Study examines true cost, benefits of winter bale grazing
By John Meska

Soil health has been dominating the sustainability conversation lately. For graziers, that topic has focused on winter bale grazing, touted by many as a great way to add nutrients to the soil through spent hay litter left behind after the cattle are done grazing. In recent years, we’ve learned cattle do fine when we ask them to walk out to the pasture get their winter feed, but the soil does much better when we simply allow the spent hay litter, manure, and urine to recycle onsite together.

I’ve heard many presenters at winter conferences make comments to the effect, “With what bale grazing can do for your soils, you can afford hay at almost any price.” At these events, I’ve often asked if anyone has any data which can reinforce those claims, but, none has been produced.

In the north country, making hay is an essential component of producing cattle on grass, and the cost of winter feed is generally considered the largest expense for most graziers. The need to make that feed on the farm often limits the size of the grazing herd. If hay could be affordably outsourced, grass-fed herds could grow larger as most or all of a farm’s land could be grazed.

When considering the need to expand operations to bring in the next generation or transition to a farm successor, one of the best ways is to either add an enterprise onto the existing land base, or expand an enterprise. If we can demonstrate that purchased hay, affordably brought in from off the farm, can allow more animals to be grazed on the same farm, then we can see where farms can expand profitability without expanding land base. If grass-fed herds could grow in size, then expanding enterprises to absorb the next generation into farming, or adding a grazing livestock component to a soil-health-building farming protocol, would result in added sustainability benefits.

Farmers, researchers share insights on rolling rye in organic no-till system
By Tony Smith

Versatile rye, hardiest of the small grains, has found feed, forage, and cover crop uses in farming for centuries. Yet rye straw as a rolled-down mulch for no-till drill grain could be its greatest purpose yet. Mechanically suppressing cover crops like winter rye could greatly reduce herbicide use in non-organic systems, and could work well to control weeds in organic systems.

No-till use with non-organic soybeans increased from 34 percent to 44 percent of acres planted between 2002 and 2006. More recent government surveys indicated 67 percent of corn producers also used no-till or minimum tillage on 90.6 million acres in the 2014 cropping year.

The non-organic no-till system isn’t reducing herbicide use, however. More than 50 million acres of soybeans received glyphosate alone or with one or more other herbicides in 2012. Herbicide use has risen from 61 million pounds in 1998 to 133 million pounds in 2012 (USDA Agriculture Statistics Service).

In the organic no-till alternative, producers roll over their winter rye in spring with a heavy drum configured with blunt metal blades. The blades have been variously and innovatively arranged horizontally, angled or in a spiral pattern. They crimp the cover crop’s stems. This prevents the rye from re-sprouting and slows its decomposition, prolonging its cover.

Platfitted into this dense mulch, the crimped rye suppresses weed growth. Yet it allows drilled cash crops like soybeans to rise up through the mat. Just this past May, University of Wisconsin-Madison plant pathologist Erzin Silva and Iowa State University horticulture professor and researcher Kathleen Delate published “A Decade of Progress in Organic Corn Cover-Crop-Based Reduced Tillage Practices in the Upper Midwestern USA” (www.mdpi.com/journal/agriculture). With more than 40 references, the document summarizes the research of CCBRT practices with organic corn and soybean production. The current research examines roller crimping rye’s economics, labor, and fuel savings. It also addresses the practice’s challenges in organic rotations, fertility management, and, of particular importance, timing for cash crop planting requirements.

“A decade of CCBRT research,” conclude Silva and Delate, “has demonstrated that CCBRT can provide a strong management tool for organic farmers aiming to improve their weed management practices while minimizing soil erosion risk, building soil organic matter, and incorporating further crop diversity into their rotations.”

Market farmers share their favorite methods to thwart weeds
By Bailey Webster

Anyone who has spent any time farming knows that weeds are one of the primary challenges of the job. For a ¼-acre urban farm plot or a several-thousand-acre row crop farm, the task is the same: manage weed pressure with as little time and labor as possible.

This can be especially challenging for market farmers who grow dozens of varieties of vegetables. Each vegetable type has its own unique characteristics, including germination time, size, growth habit, and canopy. Some vegetables germinate and grow relatively quickly, making them fairly easy to keep weed-free. Others germinate very slowly, and are outcompeted easily by weeds. Some vegetables grow long vines, which makes mechanical cultivation virtually impossible after a certain point. To make matters even more complicated, each weed species has its own growth habits and method of reproduction, which must be taken into account.

Jed Colquhoun, a researcher at the Horticulture Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, explains it this way: “There are no silver bullets in organic fresh market weed management, so I advise an integrated approach that starts well before the current growing season and is based on ‘how weeds are built.’ In other words, what techniques can we use that interrupt the weed’s life cycle, minimize competition with our crops and prevent spread through seed production or vegetative structures?” Colquhoun’s “integrated approach” includes many techniques, including stale seedbedding, competitive planting arrangements, crop variety selection, resource placement to favor the crop (such as side dressing rather than broadcasting fertilizers), mechanical and hand cultivation, weed-free mulches, and mowing nearby weeds to prevent seed production and spread.

Timing is everything when it comes to weed management, and planning ahead is essential. Here’s how several market farmers manage weeds on their farms.

Tipi Produce
Steve Pincus and Beth Kazmar own Tipi Produce, a 76-acre organic vegetable farm in Evansville, Wis. They have a 500-member CSA and wholesale accounts in Madison and Milwaukee. The farm has been in operation for 40 years, so you can bet that they have seen their share of weeds. There is a consensus among farmers that weed management is a dynamic and ever-evolving system unique to each farm—and, Tipi Produce is no exception.
From the Executive Director

Organic farming practices can feed the world. The kind of farming we all want to see is vibrant, healthy, and responsible. The practices we promote at MOSES, and the tools we offer, which includes this Organic Broadcaster, are tools anyone can use to farm—even garden—better.

In the Midwest, there is plenty of room for organic farming to grow. Demand has not met supply. Farmers, particularly grain farmers, are now being courted by many with opportunities to partner for rapid expansion. Processors, food companies, and investors are aware of the opportunities available to those who can effectively bridge this supply-demand gap. It’s an exciting time to be an organic farmer.

At the same time, these opportunities for rapid expansion come with some cautions that are giving longtime proponents of organic agriculture pause. Read Harriet’s “Inside Organics” column on the next page for more about that.

Forever, in the organic community have benefited from the supply-demand gap which has resulted in a higher price for our products. As more entities become involved in the process of growing and distributing organic food, some of the price available will be shifted toward those entities, which could effectively reduce the benefits to farmers. Also, “rapid expansion” of organic production sounds a little like turning organic food into a commodity. Most of us would not care to see our brand of agriculture become a commodity.

We are at a very interesting time in the evolution of our industry. Regardless of where things go from here, we can safely assume things will not look the same a year from now as they do today. And you, Organic Broadcaster reader, can assume MOSES will continue to do our best to serve the organic community, support organic farmers, and carry on our long tradition of quality education.

Our educational events (aka “field days”) are in full swing for the summer. We hope to see you at one of these on-farm events, many of which focus on transitioning to organic grain production. Please also tell your non-organic neighbors about these events—they’re a great way to see how organic works. You can see the full list of upcoming field days on page 7.

Enjoy this issue.

— John Mesko, MOSES Executive Director

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MOSES educates, inspires, and empowers farmers to thrive in a sustainable, organic system of agriculture.
Protecting organic integrity: Too little, too late?
By Harriet Behar

Recently, there have been numerous negative articles questioning the integrity of organically labeled products in the U.S. marketplace. The Washington Post did in-depth investigative reporting on three topics: imported livestock non-organic feed grains that were sold as organic; a dairy producing a significant amount of organic milk that was not providing pasture as required by the organic regulation and their certification agency, which was not doing due diligence in oversights; and, algal oil DHA that is still allowed in organic milk products even though 7 years ago the National Organic Program stated its use may not meet organic regulations. No further information has been provided since then by the NOP and this algal oil is still present in organic milk.

Those of us in the organic world never want to see these types of articles. The vast majority of organic producers using the USDA organic seal are following the rules, and should be proud to own an organic certificate. We are rotating crops, providing healthy pastures, providing pollinator and beneficial insect habitat, protecting soil and water quality, keeping up with the paperwork and working diligently to continually improve our operations to leave them in better condition for the next generation.

It should not surprise us, since the non-organic food system suffers from poor supply management and faltering growth leading to lower prices, that some may be see the organic label as “easy pickings” for committing fraud.

For many years, MOSES and other organizations have been pushing the National Organic Program to both tighten up its enforcement capabilities and its accreditation program. This accreditation covers both the organic certifiers as well as the oversight of the National Organic Program itself.

It is true that the NOP has greatly improved review time of the ever increasing number of complaints that come into its office. However, it has not improved its overall system, especially in detecting fraud without a specific complaint.

It is time to recognize organic is a big enough target in the food system that we are an attractive player in the food system that we are an attractive target for fraud because our systems are not tight enough to prevent it.

In Europe, there has been an Anti-Fraud Initiative since 2007 (www.organic-integrity.org). Its members include all sectors of the organic supply chain, from farmers to processors, manufacturers and distributors, as well as certification bodies. The members have met around the European Union for 10 years to create awareness within the trade of how traceability of products and transparency of certification activities and audits improve organic integrity. This group stresses that the entire supply chain holds responsibility for protecting the organic marketplace from fraudulent sales of organic products.

The development of various controls, management and oversight across numerous countries and languages has been a challenge, but the discussion and education on this topic has increased verification and accountability.

The U.S. trade and the NOP have known about this initiative for many years, and even though we are one of the largest organic markets in the world, we did nothing to address the issue of fraudulent organic products in our country.

It is time for the organic community and the National Organic Program to reassess current oversight of fraud, and rebuild the system of accountability to reflect the fact that organic is a ripe target for those who want to make an extra buck without doing the work to deserve it.

The Organic Trade Association announced recently, after the Washington Post’s articles, that it will be convening an anti-fraud task force to develop a best-practices guide for importers to use when verifying international imports of organic goods. While it’s good to address this weak link in our organic food supply chain, perhaps at some point this group will also look at the domestic supply chain and develop strategies for verifying organic integrity there as well.

There are many instances where buyers and sellers of organic produce, grains, meats, dairy and more could have more transparent and trackable documentation. Systems that provide trust that the documentation is legitimate also need to be implemented. Hopefully, this OTA task force will look to the work of the European group, and learn from its decade-long discussion on this topic, especially since we seem to be coming late to the show.

