Longtime organic farmers from Iowa chosen as Organic Farmers of Year

By Sylvia Burgos Toftness

Conservation and renewal. Land and people. Innovation and interdependence. According to Ron and Maria Rossmann, and their sons and daughter-in-law, these values and goals have guided their decisions for decades. Family and faith are the bedrock of their stewardship, commitment to social justice, pursuit of economic viability, and efforts to encourage future generations of organic farmers.

A fourth-generation farmer, Ron credits his father, Ray, for laying a good foundation in sustainable farming practices. His dad kept a large team of Belgian draft horses “because they could do work a tractor couldn’t,” Ron remembered. His father used crop rotations even then, and, like his grandfather and great-grandfather before him, they managed a diversity of crops and livestock.

The family farm is located near the small city of Westphalia, in the southwest quadrant of Iowa. Ron returned there to farm in 1973, after earning a degree in biology, and having minored in both sociology and psychology—background that would serve him on the land, within his rural community, and far beyond.

The early 1970s saw increasing demand for America’s agricultural products, and many growers came to anticipate ever-increasing profitability. It was also a time of accelerating farm consolidation and vertical integration within the food system—conditions that did not favor the smaller family farm.

It was as the balance was shifting in the mid-1970s that Ron met Maria Vakulskas. He was attending a political meeting, and she was a young journalist covering the event for local television. They married in 1978.

As the 1970s came to a close, the economic picture darkened for smaller producers. The farm crisis of the 1980s ripped through rural communities all across the country.

“Our income took a nosedive, and we were on our own,” said Ron, his father having passed by that time. “We had to make changes, but I felt we could do it because my dad had been a great teacher, and I had my Iowa State education. We also had our farrow-to-finish hog business in hand, and we had crop rotations in place,” he added.

More significantly, Ron and Maria shared the values that would weather the economic downturn and help them find future opportunities. They had, and still have their Catholic faith, a strong work ethic, and a belief that they could—and can—improve the future through their work.

Ron began using organic practices in the 1970s even though he sold into the commodity marketplace; there was no defined demand for organic products at that time. He grew organically because he believed it was better for his land and his health.

“I never felt comfortable with chemicals,” Ron said. “There was no way they didn’t get into your skin as you worked to unclog and repair machinery.”

The farm’s move to organics went hand-in-hand with Ron’s increased participation in sustainable farming organizations. For Ron, as for so many of

Spring offers tight window for planting cover crops—follow these tips

By Matt Leavitt

Cover crops are an integral part of any organic farming system. They protect a farm’s valuable soil resource from wind and water erosion, capture and hold nutrients, compete with weeds, break cycles of pests and disease, manage excess moisture, and contribute to organic matter formation. They provide living roots in the soil that feed complex soil microorganisms and contribute to a resilient farming system.

Most cash crop rotations keep the soil covered only three to four months and rarely during times of peak soil erosion—the spring and fall of the year. Cover crops can plug the gaps in these rotations.

Cover crops are a required part of a certified organic operation. Ideally, all organic farms should be working towards having as tight a rotation as possible with limited periods of bare soil. In practice, though, this can be difficult for a variety of reasons.

Farmers in the Upper Midwest (growing zones 2-4) face unique challenges incorporating cover crops into their farming operations that other, more temperate areas of the country don’t face. Wet and cool spring weather conditions can hamper planting times and make early season tillage, field prep and planting very difficult. Winters are severe and prevent all but a select few species from overwintering into the following season.

Windows to incorporate cover crops into a rotation can be very tight and dependent on favorable weather conditions and maximizing a short growing seasons for marketable crops. Farmers understandably favor ideal planting conditions for their cash crops versus trying to sneak in a cover crop with uncertain returns.

On the whole, the benefits of cover crops are typically related to how long they are allowed to grow. There are additional expenses to every field operation, and cover crops are no exception. Once seed, fuel, labor, and machinery (for planting and termination) costs are all calculated, there should be a feasible benefit to your farm to justify the expense; though on balance, cover crops are always a good investment.

Growers who have experimented with planting cover crops right away in the spring prior to cash crops have had inconsistent success and sometimes have to take an additional step to control the cover crop prior to planting. However, there are others that make spring-seeded cover crops part of their farming rotation when the weather allows. Bob Yanula, from Midwest Bio Ag, recommends an early season planting of oats and peas as soon as the ground is fit to plant in the spring. This can activate the soil with living roots right away, feed soil bacteria and fungi, and protect it from excessive rainfall. He tells his growers to work this green cover crop down with shallow tillage (<2” disturbance) before a corn, soybean or other row crop.

Cover Crop Selection

When adding cover crops to your rotation, it is important to think about what species will best meet your end goals for the farm and your soil. Cover crops consist of many different species and plant types, but can roughly be grouped into cool- and warm-season grasses, legumes, brassicas, and broadleaves.

When selecting the best-adapted cover crop(s)
The Organic Broadcaster™ is a bimonthly newspaper published by the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), a nonprofit that provides education, resources and practical advice to farmers.

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MOSES educates, inspires, and empowers farmers to thrive in a sustainable, organic system of agriculture.

We’ve only just begun
By John Mesko, Executive Director of MOSES

The modern organic and sustainable farming movement has its roots in the farm crisis of the late 70s and early 80s, when farmers were encouraged to “get big or get out.” The farmers who followed that directive made significant expansion, and then saw interest rates skyrocket, land prices fall, and the bottom fall out of the rural economy. Leading farmers and those supporting them—the organic pioneers—decided they would build a new agriculture, where they would define their own markets, produce food in their own manner, and push back against the winds of consolidation and economies of scale in farming.

At the time, very little effort to develop alternative farming systems was being made in the Land Grant System, USDA didn’t acknowledge organic or sustainable systems, and there were few, if any, support organizations like we have today. MOSES was established at a time when farmers seeking to convert to organic production needed support and the main avenue of that support was other farmers and the handful of educators willing to work on alternatives to the corporate model of conventional agriculture.

For nearly 30 years now, the MOSES Organic Farming Conference has played an important role in building the organic and sustainable farming, education and networking community. Along the way, we’ve seen massive changes in the food and farming system in the U.S. The vast expansion of farmers markets, CSAs and focus on locally grown foods has come from our community. Together with the food co-op community, we’ve built a $50 billion organic food industry.

The USDA didn’t set out to create the USDA Certified Organic label. The impetus for that came from us, from our community, set in motion by pioneers who wanted more from agriculture than poisoned soil and water, empty farmlands, and bankrupt agriculture.

The current widespread focus amidst all of agriculture, organic and non-organic alike on cover cropping and the integration of livestock grazing has the potential to change the world quite literally. If these integrated practices can become the norm throughout our country and abroad, we’ll have no trouble feeding the world with organic production systems.

Is this new? Did the idea of farming with cover crops become popular just recently? Of course not. Organic farmers have been using cover crops forever, and in fact are required to use cover crops and other soil-building techniques in certified organic production.

Our community has made this contribution to broader agriculture. Non-organic farmers are adopting and using organic production practices. That’s a major accomplishment—one with the potential to effect lasting change in the quantity and quality of food produced, as well as a lifetime of conservation and ecosystem services benefits.

But we have only just begun. In just the last 10 years, the expansive focus on building soil health in agriculture has convinced many long-time skeptics that organic farming practices can in fact feed the world. While not a surprise to those of us in the organic and sustainable farming community, non-organic farming experts are connecting the dots between basic soil-building organic farming practices and renewed soils, resilient farms and even regenerated rural communities.

We have only begun to understand the dynamics of biodiversity above and below ground in our farming systems. As more attention has been given to the broader topic of soil health, researchers have been advocating for and conducting advanced research into these topics. These researchers routinely share information with each other; the result over time is going to be a greater focus with more assets being delivered to address these care issues.

We’ve only just begun to realize the long-term growth capacity of our soils under organic farming practices. Non-organic agriculture supporters claim the need to feed 9.7 billion people globally by 2050 requires the use of GMO technology. In practice however, these same farmers and supporters are adopting organic farming practices at an incredible rate.

We’ve only just begun! Our call to action is to do more of what we’ve been doing. To be more vigilant than ever about the need for strong organic standards, strengthening organic production models and infrastructure, and bringing new producers into our community. We’ve built a brand of agriculture that is not niche or isolated. We are a bonafide industry changing the world daily, and with the capacity to solve one of the biggest concerns facing our global society. That’s something we can all be proud of and excited about!

We’re only just begun. What an exciting time to be in the organic farming community. Thank you to all who attended the MOSES Organic Farming Conference in 2018—I appreciate the ideas you contribute as we all work together to push our brand of farming forward.

See highlights from MOSES 2018 on page 10. And, mark your calendar to attend the 30th MOSES Conference Feb. 21-23, 2019. I look forward to seeing you there!

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Organic farmers join forces to impact national farm policy, organic integrity

By Jim Riddle, Organic Farmers Association

One farm - one vote—that’s a founding mantra for the Organic Farmers Association (OFA). Though we have individual supporting members and organizational members (like MOSES), only domestic certified organic farmers vote to elect OFA’s leaders, conduct OFA’s business, and to establish OFA’s policy positions.

The Organic Farmers Association was formed in 2016 to provide an authentic voice for organic farmers at the national level. Before the 2017 MOSES Organic Farming Conference, we gathered in La Crosse for a retreat to establish a steering committee, elect officers, and write draft bylaws and guiding principles. The organization is sponsored by Rodale Institute, and has been fortunate to recruit experienced organic leaders from across the country.

Since the 2017 retreat, we’ve been busy! Our members elected a policy committee, which includes 12 certified organic farmers and 6 organic farm organization representatives, to direct OFA’s policy process. (While the organizational reps on the committee have a voice, only the certified organic farmers on the committee have a vote.)

We established OFA’s 2017-2018 policy priorities, which were voted on by our certified organic farmer members. These include 2018 Farm Bill priorities, as well as positions on issues such as organic enforcement and hydroponics.

We have implemented a very inclusive policy development process. To establish Organic Farmers Association positions on various issues, we cast a wide net by surveying all U.S. certified organic producers, in addition to all OFA members.

Input from Organic Farmers Association members and the broader organic community informs OFA’s elected policy committee on policy priorities, issues and ideas. The committee drafts positions and policies, which are voted on by our farmer members to become official OFA positions. In order to be adopted, each policy must be supported by at least 60% of our voting members nationwide, in order to be adopted, each policy must be supported by at least 60% of our voting members nationwide, and must pass in at least 4 of our 6 regions.

