

# Freedom Organix Harvard, Illinois

November 2009

Dear Members:

My lower back is sore everyday now from an old riding injury which is my body's way of telling me that winter is coming soon. So it was no surprise that the first morning of November broke hard and cold. As I ventured out long before daylight, I could hear the Sebastopol geese breaking the crisp mantle of ice on their pool. No worries from me about them. They are beautifully suited for colder weather. During high winds and driving snow I have seen the flock 'tuck in', unperturbed, with their heads buried under their wings as one stands guard. Our cattle too are well prepared for the cold weather that is surely coming. As early as mid-August their smooth, shiny, summer coat gave way to the growth of a shaggy cape over their shoulders. The horses too have changed from summer sheen to winter velvet. It's time for me to finish repairs to fences and doors and barn windows that I have pretended not to see while caught up in the singular task of filling your boxes every week.

While the pace has certainly slowed since I made your last delivery, the farm continues to work with Mother Nature so that we can produce even better crops next year. In late summer as I stood by and watched the squash beetle infestation wreck the sunflowers, decimate the cucumbers, and de-tassel your popcorn, there was nothing I could do. But now it is my turn for revenge. Once there has been a hard freeze, and the beetles that will parent next year's scourge have burrowed into the ground for winter, I will till lightly one last time to bring them to the surface where they will, yes, freeze and DIE. One of my favorite farmers told me about this useful trick. Organic farmers have fewer tools than conventional farmers and all of them amaze me with the elegant, brilliant, and invariably cheap, solutions they have for everything. One of the best farmers I know told me a story of how he converted the gas engine of his Allis G to an electric motor. The gas savings though was not his favorite benefit. More than anything he loved that the much quieter electric motor let him hear the sound of weeds being torn out by their roots over the whirr of his basket cultivators. (For the record, I only told you that last story so you would all know that I covet an Allis G. They were made in the '40s for small farms like mine. The engine is behind the seat and the view to the ground is completely clear. Nothing beats the design even 60 years later. And they cost more now than when they first rolled out of the factory wearing that famous orange paint! You should also know that 60 years ago, by and large, farms ran on principles that we now call organic. If you want to know more about why farming changed, Michael Pollan's *An Omnivore's Dilemma* is an interesting read.)

The nearby farms are a flurry of activity right now. During the dog days of summer, while I was out tending crops, the acres of corn and beans planted around me went without human interaction. But now there are gravity boxes everywhere racing from fields to grain elevators. During the day big dust clouds trail behind the combines. Well into the night you can see combine headlights jiggling along in fields all over the county. (A modern combine can cost as much as \$300,000, but will only be used for several weeks each year.) Even if all that corn is not quite food in my book, as much of it will be processed into high fructose corn syrup, a harvest of that magnitude being brought in is still a marvel to see.

Thank you very much for joining us this year. It has been a pleasure growing food for your family. I hope you discovered a new vegetable or tried an interesting recipe along the way. I am grateful that so many of you came to our Fall Harvest Gathering. I hope you will join us again for our 2010 season.

Best regards,  
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Know your food, know your farmer.