While it is a good thing that the trade is taking some responsibility for this, the task force membership and discussions unfortunately are not open to the entire organic community, nor is it clear how it will develop recommendations. OTA can do a better job by following the transparent nature of the EU organic integrity network. The NOP should work with the National Organic Standards Board on this issue, which would bring public input and transparency to the process.

The NOP is considering electronic certificates to provide real-time verification. This type of organic import certificate has been required for many years by the EU and other countries. The U.S. customs agents at our port of entries have little to no understanding of organic standards.

When there are unusual trends, such as large shipments of imported organic corn and soybeans taking over the U.S. organic marketplace within a year, no one at the NOP seems to notice—even when it is brought to their attention! A large organic dairy appears not to be meeting the organic pasture regulation, and its certifier provides little to no oversight even after the operation was cited for not meeting the NOP rules.

There are numerous activities the NOP could implement now, and others that will take some time. The electronic certificate system for organic verification should be as tight as technology will allow. If the accreditation of an organic certifier is revoked by another accreditation body, such as the EU, the NOP must immediately review this action and follow suit if warranted. This has not occurred in the past and is something that the NOP could implement on its own. When there is a surge of imports, or any other marketplace anomaly, it should trigger an automatic investigation. Again, this is something the NOP can do now without approval by congress.

There are other partners within the U.S. government that could be leveraged to help the NOP ensure organic integrity. The Global Agricultural Trade System, operated by the USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service, must be updated to track imports of all organic products, instead of the few it does now.

Without current data, trends and anomalies cannot be tracked. At our borders and ports of entry, there are automated tracking systems that provide information to personnel on each type of import. These need to be updated to include organic-specific information and questions that must be answered before imported products are sold as organic in the U.S.  

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**What are the requirements for organic certification regarding water to wash my produce or irrigate my vegetable fields?**

Answer by Harriet Behar

Water that comes in direct contact with human food in post-harvest handling must meet the clean water drinking act requirements of “potable” or drinkable water. This means it cannot contain E. coli or coliforms. A $10-$18 water test can prove this drinkability.

If you are getting water from a hydrant or a faucet, heat the end of the pipe to kill any bacteria before you take the sample to send to a government or private testing laboratory. The sample needs to get to the lab within 2-3 days. There are many testing laboratories—ask your local extension agent or call MOSES to find a lab in your area.

The water also cannot contain more than 4 parts per million chlorine per liter, which can also be tested. If you have recently shocked your well with chlorine, you should definitely get a test.

Typically, municipal water is not over this amount of chlorine. Water from a creek, river, pond or other “surface waters” will typically have a bacteria count that is too high to be used for washing vegetables meant for human consumption. Water from a creek, river, pond or other “surface waters” will typically have a bacteria count that is too high to be used for washing vegetables meant for human consumption.

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**What should I be doing to prepare my animals for breeding season on my farm?**

Answer by Lauren Langworthy

While it may seem early to be thinking about breeding season, it’s actually a good time to start getting your plan in order to go as to what you and your ruminant livestock can be fully ready when the time comes.

The most important factor to consider when thinking ahead to breeding season is nutrition. You’ll want to make sure that the ladies are in good body condition as breeding approaches (body condition scoring is also known as BCS). Underweight or obese livestock may have trouble conceiving, carrying a fetus to term, or giving birth. To get to go to a good start, you’ll want to make sure that everyone is healthy, even a little plump, but not obese. This might mean that you need to separate your herd into multiple manageable groups in order to reduce competition for feed, or supplement or restrict the diets of certain groups.

Achieving an optimal weight is also important for your breeding males. If they are underweight, they will not have the stamina they need to do their job and stay healthy. If overweight, they might not be successful or could cause injury when mounting females.

A quick check-up for the whole herd is generally a good idea before breeding season arrives. You may find that some of your hens, do a little clean-up shearing, or sort out young stock that won’t be bred this year. This can be a good time to make sure that small issues with your livestock don’t turn into larger problems. They will have a high demands from the pregnancy. It is of particular importance to check hens and leg joints before turning everyone out for breeding. Males can be hampered by injury or infection. Females will be responsible to carry additional weight during breeding and pregnancy. Small issues with joints, legs, and hens can be aggravated and become much larger issues at a more critical time for your animals if they are not treated now. Make sure to plan ahead and management early enough that your herd has time to recover from the stress of handling before you’re turning them out for breeding.

Another important consideration is breeding soundness. You may have a veterinarian out to check your males about 30 days before they’ve been turned out with your females. A few tests can help make sure that your leading male will be able to play his part effectively. Farmers and ranchers might have a backup male available in the event there are last-minute issues. You can also put this male out just after your lone male should have completed his job. A “clean up” can be a male that may complicate your recordkeeping. Make sure that you record the dates that each male entered and exited the herd so that you can manage your breeding lines effectively.

Depending on the species you’re working with and your particular breed and management style, there may be some things that you can do with nutrition or management that will help promote a good and tight breeding window for your flock or herd. For example, a fence line exposure with a male can help induce estrus in your females. You’ll want to be sure you have strong fences if you employ this tactic. Also, “flushing” is a term that refers to feeding your females high quality feed prior to breeding to improve their performance. While you want to make sure that you don’t induce obesity, this high-quality feed can increase ovulations and promote multiple births in many species.

No matter what your protocol for heading into breeding season, you want to make sure that your animals are in good condition and good health. Breeding and pregnancy can be taxing on animals that are in poor condition, obese, or dealing with other health issues. To ensure all of your animals have a successful year, plan time for observation, management, and treatment of little issues that could complicate later when animals have more demands on their bodies. The work that you do to prepare your stock for breeding will pay dividends later in your season.

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Reduce stress by sorting out your farm’s cash flow
By Paul Dietmann

For some farmers, cash flow management consists of paying bills until the checking account is empty, running credit cards up to their limits, then hoping the mail carrier delivers a check or two instead of just more bills. If handling your farm’s cash flow by the seat of your pants is stressing you out, cash flow planning and analysis will help to ease your anxiety.

Cash flow planning starts with a month-by-month projection of the cash flow you expect to see in the year ahead. The projection can begin on January 1 and follow the calendar year. Or, it can start when something big is expected to happen that will impact the farm’s cash flow such as a purchase of land, construction of a new building, or taking on new debt payments.

A cash flow projection is a prediction of all of the cash that is likely to flow into and out of the farm during a given period of time. On the cash inflow side, it includes money generated from the sale of farm products, government program payments, machinery and breeding livestock sales, income from off-farm employment, and proceeds from new loans. Cash outflow includes operating expenses, principal and interest payments on loans, funds used for capital purchases, income tax and Social Security payments, and family living drawn taken by the farm owner.

An annual cash flow projection is a very useful tool for a farm. You plot out on a month-by-month basis when cash income will be received and when cash expenses will need to be paid. The projection will help you anticipate in which months your cash inflow will not meet your needs. Most importantly, you will be able to plan ahead to cover cash shortfalls without tapping credit cards, leaving bills unpaid, and possibly wrecking your credit score. Nearly every farm will have months—possibly even years—when cash flow from operations is negative. Summer is often a time of year when farm cash flow is poor. The bills for seed and other crop inputs have been paid, there might be bills for machinery repairs, and there isn’t much to sell during months you would otherwise fall short. Maybe you could build up your cash reserves during those months. Maybe you could change your farm enterprises and add one that brings in cash flow during months you would otherwise fall short. Perhaps you could pick up some off-farm work at key times of the year. You might be able to schedule the payments of some bills or loan payments to more closely match your cash flow. You could set up a line of credit with a lending institution, which can be tapped in lean months and paid off in good months.

It’s awfully tempting to get through a few months of tight cash flow by using the highest source of short-term credit: credit cards. With their high interest rates, credit cards are the worst way to cover cash shortages unless you diligently pay them to zero every month. If you decide to use short-term credit to bridge your low-cash months, work with a reputable lender and apply for a farm operating loan or line of credit. The terms will be much better than paying credit card interest rates of 18 percent or more.

Over the long run, the farm operation should generate enough positive cash flow from operations to pay all of its operating expenses, make loan payments, pay the farm owner a decent draw, and have enough cash left to replace some capital equipment and put a bit into cash reserves. If the operation consistently runs negative cash flows, you should undertake a more in-depth financial analysis and consider making structural changes to your farm business. This sort of analysis is done at the end of the year, and looks back at the farm’s actual cash inflows and outflows.

To analyze cash flow, break it out into three distinct categories: 1) cash flow from operations; 2) cash flow from investing activities; and, 3) cash flow from financing activities. Breaking out the farm’s cash flow will tell you if the farm operation paid its own way or was subsidized by other sources of cash such as off-farm income, proceeds from new loans, or with sales of capital assets such as equipment or breeding livestock.

Cash flow from operations includes all of the dollars that flow in and out of the farm in normal, day-to-day activities. Cash comes in from sales of milk, cattle, grain, vegetables, and other products. Cash might also come in from government payments and custom cash. Cash flows out as you pay for seed, feed, fertilizer, fuel, and other operating expenses. We want cash flow from operations to be positive every year.

Cash flow from investing activities refers to capital investments in the farm, not the dividends you received from investments in mutual funds. Cash inflow in this category generally comes from sales of machinery, breeding livestock, or land. Cash flows out to pay for purchases of these capital investments.

Cash flow from investing activities—whether positive or negative—can offer clues to other aspects of farm management. For some farms, cash flow from investing activities might be positive because the farm does a great job with heifer calves and always has excess breeding stock to sell. For others, it might be positive because machinery is being sold to cover shortfalls in cash flow from operations and nothing new is being purchased.

Cash flow from investing activities might be negative because the farm is using positive cash flow from operations to make capital improvements, which is good.

Cash flow from financing activities considers funds provided by lenders as well as funds made available by the farm owner. Cash inflow comes from new loans and from off-farm income. Off-farm income is included because it’s money that could be tapped by the farm if needed. Cash flows out to make principal and interest payments on loans and to provide for cash withdrawals by the farm owner. It’s helpful to look for patterns in cash flow from financing activities. Are loan payments being made on time? Are principal balances being paid down faster than new loans are taken out? If the farm has an operating loan, is the balance being paid down or only the interest being paid? Is the owner able to take a regular cash draw out of the farm, or is he or she putting more money into the farm?

The farm operation should generate enough positive cash flow from operations to pay all of its operating expenses and have enough cash left to replace some capital equipment, make loan payments, and pay the farm owner something back for their investment in the farm. If cash flow is coming up short, a more detailed cash flow analysis is in order. Ultimately, positive cash flow is what will keep you farming for years to come.

To learn more about cash flow, see chapter 11 of Fearless Farm Finances: Farm Financial Management Demystified, available in the MOSES Bookstore at moseganic.net.