To provide for equitable representation, we divided the nation into 6 regions (each containing approximately 1/6 of the total certified organic farmers in the U.S.): Northeast, South, Midwest, North Central, West, and California. There are two farmer members and one organizational representative elected from each region on OFA’s policy committee and on our governing council.

Once the policy committee was elected and our members voted on policy positions, we started speaking out. Organic Farmers Association leaders testified at the fall 2017 National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting on behalf of our farmer members’ position in opposition to certifying hydroponic operations as “organic.”

We testified at a House Agriculture Committee Farm Bill Listening Session at FarmFest in rural Minnesota, where we focused on the importance of maintaining the organic certification cost share program, expanding organic research, and the need for USDA to take action to stop import fraud.

We submitted official comments on the USDA’s proposed withdrawal of the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) Final Rule, letting the USDA know that our members unanimously support full implementation of the OLPP to make organic animal welfare requirements more consistent and enforceable.

We have hired a director (Kate Mendenhall, Iowa), policy director (Mark Rokola, based in Washington D.C.), and membership and outreach coordinator (Ali Lynn, based at Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania).

In 2017, Rodale Institute published two issues of New Farm Magazine, the publication of Organic Farmers Association, and distributed them to more than 30,000 certified organic operations and other key stakeholders.

As our sponsor, Rodale Institute created a website for OFA (OrganicFarmersAssociation.org), created a monthly e-newsletter, New Farm News, and set up a membership database to support OFA communications and membership recruitment. We also held a successful fundraiser in partnership with the retail chain, Natural Grocers, which raised $40,000 for OFA.

We have established working relationships with key House and Senate leaders from both parties, and have had a number of face-to-face meetings on various Farm Bill issues. We have also worked with USDA officials on issues such as pasture rule enforcement, import fraud, and hydroponics, letting them know our members’ positions on these issues, and suggesting ways for them to improve enforcement procedures.

In early February 2018, we wrote a lengthy letter to USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, after the National Organic Program announced that hydroponic operations could be certified organic, without explaining why or how. After laying out legal objections, based in the languages of the Organic Foods Production Act and the NOP Final Rule, we asked Sec. Perdue to retract the NOP’s statement and bring the program, and all accredited certification agencies, into compliance with the law. Among other things, we pointed out that OFPA mentions “soil” seven times and the Final Rule mentions “soil” 50 times, and neither mention “hydroponics” or “soilless production systems” at all.

Organic Farmers Association had a booth at the 2018 MOSES Conference, which was a great experience, with excellent networking and exposure. At our booth, we conducted a ballot on the question, “Should hydroponics be certified organic?” MOSES Conference voters said “No” with the following results: 65% “no,” 24% “yes,” and 11% “undecided.”

In April 2018, OFA’s policy committee and newly elected governing council will meet in Washington D.C. for our first annual meeting. In addition to “taking care of business,” (bylaws, policies, officers, etc.) we will spend a day on Capitol Hill, presenting OFA members’ policy positions.

We will focus primarily on our members’ three top priorities: protect organic integrity (which includes import fraud, pasture rule enforcement and hydroponics), continue the Organic Certification Cost Share Program, and expand organic research.

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The vast majority of corn planted in the United States is genetically modified. Additionally, corn is a precocious crop, shedding viable pollen that can travel for miles to cross-contaminate organic fields separated by buffers, windbreaks, and other physical barriers.

What is an organic producer to do?

Fortunately, there are things within your control to minimize the potential of GMO contamination to your organic corn and harvest as pure a crop as possible. Always start with seed from a reputable source that clearly tests and labels seed for GMO contamination. If GMO testing isn’t clearly noted from your seed company, ask them for test information. While purchasing purity-guaranteed seed is not the only way to limit contamination of your harvested grain, it is a wise insurance policy.

There are, additionally, corn hybrids that limit pollination from foreign pollen through traditional breeding techniques. These may also be an option, depending on your region.

Second, vary the timing of your corn’s maturity to avoid cross-pollination from surrounding farms. Organic corn is often planted later than conventional to take advantage of warmer soil conditions and optimum growing degree days. Planting slightly earlier hybrids for your region will stagger your crop’s pollination time from neighboring fields, limiting the potential of cross-contamination. Choosing fields with the most physical isolation is also a good option to maintain optimum purity.

If your corn fields are in close proximity to a promiscuous crop, shedding viable pollen that is genetically modified, it may be wise to harvest and store the outside 16-24 rows separately even if you have appropriate buffers in place. This could potentially prevent high concentrations of cross-contaminated corn.

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Third, ensure the cleanliness of all planting, harvest, and storage equipment, especially if you’re running a split operation, sharing equipment with small grains or another medium can also travel for miles to cross-contaminate organic corn only in cleaned-out bins. Pay special attention to nooks and crannies like false floors, slots, slides, and doors. Careful recordkeeping of all of these processes like clean truck affidavits, field logs, etc. can help should problems arise at the time of delivery.

Finally, when it comes time to market your crop, if possible send in a representative sample first before sending a whole load. Bringing back or rerouting a contaminated load is expensive. If you do have corn that is contaminated, it may be an option to direct market it to a livestock farmer or livestock feed buyer, which often have lower standards than food-grade markets.
On-farm trials help growers find varieties best suited to farm’s unique setting

By Organic Seed Alliance

Farming can be a risky endeavor. This is especially true for organic growers who have fewer “quick fix” agrochemical tools than their conventional counterparts to mitigate crop stresses. One way to manage risk in an organic farm system is to use crop genetics well-suited to one’s environment, production system, and markets. A grower’s seed source and variety choice are just as critical to farm management as selecting the right implements to work the field or irrigate a crop.

On-farm variety trials are an important tool for identifying varieties that thrive in a grower’s unique circumstance. That’s why Organic Seed Alliance—in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Oregon State University, MOSES, and USDA’s Risk Management Agency—has released an updated guide that walks growers through the steps for designing, planting, and evaluating a successful on-farm trial. (See box for details.)

Reasons to Conduct Variety Trials

There are a number of reasons organic growers should consider variety trials on their farm.

Variety trials can help organic growers:

1. Optimize organic systems

Organic producers have fewer allowable inputs for mitigating crop stresses than their conventional counterparts and instead rely on agroecological practices. Crop genetics well-suited to organic production systems are therefore even more crucial for success. A growing body of research suggests that varieties that perform best on organic farms may not be the same as on conventional farms, and that organic farmers may benefit from using varieties bred specifically for organic systems.

Variety trials are particularly useful for farmers transitioning to organic production, seeking varieties for low-input operations, or looking to replace conventional varieties or seed sources.

2. Fill market niches or seasonal needs

Identifying novel, interesting crops—or varieties of a crop you already produce—can be a way to differentiate yourself in the marketplace and attract new customers. Farmers market customers, chefs, and specialty distributors are intrigued by unusual or exceptional varieties, varieties with a story, superior flavor, unique colors, and varieties available early or late in the season.

Conducting an on-farm trial prior to expanding production of new, unknown varieties prevents the difficult lesson of losing a crop. Many colored carrots, for example, evolved in climates with milder winters than farmers encounter in most of the U.S. Therefore, some varieties may bolt readily if planted too soon under cool spring conditions. Likewise, a head lettuce that performs exceptionally well under cooler conditions by helping you find varieties well-suited to your growing conditions and seasonal needs.

3. Meet organic certification requirements

In order to maintain organic certification, growers must be in compliance with the National Organic Program’s organic seed rule, which requires producers to use organically grown seeds, seedlings, and planting stock when commercially available.

As the diversity, quality, and quantity of commercially available organic seed increases, some organic certifiers are increasing scrutiny of non-organic seed use on certified organic farms. Variety trials can help ensure compliance by identifying organic varieties that are equivalent in quality, productivity, and purpose to conventional varieties in a grower’s system. Even a variety trial indicating no suitable organic alternative to a non-organic variety indicates a market gap and demonstrates that the farmer is acting in good faith to comply with certification requirements.

Besides fulfilling a regulatory requirement, trialing and using organic seed also supports investments in organic seed systems.

4. Address climatic challenges

Individual plants and crop varieties vary in their response to environmental stresses. On-farm trials can highlight varieties able to withstand stresses on your farm. Sometimes these stresses are regional in nature. A cherished tomato variety, for example, may be tolerant to the disease Septoria in the Mid-Atlantic (where the seed is marketed) but susceptible to the pathogen races or the timing of infection commonly experienced in the Upper Midwest.

Unpredictable weather patterns due to global climate change may present growers with new environmental challenges, rendering old varieties less reliable than they once were. Conducting variety trials as part of your annual farm plan can help your operation adapt to more extreme conditions by helping you find varieties well-suited to the changing climate of your particular area.

One Farmer’s Success

Here in the Midwest, many organic farmers rely on seed companies based on the coasts, especially for vegetables and herbs. These companies...
Organic Farmers — from page 1

the movement’s pioneers, environmental stewardship is about stepping forward with innovations tested and evaluated on the farm.

On-Farm Research

Ron and Maria began doing on-farm trials in 1985, as founding members of Practical Farmers of Iowa. They have conducted more than 40 trials over three decades. Projects examined ridge tillage, cover cropping, swine feeding, organic fiber production, manure rates, and more. Ron has also collaborated with University of Iowa scientists doing on-farm experiments.

By doing on-farm research “you have the numbers, real evidence for farmers to look at,” Ron explained.

He recalled a poll the Rodale Institute conducted years ago. It asked farmers to identify the type of research they would trust. Most farmers responded that they would trust on-farm research because it’s realistic and practical, Ron said.

He encourages others to conduct research because crop, produce, and livestock production is very site-specific. “How else can you understand what really works on your own farm?” You need evidence to show that your approach works, he added. For example, he found through on-farm research that ridge tillage works better than conventional tillage for weed control.

Today, Ron and Maria, and their sons, Daniel and David, grow their crops in 5-, 6-, and 7-year rotations using ridge tillage within rows of cover crops whenever suitable. They have appointed trees on terraced fields to promote soil health and enhance wildlife habitat. They also employ cover crops, grass waterways, and buffer strip to improve soil and water quality.

