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MAINE FARMER NAMED ONE OF 25 VISIONARIES WHO ARE CHANGING THE WORLD BY UTNE READER

Long-time potato farmer selected for efforts to protect family farmers.

Bridgewater, Maine – Jim Gerritsen, a Maine organic potato farmer with a decades-long record of community involvement and activism, has been named by the editors of *Utne Reader* to the magazine's 2011 list of 25 “People Who Are Changing the World.”

Gerritsen was selected for his ongoing work leading efforts by independent family farmers to protect themselves from the threat of Monsanto litigation related to the corporation's patents on genetically modified seeds, an effort he sees as critical to the preservation of organic farming itself and organic foods as a choice for consumers and their families.

Each year, *Utne Reader* selects 25 people “who possess an inspiring combination of imagination, determination and energy,” said *Utne Reader's* editor-in-chief David Schimke in a statement. “These are people who don't just think out loud, but who walk their talk on a daily basis.”

Working with Other Family Farms for a Better Planet

Gerritsen, who grows organic seed potatoes on his family's Wood Prairie Farm in northern Maine, is president of the Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (www.osgata.org), the national membership trade organization of the organic seed community, lead plaintiff in the OSGATA et al v. Monsanto lawsuit.

OSGATA is joined in the lawsuit by 82 other family farmers, seed businesses and agricultural organizations. The plaintiff organizations have over 270,000 members, including several thousand certified organic family farmers.



This landmark organic community lawsuit asserts that Monsanto's patents on transgenic (gene-spliced) seed fail to meet the “social utility” requirement of patent law and are therefore invalid.

The suit also seeks court protection for innocent family farmers from Monsanto patent infringement lawsuits in the perverse situation where their farms are contaminated by Monsanto genes through unwanted genetic trespass, such as when wind-borne transgenic pollen is blown from one farm to another.

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“Our lawyers asked Monsanto to provide a legal covenant not to sue our group of family farmers, and Monsanto refused. We thus are forced to seek justice and protection in court,” said Gerritsen.

The lawsuit is currently in pre-trial procedural motions.

A Longstanding Commitment to Community

For 35 years, Gerritsen and his family have owned and operated the organic Wood Prairie Farm in Bridgewater, Maine. Located in Aroostook County, which is the top potato producing county in the country, Wood Prairie Farm is a small Certified Organic family farm producing various types of seed and specialty potatoes, including the award-winning Prairie Blush variety discovered by the Gerritsens, plus vegetable and grain seed.

The farm's modest scale allows Gerritsen and his family to focus on growing the highest quality seed potatoes for an ever-increasing number of committed catalog customers in all fifty states.

Gerritsen believes organic farming produces a superior result and is better for the land. “Northern Maine has been growing potatoes for 200 years, and some of the best potatoes anywhere in the world come from here,” says Gerritsen. “And I like to think our hard work and commitment to our soil and organic farming at Wood Prairie Farm produces some of the best potatoes in Aroostook County.”

Gerritsen is a tireless advocate for organic farming and family farms, regularly speaking at conferences and events, including the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) Common Ground Country Fair and Farmer-to-Farmer Conference, The Organic Seed Growers Conference, the Slow Food Terra Madre Conference in Italy, and other conferences across the United States and Canada.

About the Utne Reader Visionary List

In addition to Gerritsen, others on the 2011 list include David Simon, creator of HBO's *The Wire* and *Treme*; Azzam Alwash, Nature Iraq founder and marshland rehabilitator; Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.), a congressman working to foster dialogue between Muslim and Christian interests; Gary Paul Nabhan, an author called “the father of the local food movement”; Debbie Sease, national campaign director of the Sierra Club; and Humira Saqeb, founder of a women's magazine in Afghanistan.

The Utne Reader's “People Who Are Changing the World” profile of Jim Gerritsen is available at www.utne.com/Environment/Utne-Reader-Visionaries-Jim-Gerritsen-Organic-Seed-Growers.aspx.

About Maine's Wood Prairie Farm (www.woodprairie.com; 800-829-9765)

Wood Prairie Farm is located in Aroostook County, the largest county east of the Mississippi River and Maine's historic center of potato farming. For over 35 years, Jim Gerritsen, his wife Megan and their family have used organic farming techniques on the fertile land of Wood Prairie Farm to grow the finest potatoes, seed, vegetables and grain nature will produce. Wood Prairie Farm is MOFGA Certified Organic, and its seed potatoes, kitchen potatoes, seeds and other products are available direct to the customer by mail order from its website and catalog. Wood Prairie Farm is on Facebook at www.facebook.com/woodprairiefarm.

Additional information about OSGATA et al v. Monsanto is available at www.woodprairie.com/wpf_news.

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