Paul Dietmann is the Emerging Markets Specialist with Badgerland Financial, a Farm Credit System institution. He and Craig Chase from Iowa State University will present two Fearless Farm Finance workshops this year: Nov. 10 in Iowa, and Dec. 8 in Illinois. For details, see moseganic.org/fearless-farm-finances-workshop.
In an attempt to know the true cost and benefit of purchased hay in a bale grazing scenario, we must somehow measure the benefit of that hay litter on the pasture in subsequent years. After taking all costs and benefits into consideration, what is the value of spent hay litter from purchased hay? How much can farmers afford to pay for hay to be brought on to their farm to be used in winter bale grazing?

A couple of years ago, I set out to assess the value of spent hay litter remaining onsite after winter bale grazing on my farm, Lighthouse Farm in central Minnesota. At the time, our herd of grass-fed beef was pushing the limits of our farm’s capacity for pasture and reserved grassland for making hay. Our cattle numbers were increasing. In considering our options for expansion, I wondered if the good relationships I had built with neighbors could be parlayed into a reliable source for purchased hay. Being a cost-conscious farmer, I knew relying on purchased hay would increase our costs. But I also knew from experience that bringing nutrients onto the farm in the form of purchased hay would increase our productivity over time as well, which would allow us to graze even more animals.

After hearing data-less admonitions to “Just Bale Grazing,” I developed an on-farm research project I called the Minnesota Bale Grazing Study to determine the change in productivity on the site after bale grazing, and by extension, the true value of purchased hay. Obviously, the most sustainable beef production model would likely not include purchased hay being brought in from off the farm. However, many soils that are being converted to grazing lands from row crop production are depleted and need to be rejuvenated in order to reach a sustainable system. In order to boost productivity quickly, and to be able to produce enough beef to be economically viable, some form of purchased hay may be the best course, at least in the short term.

After the first year of a two-year study, the initial results of the Minnesota Bale Grazing Study are promising. Baseline soil tests taken in the spring of 2016 on Lighthouse Farm report average soil fertility and soil health. Forage tests from 2015 hay production and 2016 hay production are in the table below.

While forage quality improvements from 2015 to 2016 are impressive, it should be noted that the 2016 samples were taken shortly after the hay was made, and the 2015 samples were taken a few months after baling.

The bale grazing site was grazed from Sept. 5, 2016 through Sept. 25, 2016 (20 days) by 14-year-old steers and heifers. Calves averaged 725 lbs. at the time they were turned out, and after 20 days averaged 755 lbs. The average daily rate of gain was 1.75 lbs. This number is lower than what we normally achieve on our farm. We think part of this is due to the regrowth being too short to really allow for efficient grazing, and we think part of this is due to the fact that we split the yearlings off from the rest of the herd, and there was a day or two of stress on the yearlings from being separated. They may have delayed getting right at grazing immediately. Subsequent grazing this year will help us determine the impact of these effects.

Lessons Learned

1. We put bales out in 2015-16 too far apart. In the spring, the hay litter was not covering completely, which has resulted in spotty regrowth. I expected the cattle to scatter the hay further than they did. In the winter of 2016-2017, we put the bales much closer together, averaging only 8 feet or so between bales. Also, we fed more bales at each feeding. This had the effect of scattering more hay faster, as the cattle went from bale to bale, looking for the best hay to devour first.
2. In some instances, we used small square bales as well. These need some kind of feeder to prevent waste. We’ve actually used round bale feeders for feeding square bales, which works well.
3. We’ve put out as much as 5 weeks of feed at a time with little “wastage.” Could an entire winter’s worth of hay be fed at once? That won’t be a part of this study, but it would make a change in how overwintering cattle could be handled.

Preparing for Bale Grazing

The smart move is to purchase winter feed right out of your neighbors’ fields as they are making it—when it’s cheapest. Farmers who make and sell more hay than they feed are well aware of the price fluctuations and are content to move hay to a central location to store it until the price moves upward, usually in mid- to late winter.
**Weekend training announced to boost beginning farmers’ skills**

By Jennifer Nelson

Jumpstart your farm business with New Farmer U, the all-in-one beginning farmer conference. Hosted by MOSES along with partners Renewing the Countryside, New Farmer U offers the farmer education expertise of the larger MOSES Organic Farming Conference in a smaller setting where you can ask all your burning new-farmer questions. Two New Farmer U weekend events will take place later this year: one in Iowa and one in Illinois.

Farmers continue to face challenges as they engage in the rewarding, increasingly important career of farming. Climate-change-fueled erratic weather events and the political and financial environment of our modern world present new and changing challenges for all farmers, beginning and seasoned. New Farmer U can give you the skills, resources, and contacts needed to do the important work you love. New Farmer U is created by sustainable farmers for farmers, and offers the education and networking opportunities you need in the exciting realm of organic farm business. Whether you’re in the very beginning dreaming stages of planning your farm or already have a couple of years under your belt, New Farmer U can help you learn about both the field and financial aspects of farming from experienced farmers and experts in the field of agriculture.

New Farmer U kicks off Friday night with beginning farmer networking opportunities, and goes through Saturday and Sunday. The weekend training includes your choice of 12 hands-on workshops plus roundtable discussions facilitated by experienced farmers and experts in the agriculture community. Topics range from Farm Resiliency and Marketing Your Farm Product to Soil Fertility and Land Access. The general session includes a panel of experienced beginning farmers answering the question, “What would you do differently or keep the same in your first five years?”

Local and national organizations providing service and tool resources for beginning farmers will be onsite exhibiting products and services, and answering all your questions. And, farmer networking opportunities will abound with a Saturday night social and peer-to-peer discussion groups.

Cost of New Farmer U is $125, which includes all this education and networking, along with lodging and local, organic meals. There is a $25 discount for farm partners to attend. It’s designed to be a great value for all beginning farmers. Those with limited capital may apply for a schol- larship. See details at newfarmeru.org.

Over 100 new farmers converged for the first New Farmer U in Lanesboro, Minn. in October 2016. They learned from “rock star” organic farmers and agriculture experts about a variety of farming best practices. Here’s what farmer folks said after attending the NFU:

“IT is a great venue to network with others, share experiences and really ask questions.”

“This has been an extremely helpful course. We feel so much more confident starting a farm now!”

“New Farmer U was fantastic! I learned so much! It was so worth it and very affordable. Food and housing were included in the registration, which made it extremely affordable.”

New Farmer U is supported by a grant through the NIFA, USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.

**Finance, Food Safety Trainings**

Two additional day-long trainings open to seasoned farmers as well as beginners are offered the Friday leading up to New Farmer U. Fearless Farm Finances will be taught by experts Paul Dietmann of BlackSwan Financial and Craig Chase of Iowa State University. Food Safety training will be taught by Harriet Behar of MOSES.

Each of these courses is $50 and includes a book. Farmers participating in New Farmer U may add one of these courses for just $25.

Jennifer Nelson is an organic specialist and coordinates the New Organic Steward program for MOSES. She also owns Humble Farm, growing cut flowers.

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Visit numerous women-owned farms in the Monroe and Monona areas. Free.

Green Acres Workshops
Friday, August 4 to Sunday, August 6
Make cheese, ferment the harvest, be a farmer for a day and much more! Tickets events.

Taste of Place
Friday, August 4
A local food & drink celebration of Cow & Quince in New Glarus. Ticketed event.

Farm to Table Dinner
Saturday, August 5
Farm-to-table dinner at Dorothy’s Range featuring heritage meats. Ticketed event.

Dine Fine at Restaurants
Friday, August 4 to Sunday, August 6
Sample “locavore” specials throughout the weekend.

**NOV. 10-12, 2017**

**IOWA**

Prairie Nature Camp & Retreat Center, Williston, Iowa

**DEC. 8-10, 2017**

**ILLINOIS**

Welder Baptist Camp, Streator, Illinois

$125 for training, lodging & meals
25% discount for farm partners | scholarships available

NewFarmerU.org

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**MOSES ORGANIC FIELD DAY**

Register or see more details and driving directions at mosesorganic.org/organic-field-days.

**OGRAIN: Diversified Organic Rotations**

July 24 | 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Free | (B)ickford Organics & Meadowlark Farm | Ridgeway, Wis.

Farmers Paul Bickford and John Wegking talk about large-scale small grain production, processing, and marketing, and explain how they design crop rotations to market their whole rotation.

**OGRAIN: Artisanal Grain Production**

July 24 | 1 - 4:30 p.m. | Free | Hazzard Free Farm | Pecatonica, Ill.

Farmer Andrea Hazzard covers everything from seed selection and planting to harvesting, drying, and cleaning corn and small grains for specialty markets.

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**In Her Boots: Realize Your Farming Dream**

Aug 4 | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. | $50 | Circle M Market Farm | Blanchardville, Wis.

The Wisconsin Soil Sisters share their seasoned perspectives to answer your questions and help you gather resources for your farm launch. This event is offered in conjunction with the annual Soil Sisters weekend of farm tours.

**In Her Boots: Field to Plate Perennial Fruit**

Aug 9 | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. | $50 | Blue Fruit Farm | Winona, Minn.

Experience organic berry growing at peak harvest time, and learn what it takes to nurture these fruits from field to plate.

**Movable and Fixed Fencing for Livestock**

Aug 17 | 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. | $15 | Hoch Orchards & Gardens | La Crescent, Minn.

Learn about livestock fencing to maintain pastured pigs in an orchard.

**In Her Boots: Market Farming in Suburbs**

Aug. 24 | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. | $50 | (Radical Root) Organic Farm | Libertyville, Ill.

Learn how to grow a successful farm business in an urban/suburban setting.

**OGRAIN: Adding Organic to Large-Scale Farms**

Aug 24 | 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Free | Wineshall Supply | Grand Marsh, Wis.

Learn about crop rotations, managing a parallel operation (conventional/organic), strip tilling, navigating the organic transition process, cultivation and fertility practices, and on-farm research.

**Soil Fertility in Organic Grain Production**

Aug. 30 | 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Free | Oak Ridge Farms | Pendleton, Ind.

Focus on in transitioning to organic and managing risk during the switch.

**Opportunities in Organic Farming**

Sept. 8 | 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. | Free | (In)Earth Farm | Atlanta, Ill.

The MOSES Organic Farmers of the Year, the Bishops, showcase their diverse livestock, crop, and vegetable operations, sharing their organic management practices and on-farm research.

**Organic Vegetable Production**

Sept. 16 | 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | Free | Open Hands Farm | Northfield, Minn.