“Livestock is also integral to economic and soil improvement on the farm. They feed cover crops, as well as crops that can’t be sold to the market, to the cattle and swine, thereby capturing crop value and returning nutrients via manure to the fields.”

“Livestock is central to the circle of sustainability by providing ecological efficiencies,” Ron explained. “It closes the loop, and allows for more diversity in crop rotations.”

“Another strategy we use is grazing cattle within the crop rotations. They move the cattle according to plant growth stages and recovery periods. They manage hogs in a deep-bedding system that provides access to the outdoors.”

Family Involvement

Daniel returned to the farm in 2007. His brother, David, followed suit seven years later. A third sibling, Mark, works for the USDA Foreign Service. The brothers and Daniel’s wife, Ellen, continue to pursue continual improvement, farmer-to-farmer outreach, and the expansion of farm enterprises.

ORGANIC FARMERS OF THE YEAR

The Rosmanns

Rosmann Family Farms, Harlan, Iowa

FARM PROFILE:

700 Acres, Certified Organic since 1994

CROPS:

- corn
- pasture
- oats
- grain sorghum
- hay
- soybeans
- farrow-to-finish hogs
- chickens
- egg

LIVESTOCK:

- cow-calf

“We need to find new ways to conserve and renew people and rural communities, local economies, neighborhoods, and interdependence with one another.”

—Ron Rosmann

From a family “always involved in local politics,” Ron, Maria, and now their sons, have served many organizations in their efforts to share data and insights, promote social justice, and to advance organic agriculture on the national and state levels. In addition to being a founding member of Practical Farmers of Iowa, Ron was involved in early days of the Center for Rural Affairs and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. He served as board president for the Organic Farming Research Foundation. He has lobbied for organic research support at U.S. Senate and House committees, and has testified before the Iowa legislature.

Maria has served on many church committees, and since 2008 has served on the Iowa State Farm Service Agency Committee. She, Ron, David, Ellen, and Mark have also served as advocates in the Pew Charitable Trusts’ campaign to Congress against antibiotic overuse in U.S. livestock production.

Over the years, Ron, Maria, and their sons have made hundreds of presentations to groups large and small in an effort to share what they’ve learned, describe the challenges, and to build support for organic agriculture. They trace their advocacy work back to 1983, when Ron and Maria decided to stop using pesticides. This helped set in motion the start of Practical Farmers of Iowa. David is now a second-generation PFI board member.

Ron, Maria, and their sons are frequently approached to participate in committees and task forces, advisory groups, and boards, as well as to speak at gatherings large and small. “I believe it’s because we believe, and live, our responsibility to be stewards of the land and livestock,” Maria said.

“When you start with one effort, other doors open.”

Ron and Maria have hosted more than 35 fields days on their farm, events highlighting on-farm research results, livestock management and genetics, marketing strategies, and farm policy issues. The family hosts a major farm tour and dozens of small group tours on their farm every year. Visitors have come from across the country, as well as from Japan, China, Lithuania, Argentina, Brazil and North Korea.

The family devotes time to public policy and civic work “because we offer something better through organic agriculture,” Ron said. That “better” arises from a holistic approach that encompasses sustainable production, creative marketing, improved quality of life, and revitalized community.

Innovative Marketing

Rosmann Family Farms is a marketing trailblazer. It gained momentum by being one of the first provide certified organic beef in their market area. They private labeled their pork and beef 21 years ago, direct marketing to individuals and distributing to retail stores in distant cities. Demand and herd growth eventually called for a different distribution approach—and an opportunity to change local attitudes about certified organic, Ron said.

In 2012, armed with a degree in journalism, as well as newsroom and public relations experience, Maria opened “Farm Sweet Farm,” the family’s on-farm retail store. Located four miles outside the city of Harlan, the farm store has become “a destination spot” for high quality food and non-food products, Maria said.

In addition to selling their own certified organic beef, pork, eggs and popcorn, Maria sources Iowa wines, local honey, fair trade coffee, salsa, barbecue sauces, and various crafts. “We’ve carried over 1,500 different items at the store,” Maria said. The largest percentage has come from their local area, Shelby County.

It must be in the blood. Maria’s grandmother operated a small grocery store, which was squeezed out by the emergence of big box stores several decades ago. Maria is encouraged by the growing acceptance of organic foods.

Mark, who is based in Washington D.C., sources fair trade coffee from several countries for Farm Sweet Farm. Having served in the Peace Corps in Honduras, he shared his passion for international development with his parents. His son’s experience in Honduras led Ron to travel there later to assist in community development projects.

In addition to managing a flock of 200 laying hens, Daniel and Ellen launched their own and co-manage Milk and Honey restaurant, and they own and operate Farm Table Procurement and Delivery.

Both businesses are in Harlan.

“There’s a great need to feed our own communities,” Daniel explained. Milk and Honey specializes in serving local foods, including meats, eggs, and popcorn from the family farm. This expands awareness of the farm, its foods and production methods.

Farm Table Procurement and Delivery buys local produce, meat, milk and other products and sells them to urban restaurants and buyers from Omaha to central Iowa. “Re-establishing local distribution is a huge challenge, but may be the biggest opportunity,” Ron added.

Future Vision

Ron and Maria feel fortunate their children returned to the farm. “They have helped Ron and me continue to pursue our goals,” Maria noted. Their children truly value the diversity on the farm, she added.

Looking forward, “I’m encouraged by all the young people who want to farm, and who are challenging the values and norms of large-scale agriculture,” Ron said. David pointed to the number of economic and environmental incentives available to farmers who start small and keep their capital investments modest.

To these beginning farmers, they offer encouragement and some advice. “Have an open mind. Be willing to try new things—but don’t make changes all at once. Learn from your mistakes and never give up,” Ron said. “If you start to view the farm as a whole farm system, you’re on the right track.”

Sylvia Bungo Toftness and her husband raise 100% grass-fed beef on Bull Brook Keep near Clear Lake, Wis. She is on the board of MOSES, and hosts Deep Roots Radio (www.bronxtobarn.com/deep-roots-radio).
Livestock offer many benefits to cash crop operations

By Kelli Boylen

Integrating livestock into a cropping system improves soil health, reduces risk for a farm, and creates opportunity for efficiencies. It’s a winning strategy embraced by the two most recent MOSES Organic Farmers of the Year.

“When you have livestock, you have options,” explained Dave Bishop of PrairiErth Farm in central Illinois. Dave and his son, Hans, and daughter-in-law, Katie, were the 2017 Organic Farmers of the Year. Their 480-acre farm produces corn, soybeans, small grains, vegetables, fruit, beef, pork, eggs, and honey. The farm has been in operation since 1979.

“It was during the drought of 1988 that Bishop fully realized the value of having livestock as part of the operation. He started raising livestock for the additional income and increased fertility in the soil, but noticed the biggest impact in years when moisture was lacking.

“In another drought year, 2012, corn in some of our sandy-bottom fields failed to even form an ear. Because we had livestock, we were able to use that failed grain crop as a forage crop, so it wasn’t a loss,” Bishop explained. “The cattle give us a way to stabilize our business. They help protect us from the shocks of weather in the markets.”

The Bishop farm raise livestock on their row crop acres as part of an extended crop rotation as a means of building organic matter in the soil, providing balanced fertility for their crops, and increasing the income-producing capability of each acre.

Integrating livestock with crops not only increases income potential, it’s also a great way to keep production costs down.

“Animals harvesting their own feed and spreading their own manure can reduce the cost of retaining those animals by $0.70 - 1.60/acre,” Bishop said. “Eighty-five to 90 percent of soil function is mediated by soil microbial activity. We need healthy and active soil microbial populations to move our farm soils toward the full array of agronomic, economic, and environmental services they could provide. It is far more difficult to accomplish this without livestock.”

After 35 years of organic farming, soil quality is exceptional on Rossmann Family Farms near Harlan, Iowa. The Rosmanns were just named the 2018 Organic Farmers of the Year at the recent MOSES Conference. (See their story on page 11.) In addition to cattle and hogs, their crops include corn, soy, oats, popcorn, hay, pasture, cover crops, and succotash which is a mixture of oats, wheat, barley and field peas.

Cattle have an important role in contributing to the overall soil quality and fertility on their farm, which has been certified organic since 1994. “I always knew the importance of having ruminant livestock on the farm, especially cattle,” said Ron Rosmann. The farm relies on composted animal manure and legumes for soil quality and fertility. “This past year, we averaged 180 bushels corn/acre on 180 acres. This is with no added nutrients of any kind other than the crop rotation and composted hog and cattle manure. Our soybeans typically average 55-65 bushels/acre. This past year, we hit 140 bushels/acre on our oats with a 41-pound test weight.”

About every 10 years, the Rosmanns rotate their pastures into crop production for a few years. “We have done this with certain pastures to get better control of thatch species,” Rossmann said. They say they do not have any “rough ground” on the farm that would lend itself to permanent pasture, he added.

“We have diverse grasses, legumes, and other plants. Some are endophyte-free tall fescue, orchard grass, brome grass, rye grass, blue grass, creeping alfalfa, red clover, white clover, birdsfoot trefoil, and chicory,” he said. They have 100 Red Angus beef cows on about 125 acres of pasture.

“We have four groups of cattle in five sets of pasture,” Rossmann explained. “As the spring herd is the biggest with 60 cow-calf pairs, we split them into two sets of pastures so that we do not have more than 30 pair in any given set. We are also adding 17 more acres of pasture this year because of our increased numbers of cows, and thus also beef for finishing.”

The Rosmanns maintain around 20 paddocks of six acres each, rotating cattle every three to five days depending on the time of the year, numbers in the paddock, and other factors. But, they do not move fence.

“We have a lot of other work during the grazing season that includes crop production, hog production, egg-layers, etc., so try to make it as easy and streamlined as we can,” Rossmann said.

Bishops currently run about 50 head of Belted Galloways, rotating between permanent pasture areas, then grazing cover crops after wheat harvest, July through September. They then move to corn stubble, which also has also been seeded with a cover crop.

Bishop grew up on a diversified dairy farm during a time when most farms were quite diversified. “I was already familiar with grazing cattle,” he said. “Modern innovations, such as easily moveable electric fencing, have made the process much easier.”

Even though he recalls growing up when live stock were naturally part of the farm, he doesn’t see this approach as a step backwards. “Organic agriculture isn’t about going backwards in some way, or rejecting technology,” he explained. “It’s about honoring the wisdom of those who came before us, and selecting those modern technologies that help

In September, Dave Bishop’s Belted Galloways graze red clover that was frost seeded into wheat in late winter, ready to be grazed as soon as the wheat was cut in July.

