Growing demand for organic corn, soybeans creates opportunities for U.S. farmers

By Peter Golbitz

U.S. farmers looking for a profitable opportunity in a rapidly developing market need not look any further than their own backyard—if they can produce organic soybeans or corn.

The growing demand for organic feed ingredients driven primarily by large investments in organic poultry production, has created an ever-tightening supply situation in the U.S. that threatens to get even tighter due to inadequate U.S. production coupled with concerns about imports of potentially fraudulent organic soybeans and corn from questionable players halfway around the globe.

As the growing season winds to close, our thoughts move towards harvest, fall field work, and cleaning up machinery for the winter. These fall activities are well understood. These crops contribute to the long-term health and maintenance of your most important farm resource: your soil. Cover crops can work in nearly every crop rotation and farming system in the Upper Midwest, but are especially well suited to organic systems where diversity and rotations are more complex and provide more windows of opportunity to successfully integrate cover crops. As organic operations are charged with maintaining or improving the natural resources on the farm, including soil and water quality, fall-planted cover crops can measurably achieve those goals on a year-by-year basis.

Cover crop planting can also be a great complement to fall field passes, giving producers a place to spread manure (and hold it in place), graze animals, harvest forage, help break down persistent crop residue, and can be timed with fall harvest or light tillage. However, as all Midwestern producers are well aware, fall weather can be erratic with early frosts and lack of reliable moisture.

There are a diversity of cover crops suitable for fall planting that generally fall into three major categories: cereal grains/grasses, cool-season legumes and brassicas. Cereal grains are quick growing, cost-effective, easy to manage, accumulate ample biomass in a short time-frame, scavenge and hold nutrients, and have fibrous root systems. Winter cereal grains like winter rye and winter triticale are seeded in the fall well before the hard freeze. They are especially well suited to organic systems where fall-planted cover crops build soil health, protect fields from erosion in winter

By Matt Leavitt

As the growing season winds to close, our thoughts move towards harvest, fall field work, application of manure and other soil amendments, and cleaning up machinery for the winter. These shortening days also provide an excellent opportunity to think about planting a cover crop.

The multifaceted benefits of cover crops in a rotation are well understood. These crops contribute to the long-term health and maintenance of your most important farm resource: your soil. Cover crops can work in nearly every crop rotation and farming system in the Upper Midwest, but are especially well suited to organic systems where fall manure application, fall tillage due to drainage, amendments, tilling, etc.

What are your primary goals with cover crops:• What crop is coming off, and what crop will• Do you desire a cover crop that will overwinter• What are your primary goals with cover crops:

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To Cover Crops on page 8
Field days add to farmer education

By John Mesko, Executive Director of MOSES

Welcome to the end of summer. I hope you were able to take in one of the 14 field days we helped produce.

These focused on-farm educational opportunities are an important follow up to the annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference, providing networking and hands-on training.

This summer, we were fortunate to have two of these days hosted by MOSES board members. Dave Campbell hosted a field day on his Illinois farm, highlighting the use of buckwheat and sorghum sudangrass in crop rotations with grain, and, Charlie Johnson hosted a tour of his South Dakota grain and livestock farm. Both of these master organic farmers highlighted the importance of crop rotations in organic grain production for weed control, soil building, and fertility purposes.

After touring both of these farms, it is easy to forget they are working, family-run, for-profit farming businesses. They look and feel a little like university-grade research facilities. The information gleaned from a day spent at field days like these is well worth the time and effort to attend.

Organic farming is a thinking-person’s career; each year its own classroom and testing lab, and the best practitioners are often curious problem solvers who want to see others benefit. Charlie and Dave are two examples of this on our MOSES Board of Directors. As an organization, we are very honored to have board members like them as well as others who are true experts in organic farming, giving their time and energy to helping others understand how to harness natural systems for growing healthy food.

Nonprofit boards of directors are the owners of the organizations they serve, and as such are responsible caretakers for the vision, mission, strategic plan, and financial responsibilities required for maintaining a healthy organization.

The strongest nonprofits, like MOSES, are those whose boards anchor the organization in its founding principles, but are always striving for growth and improvement. Effective nonprofits, like MOSES, are community-driven, responsive, grassroots, service-oriented organizations. Nonprofits, universities, government agencies, and businesses all contribute to improving agriculture and the environment. The important role MOSES and other nonprofits play in this improvement can easily be taken for granted. We fill an important farmer support gap in agriculture.

MOSES is not a member organization—we serve all of agriculture. Our structure allows us to quickly and effectively translate the expertise and vision of our capable board of directors and staff into mission-accomplishing education and outreach. Through the financial support of hundreds of individuals, and our partners in the university, and government and business sectors, we are able to leverage our community expertise and vision to reach our common objectives.

For 30 years, MOSES has made a major contribution to the advancement of organic agriculture. Today, the organic and sustainable agriculture community is in the midst of another wave of dramatic changes. MOSES will remain relevant in shaping the future to the extent our board is able to adapt to the changing landscape our work has helped to develop.

