

The Harvest Beet

SUMMER 2016

est. 1979

NATURAL HARVEST

FOOD CO-OP

*Locally owned,
organically grown.*

WHAT'S NEW?

Owner Perks!

CO-OP NIGHT AT THE 218 TAPHOUSE

(behind The Shop Coffee House) in downtown Virginia has moved from Saturday nights to Wednesday nights! Natural Harvest owners receive \$2 off their first beer or wine every Wednesday night from 5pm to 11pm for 'Vinyl Wednesday'...just for showing your NHFC owner's card! The 218 has a great selection of craft beer



and boutique wines...and the vibe cannot be beat. Grab a few of your favorite albums or just head down and let someone else be the DJ. They have also been known to break out the art — painting, graphic design, or whatever strikes in the moment. It's a super chill night to hang out and kick back. The 218 is a family-friendly venue.



(What's New, cont. on back cover)

Your quarterly source of information for healthy living!

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A Year In Review

by Anja Parenteau, General Manager

WE ACCOMPLISHED A LOT IN 2015!

We participated in Earth Fest, the Mesabi Trail Tour and new in 2015, we set up a water and snack stop for the VHS 5K Fun Run. The same day as the Fun Run, we invited the runners and the community to be part of our first annual Co-op Fest where we served lunch, provided kids' games, had great musicians for entertainment and welcomed local artisans for a small arts & crafts fair. Over 300 families were able to take part.

Our Change Within Reach Round-up Program enabled us, along with the community, to give \$16,298.18 to local non-profits and charities. This number included a 5% contribution from Natural Harvest. As we do every year, we also provided gift baskets and gift cards to numerous organizations needing donations throughout the year.

We invested in new signs for the building and redesigned our website; you can now find us at naturalharvest.coop for general co-op information including: classes, the Owner Loan Campaign, expansion plans, and so much more! We have also stepped-up efforts to invite new owners to the co-op family by having two owner drives per year; adding 317 new owners last year has added \$15,850 in equity to our 2015 Balance Sheet.

Many successful new classes were held and we added a lecture series on different health topics that we co-

sponsored. 14 classes were held with 216 people attending. 11 classes had to be cancelled because of low sign-up, but we do not get discouraged. We will continue the effort of sharing health and well-being education to the community.

The store itself got a few updates as well. We reset the grocery and supplements department to make shopping easier. The produce department added an eight-foot dry produce display and we streamlined the banana display to gain more room in our first aisle. In order to determine which departments should grow in our new store, we conducted our first customer survey to find out about shopping patterns and demographics of our shoppers.

A change that affected all owners was the introduction of the Patronage Rebate system and with it the discontinuation of the daily discount. Our business has been able to save thousands of dollars in income taxes because profits are now allocated back to the owners through Patronage Rebates, as decided by the Board of Directors. In 2015, we were able to send out rebate checks (reflecting 2014 numbers) for the first time in the history

of our co-op: \$68,645 was allocated as Patronage Rebate, of that \$13,729 (20%) was sent out as rebate checks and \$54,916 was retained as equity. The introduction of the new choose-your-own-day, 5%

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

Sales: \$2,497,843.45 (9.4% growth over 2014)

Net Profit (before taxes and Patronage Rebate): \$216,994.45

Patronage Rebate Allocation for 2015: \$108,144

20% - \$21,629 (cash pay-out)

80% - \$86,515 (retained patronage)

Owner Discounts: \$41,843.53 given back to owners in 2015 through:

3 months of 2% daily discounts & 10% discount days; case discounts; 5% once-monthly discount; and new-owner discounts

Percentage of Owners Shopping: 48% (up from 44% in 2014)

Number of Customers: 92,424 (6.11% increase over 2014)

New Owners: 317 (\$15,850 more owner-equity in our Co-op)

Active Owners: 1,818 (217 more than in 2014)



Round-up Report

Supporting local continues with our **Change Within Reach** round-up program. In June, the featured non-profit is **Project Care Free Clinic**. The Free Clinic assists those without health insurance as well as help individuals navigate the often confusing health care system to find more affordable health care. They offer free informational seminars, such as Seasonal Affective Disorder and started a Walking Club to promote healthy activity community-wide. They have nearly 1,500 patients, 591 new patients in 2014. They offer group diabetes education, yoga, smoking cessation, meditation, nutritional education, blood drives and more. They have clinics in Hibbing, Ely, Grand Rapids and Virginia.