Photo by Audrey Alwell

To learn more about MOSES Organic Farmers of the Year, visit mosesorganic.org.

To read the whole story, copy the following link and paste it into your browser: mosesorganic.org/page/14

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Spring Cover Crops — from page 1

for your farm, it is important to establish what your overall goals are first. Are you looking to cover your soil? Build up organic matter? Fix nitrogen for the following crop? Provide early season forage for livestock? Provide a place to spread manure? All of these goals can be met by utilizing various cover crops seeded alone or in multi-species blends.

Grasses such as oats, spring wheat, spring barley, spring triticale, and annual ryegrass provide quick growth, thorough fibrous rooting, nutrient scavenging/sequestering, and make excellent livestock forage. Grasses have very economical seed costs and are easily planted by many different methods, including broadcasting. As they mature they have a higher carbon/nitrogen ratio which can help stabilize leachable nutrients in the soil. Grasses should typically be a part of any cover crop blend.

Spring annual legumes like forage peas, lentils, fava beans, chickling vetch, and lupins allow for early season nitrogen-fixation for following cash crops and provide deeper rooting and quicker breakdown after incorporation. Perennial legumes like red clover, yellow blossom sweet clover, alsike clover, and alfalfa provide more complete soil coverage after establishment and excellent nitrogen-fixation potential with adequate growth time. Legumes have a lower carbon/nitrogen ratio and are a good component in a mix, but seed costs are typically higher than grasses and brassicas. Always inoculate your legumes with the proper strain of rhizobium for maximum nitrogen-fixation potential. A word of caution is: it is unlikely that any spring-planted legume will fix enough nitrogen to satisfy fertility demands for the following crop in a month or two—keep your normal fertility plan in place.

Most brassicas are not a great fit for spring planting as early season growing conditions encourage the plants to bolt and set seed as their ideal growing environment. The exception to this is spring-seeded mustard. Mustards establish very quickly, cover the soil, and are excellent competitors with weeds. They are typically higher than grasses and brassicas. All brassicas are established the previous fall. If you have spring grains with peas are an excellent early season forage option. About the only cover crop not recommended for spring forage is mustard.

Broadcast seeders with an agitator can be advantageous for mixes with a range of seed sizes to prevent mixes from separating in seeding passes across a field. Try to get your spring mix seeded as early as weather and soil conditions allow. Choose cover crop species that have some degree of tolerance for cold or frost since early spring weather conditions can be unpredictable.

While there is no limit to how many species are viable in a mix, mixing 3-5 species tends to work well and is manageable from a cost and seeding perspective. When appropriate, try to incorporate species from each of the cover crop groups in your mix. For example, if you’re looking for a cover crop to plant in the spring prior to full-season tomatoes or corn, consider a mixture of oats, peas, barley, and lentils.

Optimum Seeding Practices

Spring-planted small grains, peas, lentils, and chickling vetch are all a feasible fit before row crops planted in May/June. Oats alone or oats and peas are probably the most typically planted in the Upper Midwest due to their cost-effectiveness, forgiving growth, and frost tolerance. This green material has a relatively low carbon-to-nitrogen ratio than mature residue, and activates soil bacteria when tilled in and rapidly decomposes. Incorporate the cover crops 10 days to 2 weeks prior to planting cash crops to allow for adequate soil digestion of the biomass, limit nutrient tie-up, and prevent any carryover pest issues. Shallow tillage or disturbance is preferred as opposed to any deep tillage passes.

Avoid rotting a legume cash crop in after a legume cover crop to minimize disease transference. A very common and successful way to incorporate cover crops into a rotation is to underseed spring grains (oats, wheat, barley, triticale) with clovers or alfalfa for blowdown. Small-seeded legumes like medium red clover, alsike clover, yellow blossom sweet clover, or alfalfa can be seeded at the same time as spring grains, don’t compete with the crop, and will be well established to continue growing after the grains are harvested.

Since rains after small grain harvest can be inconsistent, spring-seeded legumes are an easy way to ensure some soil remains covered all season long. The legumes provide good growth and nitrogen-fixation potential for the next crop in rotation. You can allow the legume cover crop to grow until well into the fall or even into the following spring before termination, depending on your soil type and rotational needs.

Swathing small grains and drying in a windrow will dry down any taller clover/alfalfa biomass that has smothered. Avoid cutting the clover off for forage and if you do mow it, leave the residue in the field.

Small-seeded legumes like medium red clover, yellow blossom sweet clover, and alsike clover can be frost seeded into standing winter small grains like winter wheat, winter triticale, or winter barley early in the spring when the ground is still frozen but free of snow (typically late February-early March). This system works in much the same way as underseeding spring grains with a small-seeded or blowdown legume except that the winter grains are established the previous fall. If you have winter grains in your rotation, this is an excellent way to maintain soil coverage nearly the entire growing season.

Since clovers are small, they can be broadcasted with ease even using small equipment like an ATV with a spreader.

Grazing Cover Crops

Incorporating animals into your farming operation is one of the easiest ways to make cover crops pay. With very few exceptions, nearly all cover crops can be grazed or harvested for forage. Spring grains will provide good tonnage for grazing or chopping and have good feed quality if harvested before heading. The optimal time to harvest to maximize quality and quantity would be boot stage.

Legumes like peas and lentils add marginal tonnage but have excellent forage quality and are a great addition to a forage mix. Again, spring grains with peas are an excellent early season forage option. About the only cover crop not recommended for spring forage is mustard.

Spring cover crops for forage provide a place to hold your animals, spread manure, and stretch your pastures.

Cover crops play a vital role in an organic crop rotation and there are ways to make them work for you. So if weather allows this spring, consider putting in a spring cover crop.

Matt Leavitt is an organic specialist with MOSES. He has a master’s degree in agronomy, and worked eight years with Albert Lea Seed helping farmers select seed suited to their operations.

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Organic Broadcaster
Vegetable growers get ready to meet new food safety rule

By Bailey Webster

If you’re a veggie farmer, you know it’s coming. Whether you’re the proactive type or the bury-your-head-in-the-sand type, the new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule is likely to affect you in the near future. The good news is, it’s not going to be that scary. And there are lots of farmers working hard to translate the regulation into workable strategies that will make their farms more efficient and profitable.

When it comes to the FSMA Produce Safety Rule, farms fall into three categories: not covered, covered, and qualified exempt. Here’s a quick-and-dirty rundown on what each one means:

Not Covered
Farms not covered by the Rule have no legal obligation to do anything for FSMA.

Covered
Farms that are covered by the rule must have one person on staff who has successfully completed a Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Grower Training Course or equivalent training. Growers who have completed the seven-hour PSA Grower Training Course are eligible to receive a certificate from the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO). This certificate does not expire, and belongs to the individual, not the farm. If that employee should leave the farm, another person from the farm would have to attend the training and receive a certificate.

Qualified exempt
Farms that are qualified exempt must keep sales records documenting that they do not reach the minimum sales requirement for covered produce. Qualified exempt farms must also notify consumers of the complete business address of the farm where the produce is grown, harvested, packed, and held.

To figure out which category your farm falls into, check this handy flowchart: mosesorganic.org/food-safety/#FSMA-coverage.

PrairiErth Farm
Hans and Katie Bishop know an opportunity when they see one. As a result, they’re taking uncertainty about the new FSMA Produce Safety Rule in stride. Vegetables farmers in Atlanta, Ill., they see the new Rule as a chance to make their farm more efficient and more profitable.

The Bishop farm alongside Hans’ father, Dave Bishop, as part of PrairiErth Farms. Dave raises livestock and row crops, while Katie and Hans grow vegetables for a CSA and farmers market.

The two operations are legally separate entities, and their operations are in separate areas physically. Hans and Katie should be able to be qualified exempt under the Produce Safety Rule, as long as they can show that Dave’s business is separate and doesn’t impact their production, harvest, or handling methods in any way. Dave’s income would put them over the $500,000 threshold for qualified exemption.

Since they aren’t sure if they will be able to be qualified exempt, they’re taking a proactive approach to the Rule. “We’d rather be prepared than be surprised by an inspection in the middle of July,” Katie said. “Even if we don’t think we’re going to have to do it, chances are we will down the road,” as their business continues to grow.

The Bishops are in the process of putting up a large building, part of which will be their new pack shed. It’s the perfect opportunity for them to take a look at their current food safety practices and implement new systems to bring them into compliance with the Rule.

“It feels like this is going to help us put systems in place to make everything on the farm work better,” Katie said. “We won’t have to do it this year, but we want to get a head start now, when we don’t have the pressure of having to be compliant.”

They’re not too worried about compliance because they’ve talked to other farmers who have been to the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Grower Training Course, who say it’s not as bad as it seems. “Steve Pincus (of Tipi Produce) walked into a class really worried about the things that they would have to change on their farm. He walked away saying, ‘Oh wow, this is totally doable! Maybe a change here and there, but we’re already ahead of the game,” Katie said.

The Bishops also see themselves as leaders in the organic farming community in their area, and they want to jump in without fear so they can be good role models for other farmers. They hope to bring others to the pack shed to show them what they are doing, and lead the way.

Katie admitted that their farm is lacking in certain areas in terms of recordkeeping. “We haven’t been super motivated to do it. It’s not an income-producing activity, so it gets pushed to the back. FSMA will provide the framework and structure for making positive changes on the farm.”

Open Hands Farm
Ben Doherty and Erin Johnson own Open Hands Farm in Northfield, Minn., where they market vegetables through a CSA and wholesale accounts. They’ve been focused on food safety for a long time, and passed their first GAP audit for their wholesale root crops in the summer of 2017.

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) are voluntary audits that verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored as safely as possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards. GAP audits are administered by the USDA. Many produce customers, such as wholesale suppliers and restaurants, require the farms that they purchase from to have GAP audits.

Ben and Erin started their farm in 2006, the year of the E. coli outbreak in spinach. They had lots of customers asking if their produce was safe to eat, so they understood the importance of food safety right off the bat.

“We like to tell people we’ve done everything we can proactively,” Ben said. They took a GAP workshop early on. “GAP makes sense from a ‘keeping people healthy’ standpoint. It fits right in with the goal of helping people to be healthier.”

