

## COACT'S FARM / RURAL CAMPAIGN AND VICTORIES OF THE PAST 29 YEARS

1981: In Little Falls, COACT convenes a meeting of family farmers from throughout the state to address FmHA loan denials and other injustices. **This inaugurates COACT as a farm activist organization.**

Early to mid-1980s: COACT leads the legislative fight for the minimum price bill for sustainable commodity prices for farmers, which passes the Senate, but fails in the House.

January 1984: COACT sponsors the *National Family Farm Crisis Conference* where Jim Hightower, Texas Commissioner of Agriculture, gives keynote address.

August 1984: 100 COACT farmers and other members confront the First Bank of Paynesville in Central Minnesota to protest the unwarranted calling-in of the Kohnen family's dairy farm operating loan. 37 COACT members are arrested for refusing to leave the bank.

Winter 1984-85: COACT becomes one of the lead organizations of the Groundswell farm movement when 17,000 farmers rally on the state capitol steps that February to protest foreclosures. Groundswell inspired by COACT's First Bank action.

1985-86: With the help of COACT in the Groundswell farm movement, state legislature passes a moratorium on farm foreclosures with the right of mediation and debt restructuring.

Late 1980s: COACT organizes "milk giveaways" at food shelves in St. Cloud and South Minneapolis where dairy farmers give milk away to dramatize the low prices they're paid.

November 1988: COACT farmers and consumers gather at the University of Minnesota's dairy research barn to protest synthetic Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH) research.

1992: COACT farmers organize Minnesota's participation in the *Dump the National Dairy Board Campaign*.

1993: COACT farmers provide leadership in the passage of a state minimum milk pricing law.

1994: COACT gets a state labeling and certification law passed for rBGH-free dairy products.

1996: COACT wins legislation creating the Minnesota Dairy Producers Board which has dairy farmers and consumers together monitoring unfair processor milk pricing practices.

1995-99: COACT works with farm, environment, and faith organizations to save Minnesota's

Anti-Corporate Farm Law from being weakened by factory feedlot interests, to save the right of local control in feedlot permitting, to stop limited liability for factory feedlots, and to get state legislation to control toxic hydrogen sulfide emissions from factory feedlots.

COACT organizes citizens to use their right of local control against the permitting of hazardous factory feedlots in central Minnesota, and helps win six month moratorium on feedlot permitting in Morrison County.

1999-2000: COACT works with the Minnesota Dairy Producers Board to expose the unfair high volume premiums paid to large-scale dairy operators by co-op processors at the expense of average and small-size farms that get a few thousand dollars annually compared to \$125,000 to \$500,000 paid to the large-scale operators.

Without these high volume premiums, the large-scale operations of 1,000 cows or more would go out of business because they're less financially efficient than the average-size operation of 63 cows, according to the state's Farm Business Management Education Program.

This reveals that instead of expanding to stay in business, all that farmers need is a fair price for their milk under a fair milk pricing system.

2000: COACT revives the Minnesota Safe Food Link, a coalition of environmental and consumer groups, to stop meat irradiation. As the lead organization, COACT organizes two Twin Cities rallies and news conferences. Furthermore, COACT organizes opposition testimony at the Sauk Rapids City Council hearing November 27 against Huisken Meats request for \$2.9 million in public bonds for building a meat processing plant in the community to irradiate meat.

FDA conducts focus group in the Twin Cities in July due to the controversy raised by Safe Food Link over meat irradiation, which results in consumers wanting labeling.

2000 - 2001: Minnesota Dairy Producers Board, facilitated by the COACT phone canvass, informs state's dairy farmers on the unfair distribution of high volume premiums to favored large-scale operations. Processors retaliate by getting legislators to eliminate the Board's funding and statute language.

Winter & Spring 2000 - 2001: Milk Power movement emerges from the volume premium campaign. COACT works with Milk Power dairy farmers to get a bill introduced which would allow farmers to vote in a referendum to opt out of the federal milk marketing order for a state marketing order administered by a milk price control board.

2001- 2003: COACT works with Milk Power dairy farmers for passage of the Minnesota Milk Marketing Board Act to establish a fair state milk pricing system for farmers with supply management and a sustainable floor price. It passes the Senate, but awaited further hearings in the House.

2003: COACT works in the *Citizens Task Force for Livestock Farmers and Rural Communities* (comprised of the Land Stewardship Project, Minnesota Farmers Union, League of Women Voters, Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, and COACT) to save local control for township and county government to permit feedlots which

corporate livestock interests are trying to remove by changing state law and the state's judicial system.

2004: COACT fights to save the right of local control over feedlot permitting by organizing local citizens to support legislation to repeal the Livestock-Friendly Program (code for factory feedlots), to defeat the Alien Ownership Bill (to stop foreign investors from buying up Minnesota farms and farm land), and to restore the Citizens Petition for Environmental Review.

2004: COACT member Gerald Saxerud is barred from attending the Governor's Livestock Task Force that is working to remove local control over feedlot permitting by townships and counties. Saxerud is barred because COACT is part of the Citizens Task Force on Livestock Farming, which criticized the Governor's Task Force report of June 2004 that recommended the removal of local control.

2005: COACT leads community resistance against big box Wal-Mart expansion in Little Falls.

2006: COACT organizes community support for an amendment to the State Constitution to keep the power of eminent domain at its original intent in the U.S. Constitution, which means that it can only be used for the public good and not the private economic gain of corporate developers.

2006 - 2010: COACT continues to work with Land Stewardship Project and Minnesota Farmers Union to maintain the right of local control.

Spring 2010: Regaining control over life's essentials- our health care, our communities, our property- is addressed by COACT and Land Stewardship Project at a town meeting March 15 in the Central Minnesota community of Freeport, which is attended by over 50 farmers and other Central Minnesotans.