Farmers Ben Doherty and Erin Johnson, and Annalisa Hultberg, U of M Extension Food Safety Educator, discuss food safety in organic vegetable production in the field and packing shed.
Roller-Crimping Rye — from page 1

Iowa and Wisconsin producers working with Silva and Delate are helping redefine roller-crimping cover crops into effective systems and strategies in the field. Together, they hope to widely help other producers cope with today’s increasingly erratic weather, rising production costs, and variable prices.

The farmers themselves have been contributing mightily to developing a body of knowledge and reliable systems for using roller-crimping rye in tandem with drilled grains.

“I mostly have used rye as a cover crop, especially for rolling-crimping before planting soybeans,” said Francis Thicke, who’s been farming with his family near Fairfield, Iowa since 1995. “Several years ago, I started saving some rye acreage for harvest, so I have my own rye seed source. It is a VNS [variety not stated] rye, but it has performed well, and it’s nice to have my own seed source. I plan to try growing some of the earlier-maturing rye varieties in the future,” Thicke added.

Iowans and surrounding states have for years followed progress of the Thicke family’s Radiance Dairy. Primarily running a dairy farm, the Thicke’s also raise cash crops, including soybeans, corn, wheat, pumpkins, field peas, triticale, and rye. The whole farm is certified organic, and it has grown from 176 acres in 1995 to 736 acres today.

Generations of farmers turned to rye when hilly conditions and thin soils limited production of other crops. Thicke found rye a strong ally in his commitment to restore and reclaim over-worked ground. Much of his land has steep slopes. Much of it has been badly eroded and has low fertility and soil quality from past abuse. Thicke has been applying manure to the land before planting rye.

“I try to plant the rye early in the fall in order to get a high level of biomass for rolling down,” he said. “Planting rye early results in more tillering of rye, creating rye f.RES. So, the earlier you plant, the lower the rye seeding rate you need. Conversely, the later in the fall you plant rye, the higher the seeding rate you need.

“I have been using a roller-crimper for three years. My roller is 15.5 feet long, which works well with my 15-ft no-till drill. I have found it important not to roll-crimp the rye too early; it will tend to stand back up. The recommendation is to roll-crimp rye at anthesis (flowering), but I prefer to wait until rye is in the milk stage. It is more likely then to remain flattened after rolling-crimping. Also, the thicker the rye (more biomass) the more likely the rye will remain flat after rolling-crimping. Thin stands of rye like to pop back up after rolling.”

Thicke drills soybeans into the standing rye with a no-till drill. He rolls and crimps the rye afterward. “I find it easier to see where I am going with the planter if I plant before rolling,” he said. “Also, that allows you to plant earlier than anthesis, and wait until after anthesis to roll/crimp. I have tried rolling both before and after planting soybeans; I do not think it matters which one you do first.”

He has planted soybeans into rye for three years. “The first two years, everything seemed to go perfectly. As long as I had enough rye biomass, there were very few weeds,” he explained. This year (my third year) I had to replant the soybeans. It appeared that some worms, possibly army worms, ate the soybean seedlings just as they were emerging from the soil. I am not certain exactly what happened, but only a few soybean plants from the first planting survived. That is something I will watch for more closely in future years.”

Thicke has experimented on a small scale with using the roller-crimper on hairy vetch and plant ing corn into it. “A couple of years ago, I planted two acres to hairy vetch, with some oats included, in the fall. I intended to plant corn into the hairy vetch the following spring,” he said.

“Over the winter, the field was covered by a sheet of ice. By spring, it appeared that the hairy vetch had been winter-killed, so I decided not to plant the corn. However, in mid-June I drove by the field and saw that on half of it the hairy vetch had not only recovered, but was in full bloom with lots of biomass,” he said.

“I planted corn into the hairy vetch in about the third week of June. The corn in the half of the field with a poor stand of vetch was weedy, stunted, and nitrogen deficient. But the corn on the half of the field that had thick vetch looked good and had very few weeds—that corn did not show signs of nitrogen deficiency. The hairy vetch killed easily with the roller-crimper, probably because I had let it go far too maturity.”

A friend tried the same experiment on 40 acres and found it nearly impossible to kill the hairy vetch at corn planting time, Thicke added. “Perhaps the difference was that I had planted the corn so late that the vetch was at a much later stage of maturity,” he said. “Actually, the corn planter (it was not a no-till planter) surprised me in that it easily cut through the mature vetch biomass without plugging up.”

“Planting through the standing vetch pretty much flattened and killed the vetch. I did roll crimp the vetch after, but that was probably not necessary. I think that the lesson here is that hairy vetch matures late for planting corn into it. Perhaps an earlier-maturing variety of hairy vetch would work better.”

Thicke believes the practice of rolling-crimping cover crops has tremendous potential for conventional farmers. “Most conventional farmers who use cover crops are quick to kill them with herbicides in the spring,” he said. “It seems to me that they could just as well allow the cover crops to grow much longer, plant into the cover crops, and roll-crimp the cover crops. That would likely require a lot less use of herbicides, but since they are conventional farmers, they could still use herbicides if needed. This would also be a good way for conventional farmers to transition to organic.”

More farmers are becoming interested in using a roller-crimper to plant into cover crops. “The roller-crimper I have was the first one made in a particular machine shop here in Iowa last year,” Thicke said. “I have heard that the same machine shop has filled orders for 12 this year.” Thicke’s farm field day last month drew 70 people, many seeking information on planting into cover crops. Likewise, there was a lot of interest in the work shop and Organic University course he taught with Iowa State’s Delate at this year’s MOSES Organic Farming Conference.

After 10 years of organic no-till research in the Midwest, Delate is still looking at best practices for planting organic soybeans into rolled rye.

“I believe in its promise, but it is still not a perfect system,” she explained. “We have shown higher soil quality in organic no-till systems, as the cover crop adds more carbon and microbial biomass. It should never be compared to conventional no-till, which can have consistent results because of the use of glyphosate to totally kill the cover crop.”

“The roller-crimper Rodale has promoted works well on flat ground, pushed in front of the tractor, with a no-till planter pulled behind the tractor in a one-pass operation,” she said, of Rodale’s pioneering roller-crimper design and use. “In addition to allowing a good planter, weather is the most critical factor for success,” she added. “If you plant and get no rain, the thick mulch can hurt and slow emergence. Wet weather is no barrier either, as it leads to slow cover crop decomposition. That invites moisture-loving insects, like seed corn maggots and army worms—which several growers had issues with this year. In typical organic tilled conditions, the ground is exposed, dries out somewhat, and is less prone to insect problems,” she said.

Dawn Equipment rollers that Delate has used in research employ individual rollers. They are set up on planter rows so that six rollers are needed for a six-row planter. This implement exerts more downward pressure due to hydraulics, Delate said, unlike the Rodale roller. Its extra weight comes from filling it with water. The Dawn roller is also more flexible for rolling rye on hillier ground, due to its articulated design, Delate said.

To Roller-Crimping on page 12

"No weed can resist a Buffalo Cultivator"
Researcher explains factors to consider when rolling-crimping rye

By Tony Ends

University of Wisconsin Organic Cropping Systems Specialist Erin Silva has a long list of important factors to consider when rolling-crimping rye, derived from more than 10 years of research. Timing is key, particularly with the wide swings in weather we’ve experienced this year.

Silva will share tips for rolling and crimping rye as a mulch for drilling cash grains at the university’s Arlington Research Station organic field day, Thursday, Aug. 31. She’ll also talk about the method at Mark Doufail’s farm field day Aug. 3 near Evansville in Rock County, Wis. Here are some of the tips she’ll be sharing.

In addition to an earlier planting date, a heavier seeding rate of rye (8 bushels per acre) also helps achieve adequate biomass to suppress weeds. The dry biomass of the cover crop should be in the range of 8,000 to 10,000 pounds per acre, providing a physical barrier during early crop growth to prevent sunlight from reaching the soil surface and weed seeds from germinating.

To achieve this, cereal grain cover crop planting should occur by Sept. 15, but at least by Sept. 30.

The cover crop must be terminated at a very specific stage of cereal grain growth – at anthesis (flowering). The growth stage of anthesis is easily observed in the field when pollen is visible on the cereal grain heads. Crimping before or after this growth stage risks cover crop re-growth after termination.

Terminate the cover crop (either by rolling-crimping or sickle-bar mowing) perpendicular to the direction of cover crop seeding. This helps achieve the best ground cover by the mulch, preventing sunlight from reaching the soil surface.

It pays to take the time to adjust and/or modify your existing drills and conservation planters can both work in this system. The no-till drill set on 7.5 inch rows allows for quicker canopy venting sunlight from reaching the soil surface.

The wider 30-inch row spacing allows for more precise seed placement, creating a mulch and become an issue. There also is some precaution against tractor and roller-crimper traffic, which must still be at anthesis to ensure effective termination. Terminating cereal rye may be less uniform using this technique. Use caution if this is integrated into a rotation using rye may be less uniform using this technique. Use caution if this is integrated into a rotation using.

Timing of rye termination depends on both soybean stage, which at V1/V2 allows for resistance against tractor and roller-crimper traffic, and rye stage, which must still be at anthesis to ensure effective termination. Terminating cereal rye may be less uniform using this technique. Use caution if this is integrated into a rotation using rye may be less uniform using this technique. Use caution if this is integrated into a rotation using rye may be less uniform using this technique. Use caution if this is integrated into a rotation using.

Strategic tillage and diversified rotations, particularly by including an alfalfa phase, can help reduce risk of building up perennial weed populations.

Summary of No-till Organic Tips

1. Start small. Organic no-till is a significant change for many organic farmers and non-organic no-tillers alike. Try it out on a small scale to minimize risk.

2. Choose wisely. Choose fields where you can get in early to plant a cover crop in the fall and with appropriate weed pressure – avoid perennial weeds.

3. Don’t skimp. Get cover crops in the ground on time (cereal rye: mid-September to early October) and at recommended seeding rates (3 bushels per acre for cereal grains). Successful weed suppression requires a dense mat of cereal grain residues.

4. Alter planting strategies for cash crop. Bump up the seeding rate of soybeans (225,000 seeds per acre). Be sure to spend time setting an appropriate depth on the planter. Add extra weight to equipment if needed.

Silva is willing to answer farmers’ questions. Email emsilva@wisc.edu, or call 608-890-1503.

Tony Ends is a certified organic farmer and writer who lives near Madison, Wis.
2018 Farm Bill offers chance to encourage sustainable, organic farming

By Sarah Hackney

It’s that time again—time for Congress to begin working on a new federal farm bill. This process takes place roughly every five years and sets the “rules of the road” for much of our food and farming system, including many sustainable and organic farming policy issues.