Because of their commitment to food safety and their GAP certification, Ben and Erin aren’t too worried about being in compliance with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. Many of the requirements are transferrable, and they have a great system of recordkeeping to show that they actively practice good food safety.

The Open Hands Farm crew use a Gmail account, Google Sheets and Google Docs to track all of their food safety activities. They log these activities in an electronic tablet in the pack shed. Ben joked that he’s lucky to have employees who are more computer savvy than he is to come up with their recordkeeping system. The farm

To FSMA Plans on page 14

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ORGANIC BROADCASTER
MOSES Conference gave farmers, ag professionals chance to recharge

By Audrey Alwell

“Fantastic, excellent, eye-opening, awesome, second-to-none” are the adjectives people are using to describe the 29th Annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference that took place last month in La Crosse, Wis. Nearly 3,100 people shared in the three-day event, making connections, getting ideas to put into practice on their farms, and recharging their batteries for the work ahead.

“MOSES is not only a way for me to gather information for making farm decisions, it’s also a critical time every year for me to check-in with the trends, controversies, successes and direction of organic in the Midwest, the country, and the world,” said Jordan Scheibel of Grinnell, Iowa.

“I learned a great deal of information,” said Charreise Norris of Minnetonka, Minn. “I had questions answered that have been sitting with me for months.”

“I found the social aspect of the conference extremely valuable, too,” said Katie Adams of Ferguson, Mo. “Every (crazy delicious) meal I ate was shared with different people from across the Midwest. I learned so much from these moments eating, sharing, and laughing.”

“Halfway through the first workshop of the conference I attended I was already emailing my bosses, explaining how ready I was to start growing and start the new season,” said John Williams, Urbana, Ill. “What an amazing place to recharge, kick start the new season and make amazing contacts.”

The conference kicked off with an award ceremony for the 2018 MOSES Organic Farmers of the Year: the Rosmann family of Harlan, Iowa. (Read their farm story on page 1 of this issue of Organic Farming.

The nomination period for the 2019 farmer of the year award is open now. See mosesorganic.net/organic-farmer-of-the-year.

“The conference featured three keynotes. John Mesko, executive director of MOSES, encouraged the audience by charting a bright future for organic and sustainable farming, noting the widening use of cover crops and focus on soil health—both with roots in organic production. Melinda Hemmelgarn, Food Sleuth Radio host, cautioned people to pay attention to underlying messages in ads from chemical ag companies, and presented easy steps to push back against those messages. Chris Blanchard shared advice from his Farmer to Farmer Podcast guests as well as his own life to help people prioritize what they value in their farm lives.

Rop. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) made a guest appearance on stage to share her own farm story and talk about the work she has been doing in Congress to support organic and sustainable farming. Her brief talk, the Rosmanns’ farm story, and all three keynotes are online at youtube.com/MOSESorganic.

Workshops took center stage at the conference, with 66 offered in two days. The Farm Bill, organic integrity, and equity and social justice in the food system were hot topics—growing industrial hemp drew a crowd as well. Audio recordings of conference workshops are available online at mosesorganic.net (the online MOSES store). The

MOSES Equity Statement —From Executive Director John Mesko

At the MOSES Organic Farming Conference last month, we heard from LaDonna Redmond about diversity, inclusion, and equity in her workshop “Equity & Justice in the Food System.” Redmond started her workshop with a call to MOSES to make a commitment to equity in our organization and programming.

For as long as I’m aware, MOSES has made a genuine effort to be open and welcoming to all types of farmers from diverse backgrounds, and there are many evidences of this effort. However, we realize there is a gap between intention and impact, and we want to bridge that gap. The issues of equity and inclusion in agriculture extend far beyond MOSES, and given our leadership role in agriculture, how we embrace the challenge of addressing these issues not only impacts our organization, but also the broader farming community.

This is uncharted water for us. As an organization, we acknowledge our monoculture, and seek to learn and grow. We know we can do better.

We don’t have all the answers, but as part of our strategic plan, we will be developing intercultural competence at MOSES through specific trainings and by reaching out to the diverse members of our community. The complete pathway and timetable are still coming together, but I can assure our community of one thing: as we move forward, it will be with thoughtfulness, transparency, and sincerity. We are committed to creating lasting change that will benefit our community, and all of agriculture.

We invite you on this journey with us. If you have suggestions, comments, or ideas about ways MOSES can become a more equitable organization, please share them with us. Send your comments via email to: equity@mosesorganic.org.

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Top left: Rep. Chellie Pingree declares it’s her job to push back against “bad ideas and protect good ones,” like funding to ensure organic integrity.
Top middle: Jeff Hake surprises his girlfriend, Katie Funk, by proposing to her during a workshop presentation. Luckily, she said “yes!”
Top right: Farmers connect with each other at the MOSES Conference.
Middle: New fathers proudly show off their babies.
Lower left: Farmers listen to translators to fully comprehend a workshop in their native language. MOSES provided Hmong and Spanish translation.
Bottom right: Podcaster Chris Blanchard shares advice from fellow farmers on striking a balance between farming and family life.

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Inside Organics — from page 3

During the annual meeting, the policy commit-tee will refine and propose policies, which will be sent out to all our members for comment. After reviewing and considering comments, and making final recommendations, the proposed policies will be sent to all OFA farmer members for a final vote. This procedure will be repeated annually.

In order to maximize our effectiveness, we coordinate our national policy work with other organic, sustainable, environmental, and farm organizations, working hand-in-hand on issues where we have compatible positions. We also communicate with OFA members to complement our work in D.C., with action alerts and talking points, helping them communicate with lawmakers from their districts.

In 2018, we intend to conduct a needs assess-ment of our member organizations to focus our capacity-building and networking efforts on the top priorities for our organizational members. We plan to establish OFA listservs to facilitate national and regional dialogue on organic issues, production practices, and technical assistance, as well as organizational capacity-building support for our member organizations.

We will continue to annually survey all U.S. certified organic producers and Organic Farmers Association members on policy issues to help inform OFA’s leaders on policy priorities, issues and ideas in order to add to and strengthen our official policy positions. All of OFA’s policy posi-tions, bylaws, guiding principles, action alerts, leader bias, and membership information are on our website.

We plan to double membership of individual members and increase the number of organiza-tional members by 40% in 2018 through a compre-hensive membership drive.

Which brings me to a question: Have you joined OFA? If not, you should! Be a part of the movement, promote organic agriculture, and engage in OFAs decision-making process! Visit OrganicFarmersAssociation.org and join today!

Jim Riddle, Blue Fruit Farm in Minnesota, heads the steering committee of the Organic Farmers Association.

Seed Trialing — from page 5

often take care to conduct trials in our region, but their focus is naturally more on their own regions. Relatively little organic plant breeding and trial-ing work is conducted in the Midwest, placing more of the onus on farmers to do their own tri-als and find varieties that perform well in their unique circumstances.

Take Kat Becker, who runs Cattail Organics in Athens, Wis. Becker’s farm produces wholesale vegetables and also sells through a CSA. She integrates variety trials into her long-term farm plan to ensure that she is always discovering the best varieties for her farm and markets, and to indulge her curiosity about the diversity available within common crops.

Becker provides the following tips for farmers who are planning a variety trial for the first time:

1) Talk to your seed company representatives.
   You’ll be impressed by how willing they are to suggest trial varieties from other companies, or pre-release varieties, when appropriate.

2) Don’t do a variety trial on a crop you’ve never grown before.
   Learning how to manage a new crop is a project in itself. Give yourself the benefit of growing only a well-known, reliable variety or two in your first season of trying a new crop. Look at the variety trials for subse-quent years, when you have a better understand-ing of how the crop generally performs in your system.

3) Conduct multi-window trials for crops that are planted in succession or heavily influenced by seasonal changes.
   This can help highlight varieties that work well in certain times of the season, but not in others. If you only trial let-tuce in the spring, for example, you may miss observing an important disease resistance or susceptibility that is not apparent until July.

4) Trial goals can be very simple.
   One of Becker’s most successful trials had the simple goal of finding a tomato that tasted as good and was as productive as Sungold. “I discovered ‘Yellow Mini’ and never looked back,” she said.

5) Trial things for fun…within reason.
   “My kids and I have made some wonderful discoveries trialing weird varieties we weren’t sure would be commercially viable, like various ‘Bull’s Horn’ peppers and ‘Papa Cacho’ potatoes,” she said. But focusing too much time and energy on experimenting with novel varieties can distract from more immediate trial priorities.

New Tools and Resources

Variety trials can be easily incorporated into an annual farm plan. They can be as complex and scientific as you like, or as simple as strategi-cally placing plots of two or three new varieties and writing down observations over the course of the season. The Grower’s Guide to Conducting On-farm Variety Trials includes how-to instruc-tion for conducting variety trials of any crop, and also provides trial design examples, resources for seed sourcing, and sample worksheets for trial planning and data collection.

Readers will find that the guide presents scientific principles in an accessible way. This tool is useful for farmers, but also research, Extension, and nonprofit programs looking to train farmers as co-researchers—variety trials need not be a solo endeavor. Partnering with universities, developing a trial collective in your area that shares results, or engaging CSA mem-bers, local chefs or other community members in evaluating your trials—for example, hosting a variety tasting to collect feedback that compares taste and texture and other characteristics—can magnify their impact.

In addition to this guide, OSA has developed an online resource called the Variety Trial Tool to make it easier for farmers and researchers to conduct trials. Following the steps on the webpage will allow you to design a trial to fit your needs, create data sheets and maps based on your design, visualize your trial results online or through a downloadable report, share your results with others, and see the results of other people’s trials.

The tool is still under development so questions and feedback are appreciated and can be directed to jared@seedalliance.org. A video tutorial will be available soon on the Organic YouTube Channel (www.youtube.com/user/eOrganic).

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Vegetables can do wonders for your soil.
New service helps beginning farmers access land to grow

By Kate Edwards

In a 2017 survey conducted by the National Young Farmers Coalition, land access was cited as the number one challenge for beginning farmers. To help beginning farmers in Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota overcome this challenge, Renewing the Countryside, a Minnesota-based nonprofit, has launched the Land Access Hub. With over 20 organizations steering the work, the hub is designed to assist beginning farmers in the often-difficult process of accessing land.