July gives you the opportunity to support the pride, the tradition and the art behind old-time fiddling. Every year, the **Minnesota State Old Time Fiddle Championship** is held on the Iron Range. For years, the event was held in Cotton, but with the closure of the Cotton School, it moved to Merritt Elementary School in 2011. Endorsed by the Mesabi Symphony Orchestra, Arrowhead Regional Arts Council and the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund of Minnesota, this is a celebration of local culture and heritage. An abbreviated list of their objectives is: to help participants expand their knowledge, skill and appreciation through workshops and corroboration with other artists; to provide a real, quality, performing experience for the contestants; and to enrich the community with old time fiddle music.

In August, we turn our attention to our less fortunate neighbors. All your nickels and dimes will be donated to the **Community Connect Event** organized by **Range Transitional Housing**. This is a one day event that brings together homeless and low income individuals and the agencies that can help them. Range Transitional Housing organizes a variety of agencies that can help folks navigate eligible programs, program requirements and onsite applications for assistance. The event also includes the disbursement of winter outerwear, blankets, personal care items, and groceries. While community members gather information, they are also invited to enjoy a free meal. In 2014, the event served over 300 individuals. This year's event is expected to serve 400 households.

If your 501(c)(3) non-profit organization would like to participate in the round-up program, stop in for an application! 🍯

owner discount has been a great success; many more owners are able to take advantage of this discount than with the discount days before.

The Board of Directors hired Walker, Giroux and Hahne to perform an audit in 2014. The last time a third party looked at the co-op's books was in 2006. Their audit finished with another inventory count check at the end of the year and in March of 2015, we were presented with a clean audit report.

We continue our effort to make the co-op more sustainable too: the toilet was replaced with a double flush, low-flow toilet to save water; the Deli is now equipped with a convection oven to save electricity; and as a store policy, we no longer sell water in bottles smaller than 20 oz. This helps save the planet from a sea of plastic.

We worked with 69 local and regional producers in 2015 (10 more than 2014). Local is defined as 100 miles from Virginia, regional as 400 miles from Virginia. We paid \$229,404.54 to these producers directly, that's over \$20,000 more than the year before. This makes our local purchases 15% of the overall inventory purchases for the year and it doesn't include local items we get through our regional warehouses. We also paid

\$124,452.00 to local, small businesses for supplies and services, and \$357,496 in wages to our employees. Starting wage is now \$10.00 at the co-op, after a 3-month training period and retirement and health benefits are paid to those who are eligible.

Looking forward, I see another awesome year for the Co-op! Planning for the expansion is in full-swing and we have made some great strides. We have a development agreement with the City of Virginia and bids for the site work have been accepted. Bids for construction of the building went out mid-May. This leaves only the financing to get finalized. We still need help from you, the owners! If you are able, please consider a loan to the co-op. The minimum investment amount is now \$500, making it more accessible to more owners. The outside lenders would like us to reach \$280,000 and we are already half-way there! Your money stays in our community and supports a business that is so important to so many of us!

Please join me and so many others who have already invested; we can accomplish so much when we cooperate!

Thank you,

— Anja Parenteau

Greetings Fellow Co-op Shoppers!

by Leah Calgaro, Board Member

I hope you have all been enjoying the sunshine and warm weather! I think it is finally safe to say, summer is upon us. What a joy! There is so much to look forward to within the co-op this time of year, so keep your eyes peeled for more local foods, plants in the greenhouse, gardening supplies, and more!

First, I would like to extend a big thank-you to all the owners who were able to attend the Annual Meeting. As we mingled, ate a fabulous dinner prepared by our own in-store hands (thank you Alex and staff!) and discussed all the exciting and important news about the expansion, it felt great to answer questions, talk in person, and hear the positive feedback from the owners themselves.

As most of you know, we are in the midst of an expansion that will be moving Natural Harvest to a new building being built on the shores of Silver Lake on 4th Street North. As our owner list and sales continue to grow, the expansion will help us to provide even more quality and local foods and services to even more members of the community. How exciting!

An expanded deli and hot bar, a classroom complete with a kitchen, multiple bathrooms, and a second entrance directly accessing the Mesabi bike trail off of the lake are just some of the positive changes we have to look forward to. These things and more will help the co-op further live up to its mission statement that commits us to "building a sustainable future through communication, cooperation,

and education," as well as "provide quality food, products, and services for the health and well-being of our families, our community, and our planet."