The 2014 Farm Bill under which we’re operating today contains policies, programs, and funding levels that affect everyone from who is eligible for farm loans to what types of organic crops can be insured, as well as support for farmers markets and food hubs. While formal debate is unlikely to begin before early 2018, the House and Senate Agriculture Committees have already begun listening sessions in the field and hearings in Washington D.C. to inform the next bill, which must be passed by September 2018 to avoid major disruptions to food and farm programs.

The road to a new farm bill is likely to be a winding one. Early indications suggest that the key players in the process—House and Senate Republicans and Democrats on the Agriculture Committees, the White House, and Congressional leadership—have different perspectives on the highest-cost components of the bill, including SNAP (food stamps), crop insurance, and commodity programs. Billions of dollars will be at stake, not just for these major programs, but also for initiatives that help farmers conserve natural resources, expand their operations, transition to organic production, and much more.

When it comes to organics, there are likely to be a whole host of specific proposals, including:

- Increasing effectiveness and efficiency through implementation;
- Ensuring equitable access to financial capital and resources, expand their operations, transition to organic production, and much more.
- Increasing support for planning and outreach efforts;
- Enhancing impact by targeting dollars to the most effective conservation activities;
- Enhancing impact by targeting dollars to the most effective conservation activities;
- Increasing effectiveness and efficiency through enhanced monitoring and evaluation of program outcomes.

Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

Our nation’s farmers and ranchers are aging, and many of them will reach retirement without a succession plan in place that ensures the ongoing viability and vitality of their operations. At the same time, aspiring farmers nationwide are facing significant barriers to success in agriculture, including the limited availability of affordable and desirable farmland, difficulty in obtaining credit and financing, and inadequate access to hands-on training and risk management tools.

Nearly 100 million acres of farmland (enough to support nearly 250,000 family farms) is set to change hands over the next five years—during the course of our next farm bill. To keep our agricultural economy strong, we must facilitate the transfer of skills, knowledge, and land between the current and future generations of family farmers. We must also ensure that our federal policies create an agricultural system that not only feeds families at home and abroad, but also feeds farmers by providing them with a sustainable career option that can support their families, rural communities, and our natural resources for generations to come. The farm bill can help—we need it to:

- Expand beginning farmers’ access to affordable farmland;
- Empower new farmers with the skills to succeed in today’s agricultural economy;
- Ensure equitable access to financial capital and credit.

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Farm Bill — from previous page

federal crop insurance;
• Create a new generation to steward our land by incentivizing conservation from the start.

Investing in Regional Food Economies
Consumer demand for local and regional products is on the rise, and this growing interest in the “farm to fork” pipeline is opening new markets and economic opportunities to farmers and food producers across the nation. These have long been part of the social and economic fabric for some American communities, but today interest in developing these systems is more widespread than ever. With the American farm economy in downturn and commodity prices at historic lows, family farmers nationwide have increasingly found that local and regional food pipelines can help them create big economic opportunities close to home.

Despite the serious potential created by this growing consumer demand, many would-be food and farm entrepreneurs struggle to enter the local/regional marketplace. A lack of infrastructure (e.g., storage, transportation, and processing capacity) and technical links (e.g., marketing and business planning) have made it difficult for many farmers and producers to update their businesses to reach these new customer bases. By helping to connect the dots between producers and local customers, the next farm bill can:

• Help farmers reach new markets through outreach, cost-share, and technical assistance programs;
• Increase access to fresh, healthy, local food among low income groups and communities in need;
• Develop new and strengthening existing infrastructure that connects producers to consumers.

Securing Seeds
Everything in agriculture starts with seeds. Seeds are the building blocks of our food system, and farmers require seed stocks that are regionally adapted to meet their needs and farming conditions.

Historically, control over our national seed stocks and breeding research lay in the hands of our country’s farmers and land-grant institutions. However, over the last several decades, the development of our seeds stocks, the foundation of our national food supply, has become increasingly consolidated and privatized. Innovation and growth has been stifled and our national seed stocks and breeding research have become less diverse. Farmers are natural innovators and know best what kind of performance and traits they need from their seeds and crops. By supporting farmer-driven plant breeding research, we can better ensure that all farmers have access to high performing, locally-adapted seeds—no matter where they farm or what they grow. The farm bill can help to:

• Encourage research and crop diversity to ensure the security and sustainability of the American food system;
• Expand quality seed options, giving farmers the freedom to choose what and how to grow;
• Improve coordination and transparency among research and breeding programs to make more informed and strategic public and private investments.

Crop Insurance Reform
Because of the important role farming plays in our lives and our economy, it is in the public interest to help protect farmers against risk. There are many approaches to managing risk, including crop, enterprise, and market diversification, plus investing in soil health and conservation. However, current federal policy on agricultural risk management focuses primarily on taxpayer-subsidized crop insurance. In fact, subsidized crop insurance is now the largest federal farm safety net program.

Federal crop insurance is an important cornerstone of the farm safety net, but it must be improved to better serve all of America’s farmers equitably. Currently, the federal crop insurance program excludes many types of farms and farmers, discourages sustainable practices, and encourages farm consolidation that further depopulates our rural communities.

As we gear up for the 2018 Farm Bill, we have an opportunity to include improvements to the federal crop insurance program that will make it more effective, efficient, and transparent. These changes include:

• Expand access to serve all types of farmers based on their risk management needs.
• Actively promote conservation by eliminating barriers to sustainable farming practices and rewarding practices that protect our land, water and health.
• Reform the structure of the crop insurance program so that it no longer provides unlimited subsidies that fuel farm consolidation or unduly influences farmers’ planting decisions.
• Improve the delivery of the crop insurance program to make it more transparent and efficient.

What You Can Do
Farmers and the broader food and farm movement have a huge role to play in the coming farm bill. It will take all of us speaking up for positive change to make it happen. To start, you can learn who your legislators are. If any of your Senators or Representative sits on an Agriculture Committee, he or she will be taking a leading role in drafting the next bill and needs to hear from you. Attend field hearings and Town Halls—members of Congress will be on recess for all of August and again for Labor Day, and are likely to hold Town Halls and other public events. Show up and ask for a farm bill that includes issues that matter to you!

Share your story. Have you benefited from a farm bill program on your farm, or at your organization or business? Consider sharing your story with your members of Congress and asking them to support the program that has helped you. For example: did EQIP help you install improved fencing? Did a Farmers Market Promotion Program grant help your market increase sales? These are great stories for your member of Congress to hear.

Call your legislators! MOSES, NSAC, and many other organizations will be putting out the call to action as soon as this fall for folks to call their legislators’ D.C. offices in support of a farm bill that invests in sustainable and organic agriculture. Calling takes only 90 seconds and makes a real difference. Stay tuned for many more opportunities to get involved.

Sarah Hackney is the Grassroots Director for the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC).

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“Planter design and set-up is also critical, so having extra down pressure on the planter is helpful in getting seed-to-soil contact through the rolled mulch,” she explained. “Plant at least 160,000 seeds per acre. If weeds get through the mulch too much, be prepared to cultivate with a high-residue cultivator, such as a Hinniker.”

“As one farmer told me, ‘Better to only cultivate once and get that carbon-rich rye crop in your ground, than doing four normal organic tilled weed management tillage operations.’”

Delaire said a good planter should have good pressing wheels and steel furrow closing wheels with adjustable down pressure to get the soil firm after planting and to pull the rye mulch over the row.

“We will be monitoring two organic soybean plantings in rolled rye fields this year: one planted June 1, in a one-pass Dawn roller operation with adequate rain, and one planted June 9, with a two-pass operation, and no rain following planting (beans still not all the way up),” she said. UW’s Silva has also been investigating roller-crimping rye with no-till grains for a decade. She works in tandem with six Wisconsin organic producers in trials and applied research.

One of those producers is Mark Doudlah, a fourth-generation farmer in a family operation near Evansville, 20 minutes south of Madison. Doudlah farms 1,750 acres organically and is working to complete certification on all his land this year. The farm produces cash grains, seeds, pastured and organically raised poultry, eggs, turkey, and grass-fed pork sold now under a FarmRite Organics trade mark. The farm also sells cover crop seeds.

Doudlah has been employing roller-crimping rye cover crops for 4 years. He believes it is very important to start with a variety that maximizes above ground biomass. For Doudlah, that variety is Aroostook Cereal Rye.

“Your goal should be to have enough fall nitrogen to maximize growth and leaf width,” he said. “Crimp at 75 to 100 percent anthesis (flowering). Use the roller-crimper in the fall to level the ground, making for a uniform crimp in spring easier.”

“Unroll the crimp from the planter and plant beans 7 to 10 days prior to crimping. Then crimp when the rye is ready,” he added.

Using Aroostook Cereal Rye will gain another 7 to 10 days of growing season because it reaches anthesis early, he said. “It is possible to gain more than 2 weeks of growing season through the use of Aroostook Cereal Rye and planting ahead of the crimper. It is critical to reach 7,000 to 10,000 pounds of above-ground biomass for satisfactory crimping and weed control.”

“Drill or row beans at higher seeding rates to ensure crop competition and canopy closure. We have been unsuccessful using an airplane to aerial seed rye to get the uniformity of the rye for weed control,” he added.

Doudlah uses a 40’ RiteWay Crimper. The roller has 4” angle irons welded on to the drum with the angle iron back exposed to crimp the rye. This unit is 550 pounds per foot, nearly double the Rodale/I&J chevron design, Doudlah said.

“These crimpers both have their unique advantages,” he said. “The I&J has less blade engagement with the ground at any one time compared to the RiteWay. That allows for a lighter machine and very good crimping action.” He added that the RiteWay can be used in place of culti-packers for land rolling seed-to-soil contact and sizing clay soil clods.

“We prefer to seed ahead of crimping to gain growing season and also feel it is easier to get the seed into the soil by not having to cut through that 7,000 to 10,000 pounds of above-ground biomass,” Doudlah said.

Doudlah will host a field day on his farm from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Aug. 3 to showcase roller-crimping for dark red kidney beans. UW’s Erin Silva will speak on roller-crimping cereal rye. Dr. Don Huber of Purdue will discuss herbicide interactions. Joel Gruver of Western Illinois University will speak about finances, marketing and the organic transition years. An organic lunch, ice cream social and networking are part of the field day, which costs $20. For reservations, call 608-490-0925 or 608-490-0926.

Tory Ends is a certified organic farmer and writer who lives near Madison, Wis.

Winter Bale Grazing — from page 6

Strings or wrapping should be left on to keep bales in good shape and allow for moving them again in an emergency. These can be removed in November or December just ahead of the bale grazing season, but before snow and ice make the job more challenging. It’s also much easier to remove wrappings without animals present, especially if you have to keep a wary eye on your bull.

