

Division of Marketing  
Agricultural Development and Diversification (ADD) Program  
1993 Grant Final Report

Grant Number 08007

**Grant Title**     Organico Food Processing Project (Phase 2)

**Amount Awarded**     \$18,750.00

**Name**             Ken Raspotnik

**Organization**     Chequamegon Farms  
                           Ashland

**E-Mail**

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## Certified Organic Food Production & Processing

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### Organico Food Processing Project Final Report 1993-1994

I. Original intent of Organico Food Processing Project and perceived benefit to Wisconsin agriculture.

The intent of this project is to establish a small scale state certified food processing facility that experiments with and produces new certified organic food products that can be made from locally grown fruit and vegetable crops. The perceived benefit is to help expand organic agriculture by providing area organic farmers access to canning and food dehydration facilities. Farmers will increase production of produce since they will be able to give the food durability by canning and dehydration. Processing of the crops in the cannery will extend their marketability and give them value added.

II. Summary of how the project achieved the following:

A. Jobs. A lack of markets for perishable fruits and vegetables inhibits the expansion of production by fruit and vegetable growers around here and in other areas. The cannery processes and markets products made of fruits and vegetables that organic farmers in the area produce. When Organico's products and label are well established, farmers will be able to expand production. In addition to contributing to the jobs of farmers, several full time jobs will be available in the cannery. These jobs include a lab worker, a manager, and a marketing director. Organico has also created a small, new job in its educational program, which educates consumers of the need for organic food. This project has minutely contributed to the jobs of equipment suppliers and will continue to create collateral employment in labeling and distribution.

B. New capital investment or expansion of the agriculture industry.

Over the last several years, there has been continuing investment and expansion in the cannery facilities. The building where the cannery is located was remodeled to bring it up to the state code for a food processing facility. Stoves, sinks, and tables were installed. A new bathroom facility was constructed and the necessary plumbing was installed. A seed oil press was purchased. A blender, a vegetable grater, a juicer pulper, a flour mill, and a mixer were also purchased in the last year in order to continue testing products and expand processing of new products.



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C. Diversification or expansion of production or processing of agricultural products or new development of new agricultural products.

Organico has been and will continue to develop certified organic canned and dried foods. The emphasis is on developing products made from locally produced fruits and vegetables. Organico has established a recipe for salsa, salad dressing, relishes, catsup, jams, apple butter, pickles, mustard, and tomato/vegetable juice. We made and marketed dried organic apple chips. We will be making more in the future. We pressed and marketed organic canola oil. We are continuing to expand processing and develop new products. We're experimenting with vinegars made from honey and also made from apple cider. We want to experiment with processing and marketing organic fruit leathers and carbonated fruit beverages. We are producing and processing more certified organic food than before.

F. Improvement of the competitive position of the Wisconsin agricultural industry.

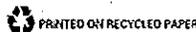
Certified organic products will be more competitive in the food industry as consumers learn about and demand food grown without harmful insecticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, as well as food processed without preservatives. Organico is processing and marketing such food.

G. Efficient use of farm land or other agricultural resources.

Organico will coordinate with small local farmers to grow fruit and vegetables for processing into products. This will increase the production of small farms. Also we will make the food processing facilities available to home gardeners so they will be able to process their surplus produce. By letting home gardeners use our food processing equipment, such as stoves, sinks, stainless steel pots, food processor, and pressure cookers, they will be able to preserve surplus produce for later consumption. Home gardens provide people with fresh, healthy produce during the growing season. By canning and drying surplus produce, or by planting a larger garden for that purpose, home gardens can provide food throughout the year. The contribution of these small gardens to food production is substantial in this area.

III. Discussion of project results.

At the end of last years growing season, we had processed a record number of jams, pickles, relish, and green salsa. We experimented and made honey mustard using freshly mashed, organic mustard seeds. The production of tomatoes was poor last year, however, our supply of salsa, catsup, and salad dressing from the previous year is still



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holding out. The durability of canned goods definitely is apparent when the growing season is so variable. We began marketing our products to area stores last fall, and have been making regular calls on the stores to keep them supplied. We invested in a juicer/ pulper machine to save time and increase production. The juicer/ pulper removes the seeds and stems from cherries, apples, strawberries, and other fruit. The pulp can then be made into jam, juice, fruit leather, or it can be frozen. We finished the second year of the grant having accomplished a lot. It was productive, educational, and fun. We are looking forward to another year of canning and drying our established products as well as experimenting with recipes of new products made from locally grown, organic produce. This small-scale food processing facility can easily experiment with different recipes and different processes because unlike a larger facility, it is not so mechanized that production can't be varied. We process a large variety of foods and are experimenting with processing even more. Marketing of our products through the newly created Chequamegon Farms Cooperative will be a big emphasis this year.