With that being said, we are also in the midst of a very important Owner Loan Campaign that, with the money raised, will help the co-op to cover a portion of the costs of the expansion without having to take out a high interest loan from the bank. The loan minimum has been dropped to \$500 to help accommodate those who wish to invest in their co-op but don't quite (like me) have \$1,000 to loan, and there is no limit on the loan amount an owner can invest.

Maybe you have just signed up as an owner this year, newly interested in some healthier food and home products for you and your family that are non-toxic, non-GMO, and environmentally friendly... Maybe you have been an owner since the co-op's humble beginning in 1979. Either way, we are all in this together. We all want what is best for our communities, our families, and our own health and Natural Harvest is a key component of all of those things when it comes to the health and the future of Virginia and the Iron Range.

So continue to enjoy that sunshine and springtime air, my friends! And next time you are in store, buying your favorite organic foods or snacks, consider talking to Anja or one of our other helpful staff members, and ask how you can invest in Natural Harvest today! 🍯

New Product Spotlight

by Maribeth Ganoe, Health & Beauty Buyer

ZACK & NACKS – MN MADE

Zack Vex and Doug Nack are long time Minnesota residents and owners of Zack & Nack's Bug Spray. Zack & Nack's Bug Spray is hand-mixed in Zack's home in small batches and has a remarkably pleasant fragrance to humans, but frightens the pesky little biting gnats, mosquitoes, flies (deer, stable and black flies) and no-see-ums! The essential oils in Zack & Nack's are food-grade and smell like a mixture of flowers and dessert! The scents of vanilla, rose, clove, lemon and peppermint are exquisitely combined to make it a safe and pleasant experience for you and your family while chasing bothersome bugs far away. This water-based product does not contain chemical solvents, alcohol or DEET, so it is safe for anyone from 1 to 92...and is pet friendly too! Pick one up before your next outdoor adventure. 🐾



WYNDMERE – MN MADE

Established in 1995 in Minnetonka, Wyndmere Naturals began with the philosophy of bringing high quality, pure, therapeutic essential oils to the market as a way to improve the emotional and physical well-being of others. They are committed to excellence as demonstrated by their 100% Guarantee printed right on their labels. The oils have been consistently purchased from the same growers since the company's inception. Their bar soaps are handmade in small batches with pure essential oils and all natural plant material. In stock now: deodorizing soap, clear skin soap, stress relief soap, anxiety release soap, and vibrant skin soap. 🐾



What's Cooking?

by Alex Haugen, Deli Chef

Grilled Romaine & Salmon

I love to grill. And ever since I first grilled Romaine, it's my go-to for BBQ parties. Grilled lettuce may sound a little weird, but it is my favorite way to eat a salad. And salmon is best cooked medium rare...cooking just until it starts to release its fat. This salad will make you feel alive and the talk of the BBQ! Pairs well with 3... to 6 beers! (In our freezer section, you will find Wild Coho Alaskan Salmon Pieces & Full-fillet Wild Alaskan Sockeye Salmon - both from Simple Gifts)

INGREDIENTS:

Skin-on Salmon Fillet
Head of Romaine
Lettuce
Grated Parmesan
Roasted Red Pepper
(from a jar, or roast your own)
Red Onion
Cucumber
Olive Oil
Sea Salt
Black Pepper
Vinegar
(Apple Cider or Coconut Vinegar)

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat the grill. Place salmon over indirect heat, skin down. Cover grill and check salmon every few minutes. Once fat starts to appear, remove from heat and let rest. Cut Romaine length-wise down the middle, rub with olive oil on cut-side and salt & pepper to taste. Place Romaine halves cut-side down directly over charcoal. Remove once they begin to char. Remove stems and place on a plate. Top Romaine with salmon, parmesan, roasted red peppers, red onions, cucumbers and choice of vinegar. A wide variety of salad toppings would work. Find your own favorite!

New Products Available at Natural Harvest...