Farmland is increasingly more expensive and less available. In Wisconsin since 1990, the number of farms has decreased by 14%, a net loss of over 400 individual farms per year. (Source: USDA NASS). In Iowa, farmland is three times more expensive than it was in 1990, even after adjusting for inflation. (Source: Iowa State Farmland Values Survey). In Minnesota, farmland availability (number of parcels sold per year) is down 69% since 1990. (Source: MN Land Economics).

The Land Access Hub is funded with a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development grant. The service involves one-on-one coaching of farmers through land access issues and is free to beginning farmers. The hub also provides workshops, webinars, and a farmland access discussion group.

Land Access Hub work started last October with a kick off meeting of the steering committee of partner organizations, which includes representatives from MOSES, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Land Stewardship Project, Main Street Project, and many other regional farming organizations. Four individuals have been hired to serve as “navigators,” coaching beginning farmers through the land access process. Each of the navigators has personal experience with land access and is uniquely suited to guide beginning farmers through the process. I am the navigator for Iowa; Brett Olson of Renewing the Countryside and Bob Kell are navigators for Minnesota; Lauren Langworthy of MOSES is the Wisconsin navigator.

While these navigators won’t “find you a farm,” they can guide you through the process, be a sounding board, help identify action items, educate on the land access process and be a technical resource.

Here are some tips for beginning farmers from the recent Land Access Boot Camp at the MOSES Conference.

- Start with Your Community
- Plug into a broader community, MOSES, Land Stewardship Project, Main Street Project. Practical Farmers of Iowa or whatever other broader farming community you are part of AND your local community are the most valuable resources you have to tap into to access land. Take advantage of the conferences, field days, and workshops those organizations offer to improve your farming skills. Don’t neglect learning to farm better while you look for land.
- Get Prepared
- Take time to be prepared, personally, financially, and technically. If you are a new farmer and are looking to buy right out of the gate, is that the right decision? Maybe. Or maybe leasing for a few years might be a good idea. If you have been farming for a while, you will know more what you need from a farm.
- There is a process for finding land. Define what you want, make sure you are ready (technically, financially, and personally), make sure all the stakeholders involved in your life are on board with your vision (family, landowners, etc.), and then start looking for it. As you are preparing, research the financial part of running a farm. Make sure that once you get the land you will know what to do with your product. Find a mentor. Learn from those of have gone before you.
- Define Your Farm
- It is important to know the attributes of the land that you need—what is necessary, desirable, or optional. Think through the enterprises you are planning. What type of land base will you need? What type of facilities will you need?
- It is important to define what you want in a farm at the outset so that when you find a farm to rent or buy you can assess its suitability. Different land is suitable for different enterprises. Knowing what you are looking for before you begin your search will help you avoid choosing land that doesn’t fit your farming needs.
- After you have very clearly defined the farm you are looking for, start talking about it—with everyone. This is how connections are made. Then look for farmland in obvious places, but also be creative in your search.
- Know Your Options for Land Tenure
- The word “tenure” means to hold. There are two basic ways that farmers can own land. They can either own or not own the land. Under each of these options there are many methods of legal structure, but it is important to remember that in the world of so many options it comes down to these two.
- According to Land for Good, a New England nonprofit that is a pioneer in land access, the farmland access process comes down to a few key issues. Farmland needs to be available, affordable, appropriate, and secure.
- Research Financing Options
- There are many options for land tenure. Land prices differ regionally, and in some areas it may be more affordable to rent rather than own. The vast majority of farmers have diverse land tenure situations. It is not uncommon to have a combination of rental and ownership.
- Financing is available from many sources, including the Farm Service Agency (a governmental lending agency), Farm Credit (a non-governmental lending agency), banks, state financing (e.g., Iowa Finance Authority), non-traditional investor-lenders (e.g., Iroquois Valley), family or other alternative loans.
- The Land Access Hub has technical advisors that are available free of charge to those working one-on-one with a Land Access Navigator. These technical advisors include legal counselors who can assist in the lease or contract process, and experienced farmers who can assist in the farm suitability process.

Kate Edwards has a vegetable CSA at Wild Woods Farm, near Iowa City, Iowa. She’s also the Iowa Land Access Navigator for the Land Access Hub.

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Integrating Livestock with Crops — from page 7

us move forward into a sustainable future.”

In a regenerative farming system, livestock are “a necessary part of providing the ecosystem services required to grow food,” Bishop claimed. “Without plant/animal diversity, chemical fertilizers and pesticides are needed to provide the fertility, weed and pest control, etc., to grow crops. Without dependence on expensive purchased inputs, a farm with livestock can become more profitable.”

There is a higher level of management required, as well as additional workload for animal care, but Bishop believes it is worth it.

Solberg agrees. He could not think of when livestock integration would not be a good idea other than when the health and well-being of the livestock or people is put in jeopardy.

“There are places and times when the producer would need to be more creative,” Solberg said. For example, producers could enter into custom-grazing leases if it isn’t feasible to purchase livestock. Producers with small acreages could graze small livestock, such as goats, rabbits or ducks.

“It comes down to management,” Solberg explained. “If a producer is not willing to do the management, then it may not be a viable idea. Unfortunately, they will also not reap the benefits.”

As a grazing specialist, Solberg encourages farmers to figure out how to make livestock integration work. “Too many producers are quick to say ‘It’s just not possible here because (insert long list of excuses).’ Many base their decision on preconceived notions built on old assumptions,” he added.

Solberg tells farmers to answer two questions before making the decision to integrate cattle into a crop rotation: what are the specific goals (increase soil organic matter, increase water infiltration rates, reduce erosion, reduce fertilizer inputs, etc.) for a particular field, and, what resources (fencing, water sources, labor, forages, livestock type, time of year, etc.) are available?

“Answering these questions will help producers select the most feasible options for their operation,” he explained.

Bishop recommended that producers find mentors nearby who are willing to visit the farm and discuss options. “Get educated. Attend conferences like MOSES and go to workshops and field days nearby,” he suggested.

Rosmann advised others who want to organically graze beef as part of crop operation to find the kind of cattle that are “gentle, not too big, but not too small either. You have to have both good pounds of gain and fairly easy finishing.”

Solberg, too, recommended getting support from other farmers, especially those who have experience with the type of livestock you are considering. “Avoid the naysayers,” he warned. “Thoughtfully approach integrating livestock, and avoid being controlled by fear.”

Kelli Boylen is a freelance writer who lives on a homestead in Iowa.

FSMA Plans — from page 9

may have to make some adjustments in order to show compliance with the FSMA Rule, but they’re starting with a great foundation.

Vermont Valley Community Farm

David and Barb Perkins of Vermont Valley Community Farm know that they will be covered by the FSMA Produce Safety Rule, and they’re taking a more staid approach to it. Their son, Eric, who works on the farm, attended a PSA Grower Training in January. That was their first step toward compliance.

David, not being the excitable type, is waiting to see how the Rule will change before jumping headfirst into changing up the operation. “My perspective in this is when they come up with a new program and requirements, they sort of evolve. If you jump too quick to make changes based on early information, it may not be what you need in the end.”

The Perkinses market through a CSA, and they also sell seed potatoes. David said they have never felt the need to get a GAP audit. They already have strong food safety practices in place, and getting into compliance with the Rule will mean “adding a bureaucratic level that we will just have to do,” David said—i.e., documenting practices they already have in place.

Bailey Webster is a certified Produce Safety Alliance trainer. Reach her in the MOSES office at 715-778-5775 or email bailey@mosesorganic.org.
Depreciation changes in federal tax reform package impact farmers

By Compeer Financial

Since the passage of the Tax Reform in late December, many people are still trying to understand the modifications and determine how this reform will affect them. Thankfully, Congress did not start with a blank slate as some presidential candidates promised; rather, they modified existing provisions while adding a sunset date to them. That means we will have to make the most of them until Dec. 31, 2025. How did the modifications impact farmers? Here are a few highlights of what changed and some simple examples of how it might affect you.

Let’s start with a look at the individual tax return. For the married couple filing jointly, the first thing that should catch your eye is the increased standard deduction. For a couple who has minimal medical costs, lower property taxes, and lower state income taxes, this increased standard deduction is a positive. It went from $12,700 in 2017 to $24,000 in 2018. The personal exemptions have been eliminated until Dec. 31, 2025, offsetting the increased standard deduction. Historically, we look at the standard deduction and personal exemptions as permanent tax deductions to help lower taxable income.

What does the change mean for a married couple with children? For 2018, the standard deduction will be $24,000 with no personal exemptions. In the past, having three kids, plus the couple would equate to five exemptions. A family would have had a standard deduction of $12,700 plus $20,250 from exemptions ($4,050 multiplied by 5), while together, they were losing $8,950 of deductions.

Perhaps Congress did see this and tried to offset it with an increased Child Tax credit. If those children qualify for the Child Tax Credit and the couple's income is under $400,000, then instead of getting $1,000 per child now the couple can get $2,000 per child of qualifying child credit which will reduce tax liability. Let’s say all the children qualify and the couple's income is $220,000. With the new law, they are losing $8,950 of deductions.

One word of caution: if there is a note on the property at a 20-year class life, then you would have to elect Bonus Depreciation on all or none of the assets in that category.

Another part of tax reform that deals with the option which allows farmers to use an accelerated method of depreciation on certain assets. Currently, farmers have a choice between a 150% declining balance or straight-line depreciation. Now they may use 200%-declining balance with the exception of 15- or 20-year class life properties. Once again, this could provide for accelerated depreciation and decreased farm income.

By accelerating depreciation, you can lower your current year tax liability and save current year tax dollars, but you should also examine what it may cost in future years. Planning is pertinent when looking at the current situation while staying focused on the long haul. Ultimately, it is your choice, but you should be cautious and consider the impact on future years.

Tax reform provides another depreciation change: the opportunity to use a shorter class life on certain new assets. For example, if you buy a tractor that has never been used (you are the first owner), you can now depreciate it over five years rather than seven, which it was previously.

One word of caution: if there is a note on the tractor for seven years; one should look at, consider matching the depreciation to the principal payments. This will provide a deduction while paying off debt. As lenders, we have found it’s tough to explain to a farmer that, while there is no cash in the checkbook, they have tax due because they paid down debt and don’t have the depreciation expense to offset the principal paid.

