" [http://www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_agriculture/our-failing-food-system/genetic-engineering/](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/our-failing-food-system/genetic-engineering/)

4. **Scientific American**, August 2007/ "Future Farming: A Return to Roots" says that large-scale agriculture would become more sustainable if major crop plants lived for years and built deep root systems. Perspective of the Land Institute, specialists in perennial agriculture. [www.landinstitute.org](http://www.landinstitute.org/www.landinstitute.org/pages/Glover-et-al-2007-Sci-Am.pdf)

5. The **USDA Glossary of Agricultural Biotechnology Terms** includes two helpful distinctions:

**Genetic engineering:** Manipulation of an organism's genes by introducing, eliminating or rearranging specific genes using the methods of modern molecular biology, particularly those techniques referred to as recombinant DNA techniques.

**Genetic modification:** The production of heritable improvements in plants or animals for specific uses, via either genetic engineering or other more traditional methods. Some countries other than the United States use this term to refer specifically to genetic engineering.

[http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=biotech\\_glossary.html](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=biotech_glossary.html)

Last Summer, LWV Ag Study Committee recommended three documents:

- The first recommendation is the USDA report ***Challenges and Opportunities in U.S. Agriculture*** (Chapter 8 of the *Economic Report of the President- 2013*). The Committee considers it an excellent

introductory document offering background on such topics as the role of agriculture in the U.S. economy, structural changes that have taken place since the 1920s, the development of new markets (e.g., organic, local), the contribution of research and development to productivity growth, agriculture in world trade, and the challenges of agricultural risk management. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/ERP-2013/pdf/ERP-2013-chapter8.pdf>

- The second document is a **Union of Concerned Scientists** policy brief entitled *The Healthy Farm: A Vision for U.S. Agriculture* referenced above.
- The third document is a short article from **Scientific American** entitled *Will Organic Fail to Feed the World?* The article presents a summary of a recent analysis of 66 studies comparing conventional and organic methods for 34 different crop species. There are numerous live links providing definitions of terms and additional reading. <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=organic-farming-yields-and-feeding-the-world-under-climate-change&page=2>

Three websites suggested for the Summer Reading are:

- Know Your Farmer, from the USDA at [http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF\\_RESOURCES](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF_RESOURCES)
- The National Sustainable Agriculture Council at <http://sustainableagriculture.net/about-us/what-is-sustainable-ag/>
- Food Dialogues at <http://www.fooddialogues.com/>

#### **Some Maine related resources:**

Maine Fare Farming Forums at [www.maine-fare.org/farming-forums](http://www.maine-fare.org/farming-forums). Linda Washburn will give a report from a recent Belfast meeting. Maine Fare is a program of the Maine Farmland Trust at <http://www.mainefarmlandtrust.org/>

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association at [www.mofga.org](http://www.mofga.org)

The proposed East-West Highway and water mining are two other Maine issues that are related to farming issues. Some of us may want to tackle one or both of these issues, although they are not part of our focus for the League study.

The 2014 Camden Conference is on Food and Water, February 21-23, 2014. (<http://www.camdenconference.org/>)

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