FROZEN

- ALDEN'S
 - Organic Ice Cream Novelties – Ice Cream Sandwiches & Bars
- APPLEGATE
 - Organic Turkey Burger
 - Turkey Breakfast Sausage

MEAT

- APPLEGATE
 - Organic Uncured Stadium Beef Hot Dog

REFRIGERATED

- ANNIE'S
 - Organic Yogurt Cups, 4 pk – Strawberry, Berry Patch or Vanilla
- CALIFIA FARMS
 - Unsweetened Almond Milk (Carrageenan Free), 48 oz.
- FOOD SHOULD TASTE GOOD
 - Hummus – Black Bean, White Bean or Edamame
- KALONA
 - Organic Whole Milk Greek Yogurts – Lavender Honey or Peach Mango

GROCERY

- ANGIE'S BOOMCHICKAPOP
 - Popcorn: Sea Salt, White Cheddar & Sweet BBQ
- BEANFIELD'S
 - Bean & Rice Chips – BBQ, Ranch or Pico de Gallo
- BEARITOS
 - Bean Chips – Black Bean, Hint o' Lime, or Nacho Cheese
- EPIC
 - Meat, Fruit and Nut Bars
- EQUAL EXCHANGE
 - Organic Chocolate Bars – Mint Crunch, Extreme Dark
- FIELD DAY ORGANICS
 - Applesauce
 - Balsamic Vinegar
 - Coconut Oil
 - Extra Virgin Olive Oil
 - Cooking Spray
 - Honey
 - Pizza Sauce
 - Tart Cherry Juice
 - Grape Juice
 - Cranberry Juice
- FEVER TREE
 - Ginger Beer Mixer

FRONTERA

- Roasted Tomato Rice Seasoning Sauce
- GINGER PEOPLE
 - Ginger Peanut Sauce
- GOMACRO
 - Macro Bars
- LITTLE SECRETS
 - Organic Chocolate Candies
- LOTUS
 - Organic Brown Rice Ramen – Buckwheat Mushroom, Wakame
- MAYA KAIMAL
 - Chickpea Chips – Sea Salt or Spicy Chili
- ONE DEGREE
 - Organic Sprouted Red Fife Wheat Raisin Bran
- SAFECATCH
 - Elite Tuna Fish – Every Fish Is Mercury Tested
- TAZA
 - Organic Stone Ground Chocolate Bars
- VERMONT SMOKE & CURE
 - Flavored Meat Sticks
- WELLNESS CORE 95
 - Dog Food – Turkey, Chicken or Beef

CHEESE

- BLACK DIAMOND
 - Cheddar Grand Reserve, aged 2+ years
- KINGDOM
 - Organic Sharp Cheddar – Aged, Black Pepper or Caramelized Onion
- MARIEKA
 - Raw Young Gouda, aged over 60 days
- SARTORI
 - Gold BellaVitano
 - SarVecchio Parmesan

BAKERY

- DAVE'S
 - Organic Good Seed Bread
- LITTLE NORTHERN
- BAKEHOUSE
 - Gluten-free & Vegan Bread – Millet Chia or Cinnamon Raisin
- SILVER HILLS ORGANIC
- SPROUTED ANCIENT GRAIN
 - Hamburger & Hot Dog Buns

BULK

- ECOS-PRO
 - Free and Clear Laundry Detergent
- FRONTIER
 - Organic Steak Rub
 - Organic Chop Rub
 - Organic Jamaican Jerk
 - Organic Vindaloo Curry Powder
- NUTS.COM
 - Organic Tropical Granola Mix
- JUST COFFEE
 - Organic Early Bird-Seasonal
 - Medium Roast
- EQUAL EXCHANGE
 - Organic Bird of Paradise – Light Roast

BACK IN BULK

You asked... we delivered! Bulk Laundry Detergent is back! And look for dish soap to be back in bulk soon!



Local Producers!



Owl Forest Farm

by Ashley Phoenix, Produce Buyer

LOCATION: Forbes, MN

OWNER: Kate Paul

ESTABLISHED: 2006 and then again in 2013 after a hiatus

WHERE PRODUCTS ARE AVAILABLE: CSA shares at the farm, Natural Harvest Food Co-op, The Shop Coffeehouse

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION: Facebook, www.owlforestfarm.com

FAVORITE ITEMS TO PRODUCE: Carrots. "They are my favorite veggie to eat, taste better than candy, and they don't hog any greenhouse space."

PEST MANAGEMENT: Organically. Row covers, crop rotation, building the soil, and certified organic pesticides when necessary.

WHY THEY FARM: "I love the freedom to be outside in nature and close to the earth while managing my own business. It is very hard, backbreaking work physically, but the mental and emotional benefits outweigh all of that. I love being a part of something much larger than myself while contributing really healthy food to the community."