Another tax law modification that will warrant some planning, is the change making tax-deferred exchanges only permissible on real property. Personal property, such as equipment, will have to be recognized to the extent of the trade-in amount as a deemed sale. For example, if you trade in a tractor and the dealer gives you a trade-in allowance of $50,000, reducing the cost of the new one from $130,000 to $80,000, you will need to report the $50,000 sale of an asset as ordinary income and the new asset cost will be the full $130,000.

One last change that needs attention is the repeal of the Domestic Production Activities Deduction, known as DPAD. This deduction was available to offset adjusted gross income. Congress replaced the DPAD with a new 20% qualified business income deduction which will give a deduction but will not reduce adjusted gross income. Another caveat is that only individuals, partnerships, and S-corps will be allowed to compute the deduction. C-corporations will instead benefit from the flat 21% tax rate imposed on them.

This elimination of the DPAD could be a huge factor for health insurance that is purchased through the marketplace if the individual has taken the premium tax credit in advance. Many times, year-end tax planning opportunities are discussed to ensure that the client stays within the desired income that they used to apply for health insurance. The new 199A deduction will not be allowed to reduce adjusted gross income. So if the current DPAD has been used in the past to reduce the AGI, this will reduce your Premium Credit.

With all the tax reform changes, you have to look not only to this year but to years down the road. With the sunset provisions and potential future tax code changes, the key is having a solid relationship with your tax consultant. Together, with an attorney, your lender, and your tax consultant, you can plan and be proactive for success not only this year but for the years ahead.

This article was a collaboration by the team members of Compeer Financial’s tax and accounting department. For more on tax planning, see Compeer.com.
New Farmer U gives beginning farmers boost through targeted workshops

By Jennifer Nelson

MOSES has continued to make a big difference in many beginning farmers’ lives in the Midwest thanks in part to funding from a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant. As the 2018 Farm Bill continues to take shape, the inclusion of this important USDA beginning farmer funding is imperative.

This USDA grant has supported our New Farmer U events in Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois, helping over 200 beginning farmers jumpstart their farms through education, discussions, and networking facilitated by experienced farmer and agriculture professionals.

Just as healthy farms include diversity in all aspects, our New Farmer U schedule also includes a healthy diversity of topics from farm business planning and marketing to practical soil building and farmer health. Our team plans the New Farmer U events from the perspective of beginning farmers. We know your time and money is very valuable; we want you to get the most bang for your buck with these weekend events. We pack in a lot of learning with great presenters—the feedback from attendees has been excellent. In the evaluations, participants rated previous New Farmer U events “excellent to above average” overall. Here are some of their comments:

• “Very informative. Covers a lot of topics from production to marketing.”
• “It was wonderful! The connections are incredibly valuable to me.”

This spring, MOSES and partners Renewing the Countryside and Land Stewardship Project are excited to bring New Farmer U home to Wisconsin! We are preparing for another jam-packed weekend event of learning and networking at the Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center in Wisconsin Dells. Attendees can also join on a full-day pre-course about farm finances or food safety.

New Farmer U-Wisconsin kicks off Friday night with network-building, and a presentation on leadership and policy, where we discuss ways to successfully organize to affect policy change that benefits farmers and farm families.

The weekend training includes workshops and roundtable discussions, as well as local and organic food, dorm-style lodging, and time for peer-to-peer support. Saturday’s general session includes a panel of regional farmers and an exhibit hall of helpful folks with resources and relevant information for beginning farmers.

Jacob Marty, Green Fire Farm, is an enthusiastic young farmer back on the land with his family, grazing 400 acres of livestock. He’ll be presenting on regenerative agriculture, and multi-species grazing, and how farmers can implement the practices that have worked for him.

Farming flowers is a hot topic, and a rapidly growing local industry. For all the aspiring flower farmers in the house, Erin Schneider, Hilltop Community Farm, will present “The Business of Flower Farming.” Farmers can join this experienced farmer and marketer, and learn how she’s created a successful farm business.

“Come and Get It … and Stay Awhile” will guide farmers on how to add income through agritourism, including farm-stays, on-farm meals and value-added products. Experts Lisa Kivirist, John Ivanko, and Brett Olson will share creative ways to increase farm income. They’ll talk about farm stay bed and breakfasts, pizza farms and farm-to-table dinners and value-added products produced under cottage food law.

Also on the docket are Laura Mortimer, Orange Cat Community Farm, Paul Dietmann, Compeer Financial, and many more wonderful presenters. We’ll offer 10-minute legal consultations and even have a massage therapist in the house to provide chair massages and healthy movement suggestions to counter repetitive-motion injuries on the farm. Check out the full workshop schedule and presenter line-up at newfarmeru.org.

Jennifer Nelson coordinates beginning farmer programs for MOSES.

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Beginning Farmer Training
Beginning farmers can boost their production and farm-business skills through a weekend training April 27-29 in Wisconsin Dells. The training includes 90-minute workshops on topics such as farm business planning, organic certification, farm law, land access and financing, and grazing, soil building, and flower growing. A panel of experienced farmers will share what worked well and what didn't work in their early years. There will also be 10-minute legal consultations, healthy movement exercises, and fun activities to encourage peer-to-peer networking. Cost for the weekend training, two nights of lodging, and all meals is $125, with a $25 discount for farm partners. See details and register at newfarmer.org.

Farm Finances Workshop
Two of the authors of Fearless Farm Finances, Dr. Craig Chase, Iowa State University, and Paul Dietmann, Compeer Financial, will teach an all-day workshop on basic farm financial management April 27, 2018, just prior to New Farmer U in Wisconsin Dells. The workshop is $50 ($25 with registration for New Farmer U) and includes lunch. Register online at mosesorganic.org/ fearless-farm-finances-workshop.

Food Safety Grower Training
MOSES and the Local Food Safety Collaborative host a day-long Produce Safety Grower Training Course Friday, April 27, 2018, just prior to New Farmer U in Wisconsin Dells. Participants receive the PSA Grower Training just prior to New Farmer U in Wisconsin Dells. The workshop is $50 ($25 with registration for New Farmer U) and includes lunch and a copy of Fearless Farm Finances. See details at mosesorganic.org/fearless-farm-finances-workshop.

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**New Organic Standards**

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is accepting license applications for the state’s new industrial hemp pilot program. The deadline to apply for the 2018 growing season is May 1. Growers will pay a licensing fee of $150 to $1,000, depending on the number of acres they intend to plant. Processors also need a license. See bit.ly/GrowHempWI.

**Farm Practices Survey**

Cornell University, University of California-Berkeley, and The Nature Conservancy are surveying farmers to learn about their biggest challenges, as well as the best solutions (such as easing regulatory hurdles, simplifying program applications, or improving cost-share initiatives). The survey also asks at factors that help farmers decide whether or not to use certain management practices related to soil, crops, and pests. Responses can be anonymous or include the respondent’s email for a chance to win $500. The survey closes March 31. See bit.ly/CornellFarmPracticesSurvey.

**Farm Labor Solutions**

The seasonal and often part-time labor needs of farms make it challenging for farmers to hire and retain a good labor force. What if your farm could collaborate with other farms to hire labor? Farm Commons has put together a resource to help Coordination Farm Labor Across Farms: A Toolbox for Diversified Farmers and Farmworkers. See farmcommons.org/resources/ coordinating-farm-labor-across-farms-toolbox-diversified-farmers-and-farmworkers.

**New ‘Organic’ Label Initiatives**

Several new alternative or add-on labels to the USDA Organic Seal recently have come to light. Regenerative Organic Certification is a holistic agriculture certification with guidelines for soil health and land management, animal welfare, and farmer and worker fairness. The standard was introduced to consumers earlier this month at Expo West. Rodale Institute, Patagonia, and Dr. Bronner’s led the coalition that created the label’s standards. The November Organic Broadcaster covered this label. See mosesorganic.org/broadcaster-newspaperarchives.

An announcement was made in early March that the Carbon Underground and Green America, in partnership with Ben & Jerry’s (Unilever), DanoneWave, Annie’s (General Mills), and MegaFood have begun development of a “global verification standard for food grown in a regenerative manner. There’s no name for this yet, and the group has clarified recently that it’s a standard, not a certification program.”

The Real Organic Project is being developed by organic farmers and advocates in response to what they see as a series of failures by the USDA to protect organic integrity from CAFOs, fraudulent organic imports, and soil-less production. The group plans to create an add-on label to represent “the organic farming that we have always cared about.” Its base will be the National Organic Standards plus additional requirements to differentiate Real Organic Project-certified farms. See details at bit.ly/RealOrganicProject.
Animal Welfare Rule

The USDA announced last week that it is withdrawing the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) final rule, originally published Jan. 19, 2017, delayed Feb. 9, further delayed May 10, 2017, and delayed yet again Nov. 14, 2017. The withdrawal’s effective date is May 13, 2018. The Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices rule was written by organic farmers and members of the National Organic Standards Board to protect the high standards of the organic label.

Comment Period for NOSB Meeting

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) invites the public to submit written comments and/or provide oral comments at its meeting April 25-27, 2018, in Tucson, Arizona. Topics of interest include organic seed guidance and container production. The comment period closes April 4. See www.ams.usda.gov/event/national-organic-standards-board-nosb-meeting-tucson-az.

General Mills’ Organic Supply Chain

General Mills of Minneapolis recently announced a "strategic sourcing agreement" with Gunsmoke Farms LLC, a 34,000-acre grain farm west of Pierre, S.D., to convert the farm to organic by the year 2020 to grow certified organic wheat and other crops for its Annie's brand of pasta. The company is bringing in Midwestern Bio Ag to mentor the farm operators, and create a regional hub to teach farmers how to implement organic and regenerative agriculture practices. General Mills also plans to work with the Xerces Society to add 3,000 acres of pollinator habitat, which also will improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, and protect game and songbirds.

Study on Nitrogen Pollution

The Organic Center and the University of Virginia have released a study showing organic farming helps prevent nitrogen pollution by recycling or reusing three times more reactive nitrogen than non-organic farming. See details at www.organic-center.org/new-research-shows-organic-farming-can-help-curb-nitrogen-pollution.

Soil Conservation

A new bill introduced in the House earlier this month would make on-farm conservation easier and more accessible for family farmers. The Strengthening Our Investment in Land Stewardship (SOIL Stewardship) Act (H.R. 5188) would strengthen the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). For details, see sustainableagriculture.net/blog/soil-stewardship-act-2018.