#### IV. Description of informational or educational materials.

Organico has been accumulating a lot of information and experience about setting up a small-scale cannery and food dehydration kitchen. We'd like to share this information with others who think they could benefit from a small-scale cannery in their community. On September 11, 1993, we held a field day which included a tour of the cannery facilities and a demonstration of oil seed pressing. Organico has had and will continue to have educational programs to educate consumers of the need for organic foods. We will be promoting the benefits of organic agriculture and warning of the hazards of agrichemical agriculture. Organico set up an educational booth at the Top of the North Agriculture Show, The Bayfield County Fair, Earth Day, and the Farmers Market.

#### V. Positive/ future projections as a result of grant funds.

As a result of receiving the grant funds, we have been doing the research of setting up a small scale certified organic food processing facility. We have been experimenting with making products out of locally produced, certified organic fruits and vegetables. We intend to keep producing certified organic products and marketing them.

We feel that many communities in rural areas could benefit from the establishment of small scale canneries in their area. This food production facility is a model that could be used to meet the needs that exist in other areas. The creation of similar canneries throughout the state and beyond will provide producers an incentive to grow crops for local processing and consumption. The establishment of several new jobs in each plant will result. We think that the development of small scale food processing facilities in other communities can help reinvigorate the rural economy.



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#### Evaluation of Products

Organico has developed recipes and produced a number of products. Following is a discussion of our products including the amount of work involved and the price of the products.

**Apple butter.** There are two things that we have found to slow down processing of apple butter, namely separating the seeds and peels from the apple pulp, and cooking the apple pulp which can easily burn. With a juicer-pulper and a steam jacketed kettle, we expect to make apple butter in large quantities at less than \$3.00 per pint. A juicer pulper and a steam jacketed kettle would have many other potential uses.

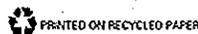
**Dried Apple Chips.** Organico made and sold a small quantity of dried apples in 1993. Laying the sliced apples on the dehydrator trays is very labor intensive. We will be making the apple slices thicker and spreading them out on the dehydrator trays more heavily in the future so that we can reduce the high cost of labor. A bio-degradable cellulose bag with a stapled-on paper label was used to package the apple chips for sale. The net weight was .66 oz and the price was \$1.00

**Salsa.** Organico Salsa is a good product. Some years have better tomato crops than others. Poorly ripened tomatoes yielded a dull colored product last year. We will try adding a natural organic food coloring to the salsa this year if the tomato crop isn't ripened (a ground up beat). Green Tomatoes are also valuable and have been processed and sold as Green Salsa. Salsa sells for \$3.00 a pint and Green Salsa sells for \$2.25 per pint.

**Gaspachio/ Spicy Vegetable Juice.** Making this product is less time consuming than making salsa since the watery tomato juice doesn't have to be strained off. It is a ready to eat soup or juice containing ground tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and other vegetables. We haven't sold any yet.

**Cannola Oil.** The yield of oil from pressed cannola seeds was lower than hoped for. The oil was bottled in 750 ml glass bottles with corks. The seal was protected by shrink wrap plastic. The oil should be sold for \$7.00 a bottle. We do not currently have a market for oil at that price.

**Strawberry Jam.** Picking the stems off of small strawberries was slow and costly in labor. The juicer-pulper removed the stems but turned the strawberries into juice. We prefer to have whole fruit in the jam. Another concern in making strawberry jam is the use of refined





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sugar. We prefer to use honey in our recipes but found the flavor and color of the strawberries to be lost unless refined sugar was used. We are going to experiment with organic evaporated cane juice (sucanat). This will add about 18 cents to the cost per jar. We would like to sell the jam for \$5.00 per pint.