EXTRA THOUGHTS: "On the surface, what looks like a one-woman show is greatly supported by family who give much of their time... my husband, mom, son, father-in-law, and in 2016 we welcome interns to the farm to help us grow. My vision is to help a younger generation learn about being more self-sufficient and learn all aspects of operating a small-scale CSA farm." 🐾



Rice River Lamb Company

by Ashley Phoenix, Produce Buyer

LOCATION: Angora, MN

OWNERS: Nate & Tiffany Briggs

ESTABLISHED: 2007

WHERE PRODUCTS ARE AVAILABLE:

Natural Harvest, Cook Area Farmers Market, at the farm

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION:

Facebook, MN Grown

FAVORITE ITEMS TO PRODUCE:

Tomatoes, peppers, and lambs

PEST MANAGEMENT: Free range chickens, using a high tunnel, and lots of TLC!

WHY THEY FARM: "Farm values are what we want to teach our children. The value of working hard, and producing something that everyone needs. Our desire to know where our food comes from." 🐾



Homestead Mills

by Ambir Vesel, Bulk Buyer

LOCATION: Cook, MN

As you are shopping thru the co-op you will notice "discover local" signs around. These signs are there to highlight some of our groceries, coffees, bulk items and more that are made right here in Minnesota, even on the Range. These are companies that are committed to using organic and/or natural ingredients to provide products that are healthy and safe for everyone to enjoy. Right up the road from us in Cook, MN you will find such a company: Homestead Mills.

Homestead Mills is a milling company that creates a variety of flours, cereals and mixes, many of which are sold right here at Natural Harvest. The factory that Homestead Mills calls home actually started as a rutabaga waxing company in the 1930s. By the 1970s it changed over to a seed growing co-op where they cleaned and sold seeds to locals all over

the area. Then in the early 1980s, owners Keith and Carol Aho became involved and Homestead Mills was created. Starting by combining several different grains they began making cereal (like Country Blend located in our bulk department). As they became more popular they began producing flours, pancake mixes and several other types of cereals. After awhile, they expanded into fish batter, potato pancakes, muffin mix, bannock quick bread even a south of the border chili mix. Need a little? Need a lot? They offer personal 1 lb. packages as well as up to 50 lb. bags.

Today, with the help of just eight other individuals, Homestead Mills is thriving. Their customer base exists not only in our five-state area but also across the country, delivering items like bagel batter to all the way to New York. If you are ever in Cook, be sure to stop by Homestead Mills to say hello and check out some of the vintage equipment used in the "old days". And don't forget to stop in their unique gift shop also!

Not often in Cook? You can find a large selection of Homestead Mills' products in bulk or prepackaged in grocery. Whether you are looking for a cup or a 50 lb. bag, we can help you. Just ask for Ambir! 🐾

Tera's Whey

by Sarah Debreto, Supplement Buyer

LOCATION: Madison, WI

Tera's Whey was introduced to my shelves in late winter 2015. What excited me about this company was their premise: pure ingredients from small Wisconsin farms. Small family farms provide the cows and goats that are pasture raised, grass fed, and free of artificial growth hormones. The whey is extracted from local artisan cheeses leaving a pure form of complete protein, which is suitable for athletes and lactose-intolerant folks. The protein is carefully blended with organic ingredients like Bourbon Vanilla and Fair Trade Certified Dark Chocolate Cocoa. Each batch is minimally processed...by people, not robotics. Their products include Active Nutrition Recovery blends, which are essential after any type of physical activity; it contains a unique combo of casein, whey protein and organic coconut water.

Tera's Whey is headquartered in Madison, WI and offers a fresh, regional product to our community. Their availability through our distributor provides the added benefit of affordability through NCG's Co-op Deals.



Their motto..."pure nutrition, simple ingredients and earth friendly"...is in-line with my values as a buyer as well as Natural Harvest's mission statement. I hope that you'll like their product as much as I do. Cheers!