GAP Software

Farmer Pedro Schambon of My Father’s Farm has designed software to make the process easier for farmers seeking GAP certification. The software captures data for the traceability report, irrigation water testing, soil amendment inputs, rodent control, bathroom cleaning, and much more. It can also help calculate planting schedules, report on crop rotation requirements, and produce sales reports. The Pro-Farm GAP software is in the beta stage, and needs 50 enterprise-farming farms to test it out. Email myfathersfarm@gmail.com or call 830-822-0200.

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CSA Newsletter Recipes

Bounty from the Box, the comprehensive CSA farm cookbook, offers an exclusive service for farmers: for a one-time payment of $35, you can access all the crop info and over 200 recipes for your CSA newsletter or blog. See bountyfromthe-box.com/for-farmers-only.

Voluntary Public Access Program

The Voluntary Public Access & Habitat Incentive Program, a joint effort of the Wisconsin NRCS and DNR, offers technical assistance and funding for landowners with more than 40 acres with 25% wildlife cover (grasslands/forests). Go to dnr.wi.gov and search "share the land" or contact the VPA-HP Coordinator at DNRVPAlands@wisconsin.gov. Neighboring states have similar programs focused on hunting and hiking access. Contact the DNR in your state.

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Howard Rotovator, 7’. New blades, works good. Massey Harris model 22 tractor w/cutl., 3 pt., ex. rubber. NE Iowa, 319-559-0373.

Specialty vegetable equipment auction. Online only. Row crop cultivators, cultivating tractors, produce wash equipment, field tools, masts, supplies and more. Visit hireasuctions.com for more details or call (608)632-0497. noah.engl@driftlessorganics.com

1995 CASE 4300 43’ Field Cultivator. Recent 52k tune up at Arnold’s. Amazing shape. $10,000. 1995 612Z White Planter, 12R30, 57k in upgrades in 2014. Only one used on 4,000 acres entire life! $12,900. 2000 CASE 730B Disk Ripper, rear lever brackets welded on. Like new. $16,400. Deere 2600 Display w one 3,986 hours of use and AutoTrac Activation, 54,500. 2014 Deere StarFire 3000 Receiver w Deluxe Shroud, SF2 + RTK Activations + RTK Radio 450, address: Deer Creek Organic Growers Cooperative, 6846 S 2500 E Rd, St. Anie, IL 60946. Email deercreeorganic@gmail.com; cell 815 953 8897.


Organic farm for sale/rent. 325 acres in NE Stark Co. North Dakota. 2 pivot, 12” well, systematically drained, 255 tillable, balance woods, creek & pasture. $2,250,000 purchase, $350/ac rent. 745-734-4800. Call 675-791-5833 for more info. Will email pictures.

Buffalo Cultivators and Planters. 320-221-2266.


Green Bean Harvester, older 2 row Pixmap, working condition, new blades in 2017. Includes cleaner and sort conveyer. $10,500 Mason, WI. (715)765-4297 or greenoakfarm@gmail.com


20’ rototiller. Eversman 240 mts set up for full till and in good shape. 701-640-3476.

M & W 1930 MT Rotary Hoe, 30 ft., new wheels. Howard HRA1 Rotovator, 10 ft. with options, like new. JD 8520T Tractor, new tracks, 3670 hrs. 920-887-7491.

Farm and Field Equipment. Due to 3 years straight of bottom line losses we are selling off a large portion of our field equipment, packing house equipment, greenhouses, farm market items... Our website link is deercreeorganic@gmail.com/equipment-for-sale.html. Descriptions, pics, and videos. Farm address: Deer Creek Organic Growers Cooperative, 6846 S 2500 E Rd, St. Anie, IL 60946. Email deercreeorganic@gmail.com; cell 815 953 8897.

FOR SALE: 250 dry 4x5 rotocut rounds, 130 RPQ, 30 high quality wrapped 4x5 rounds. 2017 4x5 round straw bales. 2016 wrapped hay. 2015 dry shelled corn. $8,200/bale. All crops are Organic-MOSA certified. 715-495-2813.

Certified Organic Baleage For Sale. 5’X1/4’ Round Bales, in-line wrapped. 210-248 RFQ. DURAND, WI. 715-495-9387.

Organic Baleage, Grass and Clover. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd cuttings. Prices are moisture discounted. Delivery available. 715-921-9079.

Organic hay and straw for sale. Round bales. 1st, 2nd and 3rd crop. Oat and rye straw also available. 507-725-5261.


FORAGES

4th cutting organic alfalfa, RFV 175, protein 19.3x48 square bale, $200/Ton. Jeff Richards. 970-630-2118.

2017 Hay for Sale. 250 dry 4x5 round cutouts rounds, 130 RFQ, 30-40 high quality wrapped 4x5 rounds. 2017 4x5 round straw bales. 2016 wrapped hay. 2015 dry shelled corn. $8,200/bale. All crops are Organic-MOSA certified. 715-495-2813.

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Looking to expand our dealer network in the following organic products: Dr. Paul’s Natural animal health herbs and tinctures, Ocean Harvest Seaplants Kelp, Sea 90 from SeaAgri. Reed seed peas and humates from Black Earth, SDI dry fertilizer. Call 260-463-0380.

Super Gro of Iowa dry fertilizer company has a 4-1-20-75s blend that is used as a row starter. Give us a call at 937-313-3378.

20% off all bareroot fruit trees. 100 varieties - Apples, Pears, Plums, and more. Locally and organically grown in Fredonia, WI. http://www.elderflowerorchards.com. Contact Adrian at 414-779-0661.

For Sale: Organic Onion Plants. Sedona, Redwing, Candy, White Wing, Safire, yellow and red Cipollinis, and Leeks. Other varieties available upon request. $7 per 100, 1000 plant minimum. Certified by MOSA.Glen 563-379-3951. giftsfresh@gmail.com

ORGANIC FISH FERTILIZER 15-1-1, 100% dry water soluble, 5-7 times more nutritious than liquid fish. Will not clog drip irrigation. One lb., 5 lb. or 55 lb. packing, can be shipped UPS. Frommelt Ag Service, Greeley, IA, 563-920-3674.

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Place your ad to be seen by 15,000 readers! $20 for up to 30 words; $3/additional 10 words mosesorganic.org/organic-classifieds
Good Food EXPO 2018
March 22-24 | 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. | $55 - $65 | Chicago, Ill.
The public is invited on Saturday to shop for local foods, watch celebrity chef demonstrations, eat at the Good Food Court and much more. 312-874-7360

Women’s Chainsaw Safety Class
March 24 | 9 - 9:30 a.m. | Free | Mankato, Minn.
SFAs Western Chapter Annual Meeting’s program will feature speakers with expertise on soil, wind and geothermal production and includes a potluck supper with homemade bread, beverages and music. 844-922-5573

Angelic Organics Open House
March 25 | 1 - 4 p.m. | Free | Caledonia, Ill.
Tour the newly remodeled Lodge, surrounding pasture & woodlands, and trails. 815-389-54855

PFI Cover Crop Field Days
March 27 | Noon - 1 p.m. | Free | Okoboji, Iowa
March 28 | Noon - 1 p.m. | Free | Clarion, Iowa
March 29 | Noon - 1 p.m. | Free | Story City, Iowa
Join Practical Farmers of Iowa and their farmer hosts at a spring cover crop-focused field day near you. 515-232-5661

PFI Advanced Beginning Farmer Listening Session
March 27 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Free | Mt. Vernon, Iowa
March 28 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Free | Hanlan, Iowa
Practical Farmers will host five listening sessions across the state to meet with beginning farmers facing issues of sustaining and growing their farm and profit margins. 563-370-7284

LSP’s Ray Archuleta Soil Health Workshops
March 17 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. | $20 | Lewiston, Minn.
March 18 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. | $20 | Faribault, Minn.
March 28 | 6 - 9 p.m. | Free | Austin, Minn.
March 29 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. | $20 | Kasson, Minn.
Archuleta challenges attendees to take part in the soil health revolution that is nurturing new types of leaders in the farming community. 507-523-3366

Webinar: Abrasive Weeding
March 29 | Free | Online
Join eOrganic for a new webinar on abrasive weeding by Sam Wortman of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

“Searching for Sustainability” Movie Showing
March 29 | 6 p.m. | Free | East Troy, Wis.
Introduction by and QA with Director & Producer Dan Bertalan and MFAI’s Policy Director Margaret Krome. 362-942-3303

SFA Soil Health Cafe Chat
April 2 | 9:30 a.m. - Noon | Free | Vesta, Minn.
Speakers include Grant & Dawn Breitkreutz, Allen Deutz (tenant), Brian Parn, Redwood County SWCD and Holly Hatlewick, Renville County SWCD. 612-722-6377

Labor Rights, Union Organizing & Effects of Free Trade
April 2 | 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. | Minneapolis, Minn.
Learn from Tomas Membrino Perez about labor rights, union organizing and the effects of free trade agreements on small producers in Honduras. 612-722-6377

SFA Soil Health Cafe Chat
April 3 | 9:30 a.m. - Noon | Free | Amboy, Minn.
Speakers include farmers Scott Haase and Andy Linder, Kent Solberg, and Blue Earth and Faribault counties’ SWCD person- nel. 844-922-5573

PFI Cover Crop Field Day
April 3 | Noon - 3 p.m. | Free | Jefferson, Iowa
April 4 | Noon - 3 p.m. | Free | Postville, Iowa
April 5 | Noon - 3 p.m. | Free | Cambridge, Iowa
Join Practical Farmers of Iowa and their farmer hosts at a spring cover crop-focused field day near you. 515-232-5661

Webinar: Promoting Beneficial Insects in Vineyards
April 3 | 3 p.m. | Free | Online
Join this webinar to learn about ecological (natural) pest management in vineyards.

Our Farms, Our Future Conference
April 3 - 5 | ($$) | St. Louis, Mo.
Every decade SARE hosts a conference to look at the progress for the future. 301-405-9471

University of Minnesota Poultry Workshop
April 7 | 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. | $30 | Rushford, Minn.
A well-designed packing shed is a crucial component of an efficient farming operation. 612-578-4497

Good Food EXPO 2018 April 26 | 5:30 p.m. | Little Falls, Minn.
This workshop will take place at Sprout, 609 13th Ave NE, Door 8 & Little Falls, Minn. 763-344-6659

Designing your Packing Shed April 30 | 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. | Free | East Lansing, Mich.
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Organic broadcasters