As we shift from field days toward preparations for the 30th Annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference, we redouble our commitment to the future of agriculture. Our organization—from our staff, to our board of directors, to our community of experienced organic farmers—continues to educate, inspire, and empower farmers (and others) not just to sustain, but to thrive. I invite you to be part of our 30th anniversary Feb. 21-23 in La Crosse, Wis. Watch your mail in late November for the conference guide, or view details as they unfold at mosesorganic.org/conference.

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

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Farmers, consumers must work together to restore economic justice to organic dairy

By Mark Kastel, The Cornucopia Institute

There’s a reason why the MOSES Conference happens every year in La Crosse. It’s literally at the crossroads of the organic community in the Upper Midwest. We all own the organic label. Even if you aren’t milking cows, the integrity of organic dairy products should be important to you—not only as an organic consumer, but also because of the economic impact dairy has on the organic sector. After produce, dairy is the second-largest industry sector, and directly impacts many other workers and businesses.

When the first organic farming conference was planned, even before the nonprofit MOSES existed, organic dairy was front and center. It was growing rapidly, after initially commercializing in the mid-1980s. New farmers were just kicking the tires and needed help making the difficult transition shunning chemicals and most drugs.

Monsanto’s genetically engineered bovine growth hormone (rBGH) was a hot controversy, and the arrogance of the conventional dairy industry, siding with the agrichemical and drug giant rather than their consumers who had legitimate worries, fueled organic dairy’s growth.

At the first conference 30 years ago, we could all fit in one modest room in a circle of chairs, close enough to have a conversation. The MOSES Conference is now the largest event on organic agriculture in the country with participants from around the world.

The organic dairy industry has also grown expeditiously. But sadly, its option as a viable anti-dote to the rapacious agricultural industry, which has hemorrhaged family farmers off the land for decades, has gone on the rails.

In 2018, family-scale producers from California to Maine have seen their prices radically slashed, weed control, and whole-farm management, quite frankly couldn’t compete.

Some of the same companies canceling contracts are continuing to buy milk from “factory farms.” It is a lot easier and cheaper to buy from one giant dairy than dozens of independent farmers. At least one dairy plant in Wisconsin canceled a contract with a farmer-owned co-op and is now procuring its milk, by the semi load, from giant dairies in Texas.

When I started working in farm politics in the mid-1980s as organic dairy farming was commercializing, there were about 45,000 dairy farms in Wisconsin alone, averaging approximately 45 cows each. In 2018, Wisconsin has about 7,600 licensed dairies—and even nationally there aren’t 45,000 independent businesses producing milk.

Organic dairy was created as the “alternative” to former USDA Secretary Earl Butz’s directive to “get big or get out.” It was launched, in part, as an economic justice vehicle by farmers and supported by consumers who were willing to pay a price premium for food produced to a higher standard: careful environmental stewardship, humane animal husbandry, and, yes, fair remuneration for the families who produce that food.

By the end of the 1980s, the hodgepodge of independent certification agencies, all with their own standards, was making it impossible to scale up organics in terms of interstate commerce and developing processed products with multiple ingredients.

Furthermore, it wasn’t even legally required to be third-party certified. In California, all growers had to do was not use banned agrichemicals the year they labeled their products “organic.” The next year they could make the ground with herbicides and lead up on synthetic fertilizers, and the following year they could be in the organic business once again. Those of us practicing true organic agriculture, making long-term investments in soil fertility, weed control, and whole-farm management, quite frankly couldn’t compete.

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When Congress debated passing The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, the USDA actually testified against the measure. They didn’t want any part of regulating an alternative food system that would alienate powerful lobbyists and corporate agribusiness.

The USDA delayed implementation of regulations governing the industry and establishing the authority of the National Organic Program (NOP) for a full 12 years. Then, during the balance of George Bush’s tenure, they did everything they could to monkey-wrench the NOP.

Under President Obama, for the first time, they brought in management with experience in the organic industry. However, these were individuals allied with the industry’s powerful lobby group, the Organic Trade Association, and friendly with the largest corporate players.

Dr. Kathleen Merrigan, credited with writing some of the Organic Foods Production Act as an aid for Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, was appointed as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture in 2009. Prior to her USDA appointment, she was a professor at Tufts and sent students to intern at Aurora Dairy during the height of public scrutiny on the giant industrial dairy’s abuse of organic standards. As Deputy Secretary, she appointed Miles McEvoy to run NOP, and he immediately declared the “age of enforcement,” but never brought the hammer down, even when Freedom of Information documents obtained by Cornucopia indicated they found factory dairies cheating.

By then, almost all the major mass-market organic brands were controlled by “Big Food” and represented by the Organic Trade Association.

When The Cornucopia Institute was founded in 2009, there were a giant industrial dairies (a 4,000-cow operation and a split, 10,000-cow feedlot) competing with the many family farmers who had founded the organic dairy industry. These huge dairies’ lactating cows had zero access to pasture. Although Cornucopia managed to create pressure, resulting in decertification of the larger operation, organic CAFOs have proliferated and are now estimated to produce half the nation’s organic milk supply, primarily from arid and southwestern states.