Bale Rings

Large bale rings have been used for years to contain hay coming off round bales so it doesn’t get “wasted.” Winter bale grazing operates on the premise that spent hay litter has value, and should not be confined to a bale ring, but rather should be spread about. Cattle eat through a bale selectively, and will do a wonderful job of distributing hay litter as they rummage through what is left behind after the core of the bale is consumed.

Depending on the size and grade of the bale ring, moving it can be difficult by hand and a potential safety issue. Often, a tractor is needed to lift bale rings that are packed in with snow, ice and hay litter. The one use we’ve found for hay rings is when we occasionally feed small square bales. Small squares are much more easily turned into bedding, and if there is any wind when feeding, can be spread too far too fast, resulting in scattered hay which just doesn’t get eaten.

John Mesko owns Lighthouse Farm, a grass-fed beef operation in Central Minnesota, and is the executive director of MOSES.
New workbook makes recordkeeping do double duty

By Kelli Boylen

For many, recordkeeping is the least favorite chore on the farm. Yet good records are essential for organic certification as well as insurance claims. Now, thanks to teamwork between MOSES and a crop underwriting manager with an insurance company, there is a free resource available to make recordkeeping easier.

Harriet Behar, Senior Organic Specialist for MOSES, and Roxann Brixen, Great American Crop Insurance, had worked together on a conference presentation and webinar about a new type of insurance policy called Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP). They started talking about records and realized much of the information required on organic farms and what is needed for a claim for this type of insurance policy are the same. Behar said she remembers thinking that making a claim would be easy for an organic producer since they need to have everything documented anyway.

“Organic producers already keep track of planting dates, input costs, scouting for insects and all the other things they do on the farm,” she said. “About 90 percent of the needed records appeared to be the same.” Producers who file a claim for crop insurance need to prove that they did everything necessary to produce a crop. Records kept for organic certification can provide this proof.

So Behar and Brixen started working with some organic producers and compiled a list of all the needed records—they included every possible thing the entire team could think of. “It all being useful.” Behar explained. “Recordkeeping is a very big deal,” Behar said. “We tried to simplify it and be concise, with every thing needed to produce one place.” Producers who file a claim for crop insurance need to prove that they did everything necessary to produce a crop. Records kept for organic certification can provide this proof.

Both the book and individual forms are available under the Publications tab on the MOSES website: mosesorganic.org.

Request a printed workbook by calling the MOSES office at 715-778-5775.

Forms in the workbook:
- Field Locations
- Crop Rotation and Input History by Field
- Five Year Individual Field Activity Log
- Supplemental Organic Integrity Documents
- Storage Record
- Sales Record
- Estimated and Actual Individual Crop Income and Expense
- Income Worksheet for Schedule F
- Expense Worksheet for Schedule F

Dr. Behar and Brixen pointed out that the workbook can serve as a guide to show an organic producer or a whole farm insured which information they need to track and have available. It is also a comprehensive ‘storage area’ for producers to add on any other information they wish.

Information on the spreadsheets not only include tracking of inputs and activities, but also monitoring the health of the crop, and any pest and disease issues and what was done to deal with these problems.

Whole Farm Revenue Protection

WFRP is a crop insurance plan that was made available through the USDA’s Risk Management Agency beginning in 2016. It is the first subsidized crop insurance plan available in every state and county. Coverage is based on five recent years of tax records and the yields and prices a farmer expects to receive for the current year. It provides a safety net for all commodities on the farm under one policy. Brixen noted that the policy was designed with organic producers and other diverse and specialty farms in mind.

If a producer needs to make a claim under WFRP, having the recordkeeping workbook completed will make the claim go much faster, Behar pointed out.

Brixen added, “As someone who is aligned with the crop insurance industry, I think we have our bases covered for needed information for any crop insurance policy.”

The team believes the recordkeeping workbooks should make tracking inputs and activities easy for producers transitioning to organic systems, too. It shows them which records need to be kept. It will also make it smoother for current producers to meet with organic inspectors because all the information is in one place.

Behar and Brixen started working on the project last winter and had it completed in time for the MOSES Conference in February. Hundreds of the workbooks were distributed there. Behar will be explaining the workbooks at MOSES field days this summer.

She said that, although they are pleased with the recordkeeping aid that they produced, they would love to get feedback from producers who are using the forms so they can fine-tune them if necessary. Behar can be reached at harriet@ mosesorganic.org or by calling 715-778-5775.

Kelli Boylen is a freelance writer who lives in Iowa.
Managing Weeds — from page 1

Even with 40 years of farming under his belt, Pincus is trying new things. He recently purchased a Treffler Harrow, a new cultivating implement from Man@Machine in the Netherlands. Pincus saw it exhibited at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference earlier this year. Man@Machine chose the conference to introduce the tool to the U.S. market.

Pincus just received his harrow and already is impressed with how it works. “It’s a really good tool,” he said. “It’s worth the extra money and complexity.”

The Treffler Harrow is a tine weeder similar to the well-known Lely cultivator from Holland. Tine weeders are blind cultivators, which means they go over the weeds and the crop indiscriminately. They are best used on robust crops that can take a bit of rough handling (usually transplants), and are also particularly effective on small direct-seeded crops, such as carrots, which can be cut very close to the plants with some practice.

The Bishops have been careful to set up a system that works. They need to be able to use the same equipment on everything, so their beds are spaced consistently, with 1-, 2-, and 3-row spacing. Their transplanter, seeder, and cultivators are all set to the same spacing, so they don’t have to waste time adjusting when they switch from one crop to another. They have a lot of equipment, and they “use the full arsenal of tools” they have available.

Another area that the Bishops focus on is transplants. “Plants that are strong and healthy can outgrow the weeds,” Bishop said. They grow healthy transplants in their greenhouse, have a good mechanical transplanter, and irrigate right away so that the transplants have good root establishment.

This winter, Bishop built his own finger weeder, which is mounted on an Allia Chalmer Model G. He said they’re using it everywhere they can this season. The Bishops also have a KULT-Kress Duo, and like Pincus, use it on direct-seeded crops to get within an inch or two of the crop. They also have a Steketee finger weeder from the Netherlands. In addition to finger weeders, the Steketee has sweeps and knives that can be lifted up so the implement can be used as a regular cultivator.

Another favorite piece of cultivating equipment is their Eco Weeder from Univerco, a PTO-powered 3-point attachment with a seat and handles so that an operator can manually control the cultivating attachments (discs with short tines that spin). Bishop said this works well for plants with in-row spacing between them—the operator moves the cultivators in and out to go around the plants and meet in between. Bishop also particularly likes using an offset cultivating tractor with belly-mount cultivators. There are many attachments that can be used, including as sweeps, discs, knives, and tines.

For the times when hand weeding is inevitable, the Bishops have a few favorite hand tools. They like the Japanese hand hoe, which can be used very close to the plants with some practice. Another favorite is the trapezoidal hoe from Johnny’s, which has a beveled shape to get under the edges of plants, and sharp corners to cut through roots. They also use a collinear hoe, which is specifically designed for use in an upright position with a thumbs-up grip, riding collinear with the soil surface. It works well with the soil to point out that weather conditions dictate practice.

The Stale Seedbed Technique

They use the stale seedbed technique, which involves preparing beds a week or more before planting and allowing the weed seeds that are brought to the surface by tilling to germinate. Right before planting the crop, the bed is cultivated lightly to kill the weed seedlings, without bringing more seeds to the surface. This technique saves time and labor spent weeding later on, and is essential for direct-seeded crops, such as carrots and beets, that have a hard time competing with weeds.

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Farm Transfer: Plan so all heirs get equal share

By Teresa Ophεim

Darrell Mohr put a lot of miles on a Farmall F-14 tractor while growing up on a 120-acre Southwest Iowa farm. Today his daughter, Amber, and her family run Fork Tail Farm, selling pasture-raised meat, vegetables and flowers on a portion of that farm that Darrell inherited and remembers so fondly.

Darrell and his wife, Chris, also have two non-farming children. In a farm legacy letter that Darrell wrote, he specified that he wants “my immediate heirs to receive to the best of my ability equal economic value.” Chris agrees. Both also say “harmony in the family is important as well as all recognizing the value of this farm.”

Darrell and Chris are typical in their desire to divide their assets equally among their children. Most lawyers have experience drafting legal structures that will accomplish that goal. In the Mohrs’ case, for example, their attorney helped them set up the farm in the Ernest W. Mohr Trust, with Amber and her siblings as equal trustees. Amber and her husband, Jeremy, rent from the trust.

“If in the future they would want to expand their business and add more land to it, I would hope our other children would be supportive,” Chris said. “Amber has told me that she might be living there but she sees it as the ‘Mohr Farm’ and her siblings can be a part of it at any time.”

If you have farming and non-farming heirs and want to treat all of your heirs financially equally, here are some questions and tips to consider:

Have you adequately compensated your farming heir?

For example, Amber and Jeremy are making many improvements to the farm, such as restoring the pastures and regenerating soils. Have they been reimbursed by the trust for those costs? Would it be fair to reduce the rental rate as they spend their days making farm improvements?

Has the farming heir been adequately compensated for labor?

Jolene, a Minnesota organic farmer, has been working on the family farm for 30 years, but has never received a salary. Only occasionally has she received the proceeds from the sale of a steer, and her parents have given her no ownership interest so far in the equipment or land. She is just expected to help out. (No wonder she has started to work on the family farm.)

Are you leaving your farming heir the flexibility needed to run the business?

According to John Gilbert, who runs a diversified crop-livestock farm in Central Iowa with his family, his “kids didn’t want to think of ‘their life’s work’ going for naught.” They wanted the farm and dynasty to continue, as well as the family, John said. One of the steps they took was to split the farming operation into two corporations in the 1990s.

“Primarily my father was trying to figure out how to give my brothers an interest in the farm without being part of the major corporation. Then Bev and I would end up with farming without so many entanglements,” John said. With this approach, his father ensured that there was never “an issue of my brothers interfering…. It was essentially Dad and me making decisions on the day-to-day operations.”

Do you have a buy-sell agreement for your farming heir?

The Farm Journal Legacy Project considers this probably “the most important tool for maintaining the integrity of the business entity in succession planning.” The buy-sell agreement gives your farming heir the right (but not the obligation) to buy farm property if the non-farming heirs decide they want to sell. It is binding on your non-farm heirs and gives your farming heir a definite and reasonable purchase price and terms for buying farm assets.

Plan early. The earlier you plan, the more likely you are to be successful providing both your farming and non-farming heirs with an equal inheritance. Jolene’s mother has a $250,000 life insurance policy; her financial advisor has recommended she designate her non-farming son as beneficiary on that, while leaving farm assets to Jolene. The Gilberts have used gifts to transfer shares in their farm corporation over several generations.