More on Tera's story can be found at <http://simplyterras.com/our-story/> 🐾



Sha'-Lem Ointment

by Maribeth Ganoe, HABA Buyer

LOCATION: Angora, MN

Sha'-lem ointment began many years ago with the formula for a salve that Agnes Zdybek brought to America from her native Poland. She used it for scalds and burns...and some said it had remarkable healing powers. In 1947, Agnes' daughter, Bernice Plunkett, suffered a severe scald of the chin, neck and chest. She used the ointment made with her mother's formula to treat her wound; the ointment took away the pain and discomfort and left the burned area without a scar. A registered nurse, Mrs. Salter, upon observing the outcome of Bernice's incident, decided to go into business. The business was sold in 1972...but in 1992, Bernice's son Robert and his wife Marilyn bought the business and formed the Sha'lem Products, Inc. Over the years, letters have been received from people praising the Sha'lem Ointment and its effectiveness in treating many skin conditions where nothing else would work. This non-petroleum based product is good for bug bites, psoriasis, eczema, sunburn, urine burns and bed sores...as well as pain relief for cuts. 🐾



Gilley's Naturals

by Maribeth Ganoe, HABA Buyer

LOCATION: Tower, MN

Many people have asked about future plans for Gilley's Naturals, a local natural care business destroyed by fire over two years ago. We are happy to announce that several Gilley's products are again available in the store! More than a year passed before Jill Gilley decided to once again build a business with natural skin care, herbal remedies and

essential oils. The response has been overwhelming with the return of many loyal friends and customers along with a whole new group looking for alternatives to the traditional and harmful body care products. Along with the original recipes, there are new items, improved products and a whole new social networking response with the business. Many of the favorites like Buggone Bug Repellent, Deep Muscle Relief, Healing Ear Oil and Fabulous Foot Butter are available again. With the business renewal are more specific items like Re-mineralizing Toothpaste and cocoa colored Fresher Hair Dry Shampoo, a product often touted by faithful customers as "essential"! Improvements and new products are consistently evaluated to keep offering a variety as well as offering the same great things you've come to expect from Gilley's. We welcome them back! And encourage you to take a look at this well-loved local company and their fresh new look. 🐾



North Country Farm

by Maribeth Ganoe, HABA Buyer

LOCATION: Little Fork, MN

North Country Farms specializes in premium, hand-made goat milk soaps. The farm is family run by Matt and Elizabeth Pendergast and was born from the desire to raise a dairy animal that was both manageable and provided a quality source of milk - goats fit the bill. They raise mostly Nubian goats because of their size, manageability, beauty and their great personality. Goat milk soap is great for people with sensitive or dry skin, including difficult skin conditions like eczema and psoriasis, and is very gentle and moisturizing. Because this soap consists of only three main ingredients of goat's milk, lard, and lye, it is simple and naturally good. North Country Farm's soap leaves your skin feeling soft and smooth. Goat milk contains several vitamins, including vitamin A, and alpha hydroxy acid which reduces fine lines and wrinkles, helps control acne, and removes dead skin cells. In addition, the high butterfat content that's in Nubian goat milk boosts the moisturizing quality of their soaps; this helps skin feel more hydrated. From Black Raspberry Vanilla to Fresh Lilac, Lemon Eucalyptus to Lily of the Valley, you are sure to find one that will soon become your go-to favorite! Find them in store now! 🐾

Save the Dates!

TUNE-UP & RIDE

On **Saturday, June 18**, Natural Harvest is teaming up with the Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability and the Fiddlin' 50 Gravel Grinder to host a **Bike Tune-up & Information Day** to help get you and your bike primed to hit the trails! There will be two presentations covering bike basics like: maintenance & safety, Minnesota rules & regulations, and bike commuting. Staff and tools will be on hand to assist you with a basic tune-up and we will have hot dogs, ice-cream treats, prize giveaways and local music from Horse Fzce! 11am & 2pm presentations with a raffle for a child's helmet after each session. This is a free, family-friendly event and everyone is welcome! Come for the info...stay for the fun! 🐾

MESABI TRAIL FUN

We are so fortunate to have the Mesabi Trail just steps from our door and in support of that, the co-op is once again a vendor of both the 3-day (\$5) and annual wheel passes (\$15) to ride the Mesabi Trail. All adult cyclists who use the trail should buy a pass. Funds from the passes help keep the trail maintained. Be sure to mark your calendar for the **Great River Energy Mesabi Trail Tour on August 6!** Natural Harvest will be hosting a stop along the trail to serve up fresh watermelon, bananas, trail mix, energy nuggets and water to all the riders! Each year the tour moves to showcase a different stretch of the trail. In 2016 the tour will travel from Virginia to Grand Rapids and Natural Harvest will host the Nashwauk stop. The Tour is designed for families and serious trail riders alike. Four starting points allow riders to customize their route, from 11 to 72 miles. At the end of the ride in Grand Rapids, there will be a picnic and a concert. Ask a cashier for a pass today to maximize your trail riding experience! 🐾