As the industry was growing aggressively, it was still able to bring on many additional family-scale farmers transitioning to organic management and, at the same time, absorb more milk from giant feedlot dairies. Now well over 20 operations milk upwards of 5,000—even 15,000—cows.

In recent years, family-scale organic dairy farmers have been hit by a tidal wave of surplus milk, radically driving down prices. Growth in retail organic dairy sales has rapidly slowed at a time when lots of new milk, principally from CAFOs, has come online. Contributing factors include a widening differential, as conventional milk pricing plummeted, and a shift in consumer preferences to plant-based “milk” alternatives. Cornucopia is currently working on a comparative analysis for...
In by the middle of May so that if everything in your soils now. Get to know your soils: Strategy 1. You can trace elements) to get the necessary volume for an application of zinc, along with some other trace nutrients, to be applied. I mentioned that for some reason marestail and foxtail populations seem predominant. Soil tests should provide important clues about why certain weeds seem to thrive in some fields, but don’t seem to get “out of control” in others. Thorough weed assessment of weed species present noting which are most common, resistant and invasive is key. (There’s a reason why conventional weed management strategies work and work well, and they can also work in an organic setting.) You might get lucky, but in T1 (first year transition) assume there’s going to be significant weed pressure. (There’s a reason why conventional fields have to be sprayed every year, even after decades of perfectly “clean” fields.) Weed management begins with a field-by-field approach. As the beans get taller, the strategy moves from marginally covering up weeds in the row using a different (front-mount) cultivator with the sweeps set at a 13-16” angle, to no-till cultivation tools like a rotary hoe. As we drive by one of my bottom fields, I’m watching the canopies of hybrid rye and hemp (in case any of your conventional neighbors are watching). This tool, we’re still assessing its effectiveness. It has been effective on resistant water hemp (in case any of your conventional neighbors are watching). And then there’s the Weed Zapper, an emerging technology for later season weeds above the canopy. Since 2018 was our first experience with this tool, we’re still assessing its effectiveness. It does seem incredibly effective on resistant water hemp (in case any of your conventional neighbors are watching). For more info on the Weed Zapper, see the weedmapper.com. I’ll bet we’ll be hearing more about this at the conference next February!

“What should I know before I plant hybrid winter rye?”

Answer by Organic Specialist Matt Leavitt, with information from Mac Ehrhardt of Albert Lea Seed

Hybrid winter rye is an exciting new crop to the Upper Midwest farm landscape. Breeding companies from Denmark and Germany have developed a way to produce hybridized winter rye seed, mainly through enhanced and uniform pollen shed, which is now commercially available in the United States. The result is hybrid rye varieties that yield significantly more than traditional open-pollinated varieties (yields of 120-140+ bu/acre are not uncommon), have little to no incidence of ergot (due to the uniformity in maturity and high pollen shed), and uniform growth, standability and maturity.

Hybrid rye makes up the majority of rye planted in Poland, Denmark, and Germany in Europe, and is a growing share of the production in Canada as well. Hybrid winter rye moves rye from being a reliable cover crop and forage crop to a potentially lucrative and high-yielding third crop in the Midwest. Moreover, hybrid varieties still retain the stress tolerance, winter hardiness, and adaptability of open-pollinated varieties, making them a good fit for a wide range of fields.

There are distinct management considerations with hybrid rye that differ from traditional winter rye, however.

Placing population and uniform planting depth for hybrid rye is critical for optimum yield; genetic suppliers recommend ~800,000 seeds/acre (which works out to be about 65-68 bushels/acre) seeded at ½ to 1” deep. (The seed needs to be drilled 1” deep.) While the available genetics are bred in Europe, hybrid winter rye has excellent winter survival thus far. But, to be safe, it is recommended to plant the seed in the same window as one would plant winter wheat.

Fertility requirements and disease management also are similar to wheat. Hybrid winter rye needs adequate fertility to produce maximum yields. Soil tests with hybrid rye that differ from traditional winter rye, however.

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Pasture walks lead to grazing success in the field
By Robert Bauer

Grazing networks are groups of farmers who organize pasture walks, which are educational farm tours that focus on managed grazing of livestock. By seeing each other’s farms, participants in grazing networks gain the confidence and support to try new things at home. Adding a farm visit from local conservation staff for each pasture walk to discuss the design and implementation of their own grazing system helps farmers to find success in the field.

Rachel Borchardt, owner of Stoney Hill Jerseys in Brodhead, Wis., is a great example of a person who gained the confidence to implement grass-based farming on her land by attending pasture walks. Borchardt attended all three of the pasture walks this summer at the Fountain Prairie Teaching Farm in Fall River, Wis., where I guest instructed with Randy Zaugbaum, Agriculture Instructor for Madison Area Technical College.

Borchardt also used the information that I shared with her during a one-hour farm visit to successfully get started grazing. When I visited her farm after the first pasture walk, she had five acres of new pasture seeding and had to consider how to lay out fences and manage grazing. By the third pasture walk two months later, she had fenced her land and had started moving animals to fresh pasture once a day. The cows love grazing, and Borchardt is excited about the confidence and support to try new things at home. Adding a farm visit from local conservation staff for each pasture walk to discuss the design and implementation of their own grazing system helps farmers to find success in the field.