Communicate often, and hire good help. If you don’t communicate, you cannot clear up misperceptions and expectations, and you may leave a legacy of family strife—no one wants that. “Every farm and family is different. Parents all have different objectives, which affects how they want assets shared,” John said. “The critical point is for the parents to explain their wishes to all their descendents, and have the important parts in writing with a lawyer. The money spent with professional guidance is the best investment a family can make. If parents don’t want to spend the money, then the heirs need to assume the costs to make sure-things are done right.”

Teresa Ophεim is Senior Fellow working on farm transfer topics with Renewing the Countryside and Practical Farmers.

Join the farm transitions discussion list: www.renewingthecountryside.org/farm_transitions
Managing Weeds — from page 14

low-lying crops such as head lettuce, because it slices through weeds without throwing soil. In their high tunnel, where it isn’t possible to drive a tractor to cultivate, the Bishops use wheel hoes with 5-, 8-, and 10-inch stirrup attachments.

In addition to cultivation practices, the Bishops use cover crops and plastic mulch to control weeds. They plant a lot of oats and peas in the fall, which winter-kill ahead of early direct-seeded crops such as carrots and beets. They also plant rye as an early cover crop before planting fall brassica transplants. They use plastic for long-season crops like tomatoes and sweet potatoes, which are hard to cultivate between when they grow past a certain size. According to Bishop, it’s important to get the weed seeds to germinate and die off under the plastic before punching holes and planting into it, otherwise weeds will grow up through the holes along with the crop, and must be hand weeded out.

The Bishops will host a MOSES organic field day at PrairierTh Farm Sept. 8, where several of the cultivators listed here will be demonstrated. See page 7 for details.

Hans Bishop manages weeds in a multi-pronged approach that keeps fields like this one in good shape. (Photo by Katie Micetic Bishop)

Foxtail Farm

Chris and Paul Burkhouse own Foxtail Farm, a winter CSA farm in Osceola, Wis. They have been farming for 25 years, and ran a 300-member summer CSA for much of that time. They grow 15 acres of vegetables, and have many old tractors and implements that Paul keeps in working order. The Burkhouses use many of the techniques described above, but like all seasoned farmers, have their high tunnel, where it isn’t possible to drive a tractor to cultivate, the Bishops use wheel hoes for paths and widely-spaced crops. She also likes the Johnny’s hand hoe for close-in weeding, as well as Johnny’s stirrup hoe as an in-between tool.

Strader’s advice to beginning market farmers is “be hand weeded out. If you don’t keep the acres you do grow very clean, and use that extra land to grow more cover crops!” As she gained experience farming, she found herself using less and less land more and more efficiently, going from 3.5 acres to 3 acres with the same production. “With fewer acres in vegetables, there was less land I had to keep weeded, so overall the crops were cleaner (which helped them to produce more)

There are some tried-and-true rules of thumb for weed management, but there are as many practices as there are individual farms. There is so much variability from farm to farm, from the type and use the crops being grown and the soil types, and the soil. At a small scale, where most things are done by hand rather than using up space to accommodate the tractor and all its implements.

One of her favorite hand tools is the Valley Oil Wheel hoe, which she used for paths and widely-spaced crops. She also likes the Johnny’s hand hoe for close-in weeding, as well as Johnny’s stirrup hoe as an in-between tool.

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Weeding shallowly keeps weed seeds from coming to the surface and germinating. “Rogueing” is the technique of pulling large weeds that are threatening to go to seed before the harvest is over—this keeps them from adding new weed seed to the seed bank. Similarly, mowing off the crop and the weeds immediately post-harvest helps to reduce deposits to the seed bank. Another good weed management technique is planning a managed fallow year every fourth or fifth year. Cover crops should be used during the fallow to reduce the seed bank and improve the soil. At a small scale, where most things are done by hand, it’s especially important to keep the soil covered to minimize weed seed germination. Strader particularly favors marsh hay mulch, which is weed-free and particularly good for fall-season crops such as brassicas as it keeps the soil temperature down. She has also successfully used clover as a living mulch, interseeding it between the vegetable plants.

Although Strader was at one point interested in mechanical cultivation, she decided that her scale was too small for it to be worth it. She would have had to also use mechanical transplanting and seeding, and decided she “will keep a lot of space tight and do things by hand rather than using up space to accommodate the tractor and all its implements.”

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Two states temporarily ban Dicamba
By Audrey Alwell

The departments of agriculture in both Missouri and Arkansas have issued a temporary ban on sales or use of Dicamba.

The bans are the latest regulatory setback to the Arkansas Agriculture Department. Both state’s have called for immediate cessation of on-farm applications of Dicamba products.

MOSES offers a fact sheet on how to protect yourself and your organic farm from pesticide drift. You can find that publication along with steps to take if drift occurs (including links and phone numbers to report drift) on the MOSES website at moosesorganic.org/pesticide-drift.

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**Organic Broadcast**

**NEWS BRIEFS**

**Workshop Audio Recordings**

Get up to speed on FSMA-compliant harvest handling while you’re in the field by listening to Chris Blanchard’s “Practical Food Safety” workshop from MOSES 2017. Or, ponder how to “Access New Markets” while packing your produce. Battling weeds in your corn or wheat? Get help from “Effective Weed Management” or “Innovative Seed Control.” Explore all the workshop topics from this year's conference by clicking on “Conference Audio Recordings” in the MOSES Bookstore (mosesorganic.net). Workshops from prior conferences also are available.

**FSA Loan Resources**

The world of farm loans and finances can seem daunting, but finding confidence to enter that world can help you grow and strengthen your farm business. MOSES has created resources to help farmers navigate the loan options available through the Farm Service Agency. New tools on the MOSES website (mosesorganic/FSA) include on-demand webinars and worksheets you can download to create a strong, fundable loan application.

Farm Service Agency’s many loan programs are designed to serve farmers who have difficulty accessing commercial credit as they improve their farms for the future. Through the webinars and worksheets MOSES has created, you’ll explore the different types of loans, their eligibility requirements, the ‘lingo’ that you’ll encounter through the USDA programs, and the basics of building a business plan and gathering the documentation you’ll need to apply for a loan through FSA.

**Wisconsin Women in Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Week: July 31 – Aug. 6, 2017**

Governor Walker has officially proclaimed July 31 through Aug. 6 as “Wisconsin Women in Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Week.” This proclamation recognizes the growing importance and the positive impact of women farmers in Wisconsin, as women now represent approximately 11 percent of primary operators on all farms in Wisconsin. This week also coincides with the annual “Soil Sisters: A Celebration of Wisconsin Farms and Rural Life” weekend event Aug. 4-6 in the Green County area, the largest women-farmer-led event in the nation, with a variety of workshops, culinary events, and tours. The weekend kicks off with the MOSES “In Her Boots” workshop Friday, Aug. 4 at Circle M Farm in Blanchardville, Wis. For the Soil Sisters event guide, see www.soilsiestswi.org.

**Agricultural Youth Work Guidelines**

Several children have died this summer due to skin steer accidents, prompting the National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety to collaborate with a warning and new safety guidelines for children and youth. The guidelines were created based on the latest scientific research, and can assist parents and supervisors in determining which tasks are appropriate for youth ages 7-16, with varying degrees of supervision. Find the new guidelines plus more information about how to keep kids safe on mosesorganic.org/child-farm-safety.

**GMOS in Wisconsin**

A free forum Monday, July 24, 2017 from noon to 2 p.m. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison will focus on the complex issues surrounding GMOs, especially relevant in Wisconsin as the university’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences is at the forefront of GMO-related research. Panelists for “Science and Civics: GMOs and Wisconsin” include university researchers, MOSES Executive Director John Mesko, Wisconsin Farm Bureau President Jim Holte, and Margaret Krome from Michael Fields Agriculture Institute. The event is free and open to the public, but tickets are required: bit.ly/ UWThnkGMOS. The forum is organized by the Astina Institute: Citizenship and Agriculture, and is supported as part of their efforts to increase both civic and scientific literacy in the U.S.

**Organic & Non-GMO Forum**

The Organic & Non-GMO Forum: Oilseds & Grains at the Crossroads takes place Nov. 6-7, 2017 in St. Louis. This event brings together producers, handlers, buyers and processors to address the challenges of meeting the growing demand for organic and non-GMO products, plus emerging opportunities for specialty production. Sessions cover the latest information regarding bringing forward and demand for organic and non-GMO products, plus emerging opportunities for specialty production. For more information about the recipients, see bit.ly/organictradeward.

**Organic Trade Association Leadership Award**

The Organic Trade Association’s 2017 Leadership Awards Celebration will be Sept. 13 in Baltimore, Maryland. Janeen Van Arnum of Sustainable Strategies LLC, who serves as Senior Trade Advisor for OTA, was selected for the Growing the Organic Industry Leadership Award. The 2017 Organic Farmer of the Year Leadership Award will be presented to RauReco Vineyards in California, an organic farming advocate and farmer for more than 40 years. Peggy Sutton of To Your Health Sprouted Flour will receive the Rising Star Organic Leadership Award. For more information about the recipients, see bit.ly/organictradeward.

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**Feast Local Foods Marketplace**

If you own a food or beverage business from Iowa, Wisconsin, or Minnesota, consider applying to attend the 4th annual Feast! Local Foods Marketplace Dec. 12, 2017 in Rochester, Minn. All exhibitors are jury-selected, and more than 100 will have the opportunity to show, sample, and sell their artisan foods to wholesale buyers at the Friday trade show, and to consumers during the Saturday festival. The early-bird registration deadline is Aug. 15. Apply online at local-feast.org/exhibitors_2017.

**“Organic” Grain Imports**

In response to the discovery of fraudulent imports of soybeans and corn from Turkey that violated federal organic regulations, USDA’s National Organic Program (NOP) has revoked the organic certification of Beyaz Agro, a major Turkish grain exporter. The Organic Broadcaster newspaper has included several stories recently with concerns over the huge rise in organic grain imports and the possibility of fraud. “Organic production shortfall in U.S. encourages imports, creates risk,” and “Organic imports hurt U.S. organic grain producers” provide insights on this topic. Find those stories at mosesorganic.org/archives.

**Farmer of Year Nominations**

The nomination period is open for the 2018 MOSES Organic Farmer of the Year. The award recognizes a Midwest certified organic farmer or farm family for practicing outstanding land stewardship, innovation and outreach. It will be presented at the 2018 MOSES Organic Farming Conference Feb. 22-24 in La Crosse, Wis. The nomination form is online at mosesorganic.org/organic-farmer-of-the-year. Deadline for nominations is Sept. 15, 2017.