Pickles. Organico has processed dill pickles and bread and butter pickles. The size of whole cucumbers varies a lot which makes for an inconsistent product. It is also time consuming to fill the jars with whole cucumbers. Sliced pickles are faster to process, but don't stay as crunchy. Organico will be making both types and hopes to expand the market for pickles so more farmers will grow cucumbers for processing into pickles. Wide mouth quart canning jars are used for the whole pickles (dill pickles). The cost is \$3.00 per quart.

Mustard. Organico has developed a recipe for honey mustard. This product can be made any time of the year which is convenient. It is fast and easy to make. The mustard seeds are mashed in the oil press. The mustard is then canned using the same equipment that we use for other products. Organico will experiment with other types of mustards. The cost is \$2.00 per half pint.

Relish. Our relish is tasty. Fresh carrots, cucumbers, and onions are ground and combined with other ingredients and canned in pint jars. The cost is \$3.00 per jar. We hope to sell this product in a wide area. Labels are being worked on.

Other products we want to continue making are dressing and catsup, both of which use ripe tomatoes. These products are bottled in standard pint canning jars. Organico wants to encourage reusing jars and has chosen to use standard bottles. Most other dressings and catsups that are available are bottled in non-standard bottles. Dressing and catsup also sell for \$3.00 per pint.

Organico is also experimenting with vinegar recipes.



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Useful Resources:

BAR N.A. Inc. (Oil processing equipment, etc.)  
205 South Main St.  
Seymour, IL 61875  
217-687-4810

Brown International Corp. (Juicer pulper)  
633 North Barranca Ave.  
Covina, CA 91723  
818-966-8361

Cole-Palmer Instrument Co. (pH meters etc.)  
7425 North Oak Park Ave.  
Niles, IL 60714  
1-800-323-4340

Custom Food Machinery, Inc  
750 Canada Rd.  
Bailey, MI 49303  
616-675-7050

De Luca Restaurant Supply (kitchen equipment)  
2700 27th Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN  
612-721-0230

Dalco-Duluth (Cleaning Products)  
4440 Haines Rd.  
Duluth, MN 55811

Department of Health and Human Services (File required  
Public Health Service processes)  
Washington, DC 20204

Hubert (Rubbermaid catalog)  
9555 Dry Fork Rd.  
Harison, OH 45030  
1-800-543-7374

Koch Supplies Inc. (Source of bags, information)  
1411 west 29th St.  
Kansas City, MO 64108  
800-456-5624

Interstate Label (low quantity label printing)  
800-426-3261

North Farm (Organic food supplier)  
1505 North 8th St.  
Superior, WI 54880  
1800-236-9862





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PhF Specialists (Information service)  
1190 S. Bascom Ave., Suite 242  
San Jose, CA 95128  
408-275-0161

Silliker Laboratories (Certified lab for required tests)  
900 Mapel Rd.  
Homewood, IL 60430  
708-957-7878

Superior Products (kitchen Equipment)  
PO Box 64177  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0177  
1-800-328-9800

Uniform Code Council, Inc. (receive UPC codes)  
8163 Old Yankee Rd.  
Dayton, OH 45458  
513-435-3870

US Dept of Commerce  
Patent and Trademark Office  
Washington, DC 20231

Walnut Acres (Pectin for jam, etc.)  
Penns Creek, PA 17862

Jars:  
Anchor Glass Containers, Golden Harvest canning jars  
contact: Roger George  
Highland, MI  
313-887-3535

Continental Glass & Plastic  
841 West Cermak Rd.  
Chicago, IL 60608  
312-666-2050

Freund Can Company  
194 West 84th St.  
Chicago, IL 60620  
312-224-4230

House Of Cans  
3522 W. Potomac St.  
Chicago, IL 60651  
312-342-3600

Lafitte Cork & Capsule Inc. (Corks)  
908 Enterprise Way  
Napa, CA 94558  
707-258-CORK





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Seal-It, Inc. (Heat tunnels)  
69 Bloomingdale Rd.  
Hicksville, NY 11801  
800-325-3965

State Wide Sales, Inc. (shrink wrap etc.)  
2767 Highway 55  
St. Paul, MN 55121  
1-800-677-8283

Twin City Bottle  
1227 East Hennepin Ave.  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
612-331-8880

Walmart (Ashland) sells jars at a very low cost

Weaton Glass Company (special jars manufacture)  
1731 S. MT. Prospect Rd.  
Des Plaines, IL 60018  
708-827-8164

W. B. Bottle Supply Co., Inc.  
836 East Bay St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53207  
414-482-4300