Rachel Borchardt (right) learns about soil health from Randy Zaugbaum at a pasture walk hosted by Madison Area Technical College at Fountain Prairie Farm in Fall River, Wis.  

Photo by Robert Bauer

Borchardt owned and milks four beautiful Jersey cows on her five-acre farm. With her background as a veterinary technician as well as owner of a dairy farm, she understood the importance of getting cows out of the barnyard and onto pasture for hoof and rumen health. That’s why when she bought her current farm she seeded down the cornfield on the property to a grass and legume mix recommended by the local co-op. I recommended no-till seeding in sod-forming grasses such as bluegrass or smooth bromegrass and alfalfa, which are a bunch-forming grass and upright legume, respectively. Those species are a good mix for high-quality hay, but the bare soil that will be exposed between the crowns of those plants after grazing would lead to germination of weed seeds.

I recommended legumes that she didn’t think were palatable, gate, even eating some of the mature grasses and weeds such as bluegrass or smooth bromegrass to increase plant density. I also observed that the total proportion of legumes in the pasture was about 30%, which is less than the 40-60% proportion of legumes recommended for high-quality pasture. Because of the wet soils on the farm, I recommended inter-seeding alsike clover, which is an upright legume that tolerates wet soils better than alfalfa and would intermix well with the existing bunch grasses.

Given the needs of the soils and plants on her farm, Borchardt learned how to lay out her system based on her own needs and the needs of the animals. She figured that, based on her busy schedule, she could commit to moving the cows to fresh pasture once each day. That would also allow the cows to eat the best and leave the rest if she sized the paddocks correctly.

Borchardt learned to start her paddock layout by determining the stocking rate for her entire farm, based on the dry matter needs of her herd and the productivity of her land. We ran the numbers and she has more than enough pasture for the entire year, assuming good production and taking into account the grain that she plans to feed the cows. The remaining pasture could be cut for hay, which gives her room to be flexible, take risks, and make mistakes if necessary.

The second pasture walk really helped Borchardt gain confidence and solidify her plan to start grazing. The guest speaker was Todd Reitmann, Conservation Specialist for Columbia County Land & Water Conservation Department. Todd designed and provided financial assistance for the grazing system at Fountain Prairie Farm, including the livestock lanes that connect the pastures to the watering system in the barnyard. Todd led a tour of the facilities. He showed us how the livestock lane was crowned to shed water and we discussed the appropriate width for a lane to accommodate livestock and equipment.

I think that seeing and hearing about the practice from different people allowed Borchardt to learn in the way that worked best for her. She realized that she had enough details figured out to move forward. And if her temporary cow lane needed improvement, she knew she could contact her local conservation office for help.

The third pasture walk “Managed Grazing and Soil Health” affirmed the choices that Borchardt had made. She arrived excited to share her progress—she had fenced the entire pasture, pouring the pre-drilled composite PVC posts in by hand with a post pounder. And the cows were excited to graze as soon as they opened the gate, even eating some of the mature grasses and legumes that she didn’t think were palatable, while leaving many of the weeds. I reminded her to maintain 6” residual grazing heights to prevent germination of the seedbank in future years.

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Organic Corn & Soybeans — from page 1

Adding to the action at the USDA, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) convened a Global Organic Supply Chain Integrity (GOSCI) task force in June 2017 that has since created a best practice guide with initiatives that can be implemented by companies involved in organic trade to further reduce the chances of fraud in the organic supply chain. In May of this year, OTA announced that it had kicked off a pilot program based on the GOSCI recommendations, with a select group of companies, to test drive some of the new practices and see how effective they are in actual trade.

Increased Need for Domestic Production

The net result of these actions has been increased vigilance and enforcement along the supply chain, with the USDA NOP revoking organic certification for those caught in fraudulent activities. However, the real prize and benefit for U.S. farmers have been the increased demand and higher prices for domestically produced soybeans and corn used for organic feed.

“Protein producers [livestock and poultry] need to protect their brand, and heard quite clearly the shot across the bow from last year,” said Ken Dallmier, president of Clarkson Grain Company in Cerro Gordo, Ill., one of the country’s largest identity-preserved soybean suppliers. Dallmier believes that U.S. poultry producers who are dependent upon these shipments to meet their feed needs.

While the U.S. organic feed market may need imported grain to meet current demand, there is plenty of land available to transition to organic production if U.S. producers are willing to make the investment for the future. At this point, less than 1 percent of total U.S. soybean and corn acres are being farmed organically. According to the latest USDA-NASS survey on organic production published in the fall of 2017, U.S. farmers harvested nearly 25.6 million bushels of organic corn on almost 214,000 acres, and just over 4.6 million bushels of organic soybeans from almost 125,000 acres in 2016. During that same year, U.S. buyers imported 21.7 million bushels of organic corn and 13.8 million bushels of organic soybeans—more than half of the total U.S. supply of organic soy and corn for that year. Based on USDA-reported average yields, those imports represent nearly 600,000 acres of production worth nearly $400 million.