**In Her Boots Podcast**

The MOSES Rural Women’s Project has launched a podcast that shares wisdom from women who farm. The “In Her Boots” podcast has 10 episodes so far, featuring interviews with organic pioneer Dela Ends, and hosts of the 2016 In Her Boots workshops: Kathy Zeman and Rachel Hershberger. New episodes post weekly. The show is available on iTunes and Stitcher. Learn more (and listen in) on the MOSES website at mosesorganic.org/in-her-boots-podcast.

**Urban Women Caring for the Land**

MOSES will offer a unique Women Caring for the Land workshop Thursday, Aug. 17 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the USDA NRCS office in Madison, Wis. The workshop targets women who live in urban areas and own rural land, giving them information on conservation practices and programs they can access to improve their land. See details at mosesorganic.org/rural-womens-project/events.

**Free Admission to MOSES Conference**

You could win a free pass to the 2018 MOSES Organic Farming Conference if you enter and win the program cover photo contest—even if you don’t win the coveted spot on the program, you’ll still get recognition for your amazing farm when we show your photo before the keynotes. You also give MOSES authentic farm photos to use to promote organic farming. Farms must be certified or transitioning to organic. See mosesorganic.org/photo-contest.

**Intellectual Agrarian Podcast**

MOSES Executive Director John Mesko was interviewed in the July 10 episode of The Intellectual Agrarian Podcast, a new show by Terrance Layhew, an organic inspector who was raised on a Wisconsin farm. They discuss MOSES, Mesko’s grass-fed beef operation, and the Amazon/Whole Foods deal. Find the podcast at bit.ly/intellectualagrarian.

**MOSES Staff**

Hailey Melander has joined our staff as the Communications Coordinator, working with our communications team to help promote MOSES programs and services for farmers. She lives on a small hobby farm in Wilson, Wis.

**Food Safety Survey**

The Local Food Safety Collaborative has created a survey to assess farmers and food processors’ basic understanding of food safety so the collaborative can create materials to help farmers and processors comply with Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) regulations. After completing the 20-minute survey, participants may enter a raffle for a $100 gift card. Survey responses will be kept confidential. The survey is online at www.localfoodsafety.org/survey.

MOSES Executive Director John Mesko, Wisconsin Farm Bureau President Jim Holte, and Margaret Krome from Michael Fields Agriculture Institute. The event is free and open to the public, but tickets are required: bit.ly/UWThnkGMOS. The forum is organized by the Astina Institute: Citizenship and Agriculture, and is supported as part of their efforts to increase both civic and scientific literacy in the U.S.

**Iowa Small Grains Business Directory**

The second annual Small Grains Business Directory has been released by Practical Farmers of Iowa. Despite their versatility and value, small grains are a challenge to market, and the directory was created to address information for seed buyer, grain buyers, and seed cleaners, as well as the small grain species they buy. More information is available at bit.ly/smallgrainsdirectory.

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**Organic Best Management Practices Survey**
A group of researchers from Purdue and other U.S. universities is studying best management practices for enhancing post-harvest quality and safety of organic produce/vegetables. Researchers are asking producers to take a 25-minute survey at bit.ly/purdue_survey.

**Organic Leadership Awards**
Three recipients of the Organic Trade Association Awards have been selected for their organic leadership, innovation, and advocacy. The recipients are: Robert (Bob) Anderson of Sustainable Strategies LLC—Advisors in Food and Agriculture, who serves as Senior Trade Advisor for the Organic Trade Association, was selected for Growing the Organic Industry Leadership Award. The 2017 Organic Farmer of the Year Leadership Award will be presented to Phil LaRoca of LaRoca Vineyards in California, an organic farming advocate and farmer for more than 40 years. Peggy Sutton of To Your Health Sprouted Flour will receive the Rising Star Organic Leadership Award. The Organic Trade Association’s 2017 Leadership Awards Celebration will take place on Wednesday, October 18, 2017, in Baltimore, Maryland. For more information about the recipients, visit bit.ly/leadership_awards_organic.

**Organic Onions**
Research published in American Chemical Society’s Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry showed that flavonoid levels and antioxidant activity in organic onions are higher than in conventional onions. The six-year study tested two varieties of onions and showed that antioxidant activity was higher for both varieties in organic onions, and flavonols in organic onions were as much as 20 percent higher. Find the publication here: bit.ly/organic_onions.

**Deep Winter Greenhouses**
A Deep Winter Greenhouse (DWG) is a passive solar greenhouse that enables small-scale farmers in northern regions to grow cold-hardy vegetables year-round without additional lighting. DWGs feature a south-facing glazing wall that is designed to maximize solar energy, which is then stored in an underground thermal mass. Crops well suited to DWG production include a variety of lettuce, herbs, brassicas, asian greens, and sprouts. University of Minnesota Extension just added construction plans to its webpage of DWG resources: bit.ly/deep_winter.

**MISA Board Nomination**
The Board of Directors for the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) is seeking nominations (you may nominate yourself or someone else) for individuals to serve a three year term. The purpose of MISA is to bring together the diverse interests of the agricultural community with interests from across the University community in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond. The application or nomination form is due to the MISA office by August 10, 2017. For more information about MISA, an application/nomination form, roles and responsibilities of Board members, and desired characteristics of Board members, see bit.ly/MISABoard.

**Pollinator Seed Mix Recommendation**
Researchers from the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach have developed a diverse seed mix of perennials that provide a varied habitat for monarch butterflies and bees. The perennials in the mix are all native to Iowa, and different flowers in the mix bloom throughout the growing season, providing nectar and pollen sources from the early spring through late fall. Iowa State University is not directly selling the seed mix, but offers the free publication, Monarch Seed Mix High Diversity, with recommendations: bit.ly/pollinator_seed.

**NOSB Nominations**
The USDA is taking nominations for the environmental protection and resource conservation seat on the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The seat has a 5-year term running January 2018-2023. The USDA also is taking nominations for a pool of candidates to serve out the remainder of a 5-year term should unexpected vacancies occur in any of the seven positions. Written nominations must be postmarked by Aug. 7, 2017. See details at ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/nosb/nomination-process.

**NOSB Fall Meeting**
The next NOSB meeting will be Oct. 31 through Nov. 2, 2017 at the Omni Hotel in Jacksonville, Florida. The draft agenda has been posted on the NOSB website. Details from the spring meeting are online at www.ams.usda.gov/event/2017-national-organic-standards-board-nosb-meeting.

**Ancient Grains**
oOrganic has released a new video featuring the ancient hulled wheats: einkorn, emmer, and spelt. These wheats are prized by chefs and individuals for their flavor and nutritional properties, and are marketable at a higher price per pound than modern wheat. The video was created by members of the NIFA OREI-funded research project, and discusses the detailing process for these wheats, and the characteristics that make them compatible with organic and sustainable farming. View the video here: bit.ly/ancient_grains.

**Potato Growers**
University of Wisconsin-Madison researchers are asking potato growers in Wisconsin and neighboring states to send in soil samples from organic or non-organic fields to study how soil microbial communities respond to farm management practices. They need 2-cup soil samples from fields currently in potato shipped to the lab within 1 week of sampling—the university will cover shipping via UPS. For more details, email Richard Lankau at lankau@wisc.edu or call 608-262-3084.

**Spotted Wing Drosophila**
Producers battling Spotted Wing Drosophila can find information online about the organic management of this invasive pest. The resources include websites, videos, and publications based on a multi-state NIFA-OREI research project. Many of these publications are open-access, so you don’t need a journal subscription. Topics covered include using high tunnels and exclusion netting to reduce pressure in raspberries, the effects of non-nutritive sugars, border spray and between-row tillage, and more.

**Hay-Buying Scams**
Farmers have let MOSES know that there’s a hay-buying scam afoot. Farmers should take care when selling hay or livestock online, and should contact their local law enforcement agency if they believe that they have been targeted by a scam. Warning signs of a possible scam include: a buyer who refuses to speak by telephone, is vague about transportation arrangements, or a buyer who suggests mailing a check in excess of the price, then requests that the seller mail the additional amount in cash back to the buyer. Farmers can limit their exposure to such scams by writing up a contract that protects both buyer and seller.

**Leopold Center**
As of July 1, the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University has lost state funding that was established when it began in 1987. The long-running grants program will cease, but the Leopold Center will remain as a unit, and a task force will be established to gather ideas for the future of the center. The center has an account with donated money that is managed through the ISU Foundation, but it is not enough to sustain the Center as it has existed. Go to leopold.iastate.edu/ for updates and more information.
**For Sale or Rent: 80 acres certified organic standing grass hay near Curtis, Wis., 757-660-9291, Mary.**

7.8 acre organic egg farm for sale. Includes several acres tillable for produce and energy efficient 3-4 bedroom house with original wood floors and cabinets. Total capacity 5,900 layers. Includes contract to grow eggs for established regional brand. Asking price $325,000 for real estate and equipment. Layers to be sold separately. Pictures at TeasdaleRealty.com. Call Sam Heikes: 605-222-3949.

**For Sale:** Organic Hay. 3x3x8 large squares baleage. MOSA certified. Wonocow, WI. Transportation available. 608-553-1136.

**For Sale:** Organic Wheat or Barley Straw. MOSA certified. 3x3x8 large bales. Wonocow, WI. Transportation available. 608-553-1136.

**For sale:** Certified organic alfalfa with some grass, 1st cutting 2017, tested and stored inside, 605-460-1545.

Certified organic alfalfa & straw 3x3x8 & 3x4x8 bales. 2016 and 2017 crop years. Antelope Valley Farms Ravenna, NE 308-380-3311.

**For Sale:** Certified organic alfalfa with some grass, 1st cutting 2017, tested and stored inside, 605-460-1545.

**For Sale:** Established CSA with farmland. Young dairy owners looking for turn-key grazing couple. Contract for deed an option if necessary. Partially irrigated. Owner is veteran production distribution area, and full line of farm field equipment. Includes 2 greenhouses, walk-in cooler, retail distribution outlets, good tires, runs very good, has a 2-row cultivator; also 2-row cultivator for Farmall Super C. For sale: Massey Harris 22 tractor for sale separately. Pictures at TeasdaleRealty. Price $325,000 for real estate and equipment. Layers available to be sold separately. Pictures at TeasdaleRealty.com. Call Sam Heikes: 605-222-3949.

**For Sale:** Organic oats, corn, hay. Wrapped and dry big bales. Can deliver. 608-574-2160.

**For Sale:** Organic High Moisture Corn for sale in the fall. Delivery possible. 20,000 bu available. Looking for commitments. Osceola Wis, 715-294-3104, email: crystalbalfarms@yahoo.com.

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