3RD ANNUAL IRON RANGE HARVEST FESTIVAL

September 9-11, 2016

Across the Iron Range

This annual event is organized by the Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability and Congregations Caring for the Earth. The weekend will include a kickoff event on the 9th, farm tours on the 10th, a farmers market on the 11th culminating with the 100 Mile Harvest Meal that evening. Stay tuned for more information as you begin seeing posters at the co-op as well as around the community. You can also check out what the Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability is up to with the Harvest Festival as well as other events on Facebook. We hope you can make it out to the Festival's events to connect more with where your food comes from as well as to show support for your local food producers! 🐾



The Sumatran Orangutan

The Sumatran tiger, rhinoceros, elephant and orangutan are critically endangered due to palm oil expansion into their habitat. Scientists are especially concerned about the Sumatran orangutan because it is a keystone species, which means the orangutans' presence helps other species thrive.

These amazing animals are known as "gardeners of the forest," because while they feed in the forest canopy they drop fruit-laden branches to the forest floor below, where they can be eaten by other animals or grow into new trees. If Sumatran orangutans become extinct, it will severely damage ecological health in Sumatra's remaining rainforests.

The Orangutan Information Centre is a Sumatran organization that works with the local community to restore critical habitat and provide education on a range of sustainability issues. As of 2014, they've planted over a million native trees in deforested areas of Gunung Leuser National Park, which is one of just two remaining habitats for the Sumatran orangutan. For additional information or to make a donation, visit orangutancentre.org. 🌿



Palm Oil: Sustainability Crossroads

www.strongertogether.com

By now you may have heard about palm oil, a tropical plant-based fat that has recently surged in popularity because it can be used to replace hydrogenated oils (trans fats) in many processed foods. As government regulations regarding the removal of trans fats from our food supply continue to increase while consumer demand for processed foods remains the same, companies have become increasingly dependent on palm oil as an inexpensive source of shelf-stable fat. This increased demand is having disastrous implications for tropical rainforests and our shared environment in a short amount of time. When it comes to palm oil, we're at sustainability crossroads.

AN UNNECESSARY DIRECTION

Palm oil comes from the African oil palm tree. In many ways, the oil palm is an ideal source for sustainable ingredients. This hardy tree grows quickly in a wide range of tropical environments and yields lots of oil — in fact, it requires about one-tenth of the land needed to produce the same amount of oil as soybeans or canola.

Most palm oil today comes from Indonesia, a biodiverse Southeast Asian nation made up of thousands of tropical islands. Indonesia's largest island, Sumatra, is home to species which can't be found anywhere else on earth. Farmers looking to earn a living from the surging demand for inexpensive palm oil have cleared roughly 44 million acres — an area equivalent to the state of North Dakota — in order to grow oil palms. This destruction has put many unique animals on the endangered species list. The slash and burn methods used to clear rainforests have made Indonesia the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases and a major contributor to global climate change. Indonesia's rainforests grow on *peatlands*, swampy layers of ancient, carbon-rich vegetation that spread deep beneath the forest floor. A single acre of burning peatland rainforest can release over 10,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide. This is in addition to the loss of trees which acted as a *carbon sink* by removing carbon dioxide from the air.

TURNING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Thankfully, as consumers become educated on this issue, companies are beginning to take note. This is a trend that must continue in order to reach palm oil's potential as a sustainable ingredient. Increased consumer demand for sustainable products has led many manufacturers to consider how the ingredient could be produced more sustainably. Familiar third-party certification programs, such as USDA Organic and fair trade, can help people identify palm oil that has been produced with sustainability in mind. You may also see the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) logo on products containing "Certified

Sustainable Palm Oil." RSPO brings palm oil industry stakeholders together with environmental groups to increase awareness and availability of sustainable palm oil. RSPO members agree on a set of principles which includes a commitment to transparency and a promise to avoid future deforestation, particularly in areas of high biodiversity. Many environmental groups acknowledge that RSPO's current principles are insufficient; however most agree that the principles are a necessary first step towards a more sustainable future.

As of 2014, roughly 75% of palm oil producers have committed to RSPO principles, and still more companies are sourcing organic and fair trade palm oil. This makes many experts hopeful that consumer interest in sustainable palm oil has reached a turning point that will make truly sustainable palm oil increasingly available.