The import numbers clearly show that the U.S. feed market has grown dependent upon these shipments to meet the rapidly growing demand. However, in the months following the May 2017 news article on the fraudulent imports, the monthly volume of imports for both organic soybeans and corn began to decrease—slowly for soybeans, but more quickly for organic corn. (See tables to right.)

By the end of 2017, while total imports of soybeans had increased 15 percent over 2016 to reach 15.9 million bushels, the volume of imported corn dropped by 35 percent to hit 14.6 million bushels. Looking more closely at the January to June period of 2018 compared to the same period in 2017, we can see that organic soybean imports are down 19.1 percent from the previous year in those first six months, while organic corn imports are down by a whopping 81.4 percent during that same period. How the rest of 2018 pans out is still to be determined. But, a tight domestic supply of organic corn and 13.8 million bushels of organic soybeans for the feed industry, and the time to come. However, the increased demand and preference for U.S.-produced organic grains is beginning to show itself in rising prices being paid to farmers for organic grain as imports slow down. This is happening at the same time that conventional farm-gate prices have dropped to recent historical lows—below the actual cost of

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This summer, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed an error in its widely cited 2016 report that ranked the suicide rate among farmers as the highest of any occupation in the country. The CDC said it had misclassified farmers as part of the center’s “farming, fishing, and forestry” occupational group. While confusion around the actual rate of suicide among farmers centers on how they are classified in the data, any rate of suicide among farmers, ranchers, or farm workers is too high. The positive side of all this attention is that it has people talking about the issues that lead to suicide and ways to help farmers cope with the stress of farming. In May before the CDC’s news, National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson wrote to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, urging him to proactively address the farmer suicide crisis. Johnson asked Perdue to use the resources at USDA to help agency personnel and the Cooperative Extension Service learn to identify and respond to signs of mental stress, and to convene rural stakeholders to work with agencies and non-profits to identify best practices in responding to farmer stress. Lawmakers are currently working on the 2018 Farm Bill which includes a provision (Section 7511) called the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network. This provision would support community-based mental health services. The provision also calls for the USDA Secretary to prepare a report on the state of behavioral health in the rural community. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has a free, 24/7 help line (833-600-2670 x 1) that connects callers who are overwhelmed or suicidal with people who are trained in dealing with personal crises. In addition to that crisis line, MDA also retains Ted Matthews as its Rural Mental Health Counselor. (See mda.state.mn.us/about/mnfarmerstress/copingstress.) He has counseled dozens of farmers through tough times. “Farming has always been a very stressful occupation with so many possible negative outcomes, and everyone handles stress in different ways,” Matthews said. He encourages farmers to look for the things they can control, and not focus on things they can’t, such as the weather or commodity prices. “By putting our energy into what we have no control over, we can reduce our stress,” he added. Matthews encourages the farmers he counsels to communicate with their partner or spouse. “My dealings with many women in agriculture are with personal crises. In addition to that crisis line, one, and bonding comes with communication,” he said. “Men, on the other hand, when stressed, communicate less.” He recommends setting aside at least 15 minutes a day to talk about what happened that day on the farm for both partners. “The simple reason for that is that two heads are better than one, and bonding comes with communication,” he explained. Matthews also counsels his callers to “be nice.” Stress can make people quick to anger or snap at their partners. He encourages people to be aware of that tendency and make an effort to treat others—and ourselves—more kindly in times of stress. “By being kind to ourselves, we have a greater capacity to be kind to others,” he added.

Factors Behind Farmer Suicide

Farming is widely viewed as a high-stress occupation with financial risks and physically demanding work. While the additional stress of extreme weather events and volatile markets are beyond a farmer’s control, farmers feel it personally when these factors impact a farm’s success. When farms have been handed down through a family, struggling farmers often feel the added dimension of letting down past generations if the farm fails. Farming is also widely viewed as a noble profession. Farmers are caretakers of the land and food providers—roles they take seriously. Dr. Mike Rosmann, an Iowa farmer, clinical psychologist, and syndicated columnist, describes this noble approach to farming as the “agrarian imperative theory.” He believes people have “a genetic imperative to produce life’s essentials”—food, clothing, and shelter. His view is there is something inherent driving farmers to work incredibly hard, endure physical hardship, take uncommon risks and rely chiefly on themselves to provide these essentials. “The strong urge to succeed at all costs, even ending one’s life, is seen somehow as more noble than failure at farming,” Rosmann wrote in an article about farmer suicide. Opening up discussion about the topic of suicide seems to be at the core of prevention. Dr. Helen Farrell, a psychiatrist with Harvard Medical School, wrote, “Glib remarks such as ‘everybody has them’ perpetuate the myth that suicidal thoughts are part of a normal human experience and imply that suffering individuals should just deal with it with themselves.”

Help for Farmers

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has a free, 24/7 help line (833-600-2670 x 1) that connects callers who are overwhelmed or suicidal with people who are trained in dealing with personal crises. In addition to that crisis line, MDA also retains Ted Matthews as its Rural Mental Health Counselor. (See mda.state.mn.us/about/mnfarmerstress/copingstress.) He has counseled dozens of farmers through tough times. “Farming has always been a very stressful occupation with so many possible negative outcomes, and everyone handles stress in different ways,” Matthews said. He encourages farmers to look for the things they can control, and not focus on things they can’t, such as the weather or commodity prices. “By putting our energy into what we can change instead of being overwhelmed by what we have no control over, we can reduce our stress,” he added. Matthews encourages the farmers he counsels to communicate with their partner or spouse. “My dealings with many women in agriculture show their number-one issue on the farm is lack of communication,” he said. “Men, on the other hand, when stressed, communicate less.” He recommends setting aside at least 15 minutes a day to talk about what happened that day on the farm for both partners. “The simple reason for that is that two heads are better than one, and bonding comes with communication,” he explained. Matthews also counsels his callers to “be nice.” Stress can make people quick to anger or snap at their partners. He encourages people to be aware of that tendency and make an effort to treat others—and ourselves—more kindly in times of stress. “By being kind to ourselves, we have a greater capacity to be kind to others,” he added.

Ways to Reduce Stress

If suicide is seen as a way out of a stressful situation, one way to prevent suicide would be to reduce stress. The Cleveland Clinic has a succinct list of helpful tips to follow to reduce stress. (See my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/81533-stress-10-ways-to-ease-stress.) Mental health experts recommend regular exercise to lower stress and anxiety. Exercise releases endorphins, those feel-good hormones.

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GH4125
This medium maturity variety is a complete package of yield, test weight and standability.

Crisis Lines for Farmers

National Farmers Union Farm Crisis Center: farmcrisis.nfu.org
Crisis hotline: 800-273-8255

Farm Aid Farmer Hotline: 888-FARM-AID

State Hotlines:
Minnesota: 833-600-2670
Wisconsin: 800-642-2474
Iowa: 800-447-1985
Missouri: 888-279-8188


To Manage Farm Stress on page 14

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Cover Crops — from page 1

Cover crop mixes tend to give you the best return on investment and greatest chance of success given variable soil, moisture, environmental and weather conditions. Adequate species diversity in a cover crop blend can maximize resource use, rooting depths and synergistically enhance growth of the entire mix.

A cover crop mix can be as diverse and variable as you desire, but 3-5 species typically minimizes seeding issues and keeps costs reasonable. A grass/brassica mixture (e.g., oats/radish, oats/tur-nips) is a low-cost way to achieve diversity that can fit in multiple rotations. A 3-way grass, brassica, legume (e.g., oats/peas/radish, winter rye/hairy vetch/radish) mixture will provide benefits of all three species given a well-formulated seeding rate.

Managing Winter Rye

Winter rye is one of the most useful and ubiquitous cover crops for producers in the Upper Midwest due to its winter hardness, adaptability to a variety of soil types and growing conditions, competitive ability with weeds, and ability to produce significant biomass in the spring of the year. In fact, winter rye can put on so much growth in so little time that terminating and incorporating it can be a challenge, depending on your machinery and timing.

Winter rye competes very well with weeds; its root system and young tissue exude water-soluble allelopathic compounds into the soil that can suppress the germination and growth of small-seeded weeds. It provides excellent forage quality for livestock and can be seeded basically until the ground freezes. (The seed can germinate at 35°F!) However, the later you seed into the fall, the slower the stand is to establish and grow the following spring.

It is important to fit winter rye into the right rotation. If planted after full-season corn (before soybeans), winter rye has very little time to establish before winter. Growing winter rye before next season’s corn can also be problematic. Recent research from USDA and Iowa State has shown that winter rye roots can harbor Fusarium, Pythium, and other pathogenic fungi that can infect young corn seedlings. Moreover, winter rye can overutilize soil moisture and nitrogen in nutrient- or moisture-deficient soils, especially as it reaches the reproductive stage.

While it can be difficult to ascertain what characteristic of rye is actually stunting corn growth in the field, experts recommended waiting at least two weeks after incorporation to plant corn after winter rye. You can definitely get a poor stand of corn following rye without the right rotation management. Soybeans after winter rye, however, are much more forgiving and are a nice rotational fit.

Winter rye is the most popular choice for the organic no-till soybean system due to its vigor, tall growth, winter survival, competitive ability, allelopathic qualities, relatively early maturity, and resilient residues after termination. Research from University of Wisconsin and other institutions have helped growers be more successful with this system as it can combine cover crop benefits with an active row crop rotation with limited to no yield drag in optimum years.

However, there are some general guidelines to follow. Ensure you plant your winter rye early enough in the fall so it gets well established (typically before Sept. 30 in the Upper Midwest, but it can vary by latitude). Also seed enough so you have a complete stand (at least 3 bushels/acre or ~175 lbs/acre).