THE WAY FORWARD

This complex issue can be addressed by a range of actions. It is important to note that avoiding palm oil in favor of other oils isn't necessarily more sustainable, since that could lead companies to switch to other less productive, and therefore inherently less sustainable, oils. What you can do:

READ THE LIST OF INGREDIENTS

Palm oil can appear on ingredient labels of processed foods in many different forms. The World Wildlife Fund provides a comprehensive list of ingredients that are likely to be derived from palm oil (see pg. 7). If a product contains these ingredients, look for fair trade, USDA Organic, and/or RSPO certified labels.

CONTACT MANUFACTURERS

If your favorite product contains palm oil that's not fair trade, organic or RSPO certified, consider contacting the manufacturer. Ask about their policy for sourcing ingredients, and if they have plans to transition to more sustainable sources in the future.

MAKE A DONATION

See the side bar about the Orangutan Information Centre, an organization working to restore native rainforest habitat in Sumatra for more information about how you can help.

LEARN ABOUT FOOD SOURCING ISSUES

The palm oil issue is a great introduction to the complexities of our global food system. Although it is an extreme example, it is by no means the only one. By becoming well informed consumers, we can decrease the negative environmental and social impacts of our food choices. One easy way to begin is by looking for locally produced foods. Since the impact is closer to home, you have more information about how it was produced and how it affects the land and people where it was grown. See more at: <http://strongertogether.coop/voices-from-the-field>

BUT I DON'T USE PALM OIL...

You might not cook with it, but you almost certainly eat or use palm oil. Palm oil is the most widely consumed vegetable oil on the planet, and it is in about half of all packaged products sold in the supermarket. While palm oil is the most efficient source of vegetable oil, its rapid expansion threatens some of the planet's most important and sensitive habitats.

Many products that use palm oil aren't clearly labeled. Palm oil and its derivatives can appear under many names, including:

INGREDIENTS: Vegetable Oil, Vegetable Fat, Palm Kernel, Palm Kernel Oil, Palm Fruit Oil, Palmate, Palmitate, Palmolein, Glyceryl, Stearate, Stearic Acid, ElaeisGuineensis, Palmitic Acid, Palm Stearine, Palmitoyl Oxostearamide, Palmitoyl Tetrapeptide-3,

Sodium Laureth Sulfate, Sodium Lauryl Sulfate, Sodium Kernelate, Sodium Palm Kernelate, Sodium Lauryl Lactylate/Sulphate, Hydrated Palm Glycerides, Etyl Palmitate, Octyl Palmitate, Palmityl Alcohol

CONTAINS: Palm oil

The good news is that you don't have to give up products containing palm oil! It can be produced in a responsible manner that respects the environment and the communities where it is commonly grown.

To ensure you purchase products made with certified sustainable palm oil, look for **fair trade, USDA Organic, RSPO Certified or Natural Habitats label (a group certified by RSPO)**. These labels give you the confidence that the palm oil was produced in a socially and environmentally responsible way.



Natural Habitats
organic products grown in a sustainable habitat



DID YOU KNOW?

Unrefined organic red palm oil is one of the most nutritious edible oils in the world (not to be confused with palm kernel oil). The dark red color is a sign that it was left in its natural state (unrefined) therefore still contains a powerhouse of health benefits: it contains a high concentration of carotenes, which include beta-carotene and lycopene, and is densely packed with numerous tocotrienols – a powerful form of vitamin E. 🌴

A Warm Welcome to Our Newest Natural Harvest Owners!

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Outdoor Patio Spray

Enjoy the outdoors more with this simple essential oil and water-based spray!

INGREDIENTS:

2 ounces water
25 drops lemon tea tree
15 drops citronella
5 drops cedar wood

DIRECTIONS:

Fill a spritzer bottle with water & add essential oils. Shake well. Spray as needed.

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Owner Perks!

(Continued from What's New
column on front cover)

NO MORE ANNUAL FEE

As of January 1st, 2016, owners no longer need to pay an annual fee of \$10! Woot! Woot!

OWNER EQUITY FEE

The votes are in! Owner votes were tallied at the Annual Meeting and the vote was to increase the equity fee to \$100 on June 1st for all new owners. Thank you to all owners who participated... and who joined us at the Annual Meeting. 🍷



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