Seeding Recommendations After Corn (grain), Soybeans

As described above, there is little time after a full-season corn or soybean grain crop to get reliable establishment of most cover corps with the exception of hairy vetch. Winter rye can be successfully drilled after harvest or flown into standing corn when the crop reaches physiological maturity (black layer for corn, leaf yellowing for soybeans). Time these seedings with rain and ensure adequate establishment before Sept. 30 in the Upper Midwest, but it can vary by latitude. Also seed enough so you have a complete stand (at least 3 bushels/acre or ~175 lbs/acre).

To Cover Crops on page 14
Farmers offer tips to help others start on-farm service
By Lisa Kivirist

The growing interest in on-farm, agritourism experiences combined with consumer enthusiasm for local foods has fueled growth in dinner-on-the-farm ventures. But diversifying into on-farm meals is not a simple nor low cost diversification strategy for farmers as these endeavors involve jumping into arenas we’re not typically familiar with, like building commercial kitchens and navigating various health department regulations.

Add in the high price tag of such efforts and the importance of solid research and education before investing grows apparent.

Renewing the Countryside offers that through its Come and Get It project, with the tagline, “What you need to know to serve food on your farm.” This project provides free resources and expert advice for farmers looking to potentially diversify into on-farm food service to help them best manage risk and make sound business decisions.

“There definitely is increasing opportunity for farms to diversify and grow income through expanding into agritourism offerings that incorporate their own farm-raised ingredients, from on-farm dinners to pizza farms to various food events,” explained Brett Olson, creative director of Renewing the Countryside, a Minnesota-based organization that champions rural revitalization.

“Unfortunately, few resources exist to provide farmers with guidance, resources and support in such efforts, and we want to address this need.”

The Come and Get It program, with funding from a North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education partnership grant, fills this gap by providing expert support and resources for farmers seeking to successfully launching such ventures. Support from the Minnesota Sustainable Agriculture Institute (MISA) and Farm Commons initially helped launch this unique program, the only training program of its kind in the country.

Seven farm partners in Minnesota and Wisconsin serve on the project team for Come and Get It, providing advice and support to farmers looking to potentially start such operations: Together Farms in Mondovi, Wis., Suncrest Gardens Farm in Cochrane, Wis., Borner Farm Project in Prescott, Wis., Dream Acres Farm in Spring Valley, Minn., and Moonstone Farm in Montevideo, Minn. Campo di Bella and Squash Blossom Farm also hosted on-farm field days during the summer of 2018 to give farmers a “behind the scenes” look at their kitchen operations.

Project elements include a free detailed manual with specific versions for Minnesota and Wisconsin to help farmers assess and evaluate the business planning aspects of adding an on-farm food enterprise, including navigating the various regulatory categories, assessing market opportunity, food businesses license categories, liability and food safety compliance and marketing. The manual also includes case study stories of two farms: Stoney Acres in Athens, Wis., and Dinner on the Farm in Rochester, Minn.

A new element of this project includes a research component in partnership with the Applied Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Stout in which feedback and data will be collected from attendees at various on-farm events during the 2018 season and compiled. This research report will be available in an updated version of the manual in December 2018.

“This unique research data will help farmers looking into food service to gain a better understanding of who is coming to such events,” Olson said. “For the first time, we’ll have data on things like how these folks hear about such events, how far did they travel and what other services might they be looking for, like farm-stay overnight lodging.”

The collaborative spirit of the sustainable farming community shines in this project as the farm partner team generously share their reflections and advice for others looking to start such diversification income streams. Here are five key starter tips from these successful farmer entrepreneurs:

Take it slowly.

Take your time and do your research before spending a dime is a consistent piece of advice. Remember to ask yourself those bigger questions of how such an addition can fit in with and support your other farm efforts.

“Opening the on-farm restaurant and winery in 2015 has been a dream of Marc and mine for years, but it is something that came together slowly and strategically,” explained Mary Ann Bellazzini of Campo di Bella Farm. “We still keep creatively experimenting with ideas, always asking ourselves does this fit our values, especially prioritizing our family and spending time with our two teens.”

Even when you officially embark on building a kitchen, realize these projects still can go slowly, especially when dealing with various contractors and builders. “We learned the hard way that the best laid plans don’t always work according to your schedule,” offered Susan Waughtal of Squash Blossom Farm. She and her husband, Roger Nelson, originally intended to open in June of 2016 for pizza; however, the electrical and plumbing contractors didn’t complete their work under September. “We were basically a small beans project to them and other bigger clients came first.”

Educate while you innovate.

Odda are what you are envisioning doesn’t fit into the typical regulation box. Keep communicating and education flowing between you and various agency representatives.

Dream Acre’s kitchen goes down in the commercial kitchen history books as it is the first completely off-grid, solar-powered facility of its kind. “Being off-grid, the kitchen took a lot of time to research and explain to the health department as it was so out of their box,” explained Eva Barr of Dream Acres Farm. “We’ve learned to be extremely upfront about what we’re doing in talking to regulators and to simply keep at it. Eventually you will find someone receptive to what you’re doing and willing to work with you.”

Stephanie Schneider of Together Farms had a similar experience building a food trailer for her on-farm food events. “Anytime I do something it seems like I’m the first to do it and have to talk to everyone in state government,” she recalled. “There are things we needed to work out because the trailer is not a permanent structure as there is no hard plumbing so we needed to hire someone to come and pump out the grey water.”
Couple crafts farm transfer plan that lets them live out their lives on farm

By Teresa Ogheim

Marïenné Kreitlow and her husband, Jerry Ford, have set up a plan that lets them live out their lives on the farm that has been in the Kreitlow family since 1898, transferring ownership upon their deaths to a young couple, Seth and Kiri Bravinder, who are family friends but not blood relations. This farm transfer plan protects their land and keeps it in farming. It’s also a generational transfer scenario that is increasingly common: at least three generations were involved in the planning.

Marïenné's 95-year-old father, Willard, lives with her and Jerry. He transferred title to the land to Marïenné (113 acres, including house and buildings) and her brother (467 acres) a few years ago, reserving a life estate. Rent checks still go to Willard; he is in charge of taxes, and helps on the farm when he can. He also is the inspiration for their philosophy that the land is "really on loan to us to care for and for leave it better."

Marïenné and Jerry rotationally graze cattle on Living Song Farm. They steward a wetland and forest. They grow organic garlic and potatoes for market, and manage conservation practices such as wildlife enhancements, native plant propagation, and soil and water conservation practices on the cropland.

"As pastures were taking over in the 1940s, he started to become aware he was losing topsoil," Jerry explained. "One spring, he had plowed and was ready to seed when it rained hard. He watched the topsoil wash down the hills. Most of the land here is highly erodible. He met with leading conservationists of the day and started implementing soil and water conservation practices. By the 1950s, he had all the steeper hills terraced and everything planted on the contour. He was an early adopter of no-till and grassed waterways. His farm always incorporated small grains and livestock, including dairy cattle and pastured pigs."

"According to Marïenné, Willard's focus on his "personal judgment rather than pressure from government and the neighbors" also meant that the farm survived debt-free through the 1980s, when so many other farms went out of business. "My dad never bought into the idea that you have to make it bigger and get all this equipment. He didn't take out the fencerows and the windbreaks. He wanted to provide a home for wildlife. He valued the land, Jerry explained. "We lost vehicles and were close to losing our house that was 19 feet above sea level! We were living like refugees. Then the attack on the World Trade Center happened, and that caused us to evaluate what we wanted to do."

Marïenné and Jerry decided to move to the farm as soon as possible, figuring they had just nine years before Jerry's teaching pension would kick in—and they could earn their living farming until then. They moved in 2002, the year Wright County had terrible flooding. "Our start here was trial by water," Jerry added. "The two settled into farming, but kept up with their careers in music and theater. Marïenné's mom died in 2004, the year Jerry began working with Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota (SFA)."

Jerry now is SFA's event coordinator and director of the Minnesota Garlic Fest. Marïenné continues to write and perform. "We wanted to figure out how to transition this land to them without strapping them financially. We didn't want to sell them the farm because we want to live here. We considered a life estate as a possibility, but Willard already has a life estate on the property," Jerry explained.

They settled on a "transfer on death" legal structure. If Marïenné and Jerry happened to pass before Willard, Willard's life estate would continue until his death, and then the land would go to Seth and Kiri.

The two couples are working out the financial and living arrangements independent of the land transfer. Seth and Kiri and their baby will be moving from St. Paul to the farm into temporary housing. Marïenné and Jerry are considering possibly selling them a piece of property so they can build a house. Seth and Kiri will pay rent on land they use to build a grass-fed beef operation.

"It's not necessary that they continue to grow garlic," Jerry added. "They could put the whole land in pasture, and it would achieve our conservation goals."

Jerry gives credit to high quality advisors for their succession plan. "I used to bristle when people would tell me you have to get a lawyer for this. Now I am the one to say you have to get a..."
Farm Transfer — from previous page

Kiwi and Seth Bravinder (and baby Amos) plan to start a grass-fed beef operation on rented land on their future farm. Photo submitted

lawyer who is well versed in property issues and estate planning. And, there are costs involved! To put all the paperwork in order cost us around $3,000. We’ll do tune-ups every couple of years, but the basic plan is in place.”

Jerry added that other people’s situations may be different. “But if things can be learned from our case, that is great,” he added.

Teresa Opheim was a Senior Fellow with the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture focused on farm transfers. She now works for Iroquois Valley Farms, a company making impact investments in organic and local agriculture using triple bottom line principles.

On-Farm Food Service — from page 9

Add additional sales opportunities.

An on-farm food service component can support and enhance other farm businesses. “The income we generate via selling food is not the primary reason we do this,” explained Audrey Amor of Moonstone Farm, which hosts a few events annually. Her core business component is grass-fed, pasture-raised beef and maintaining one of the first farm-stays in the area in the early 1990s. “We also sell our beef direct from the farm as well as fruit preserves made from farm-grown fruits such as currants, elderberries and apples, honey and pottery and burn art my husband and I make.”

Build Community Creatively.

Cultivating community can be a natural off-shoot of an on-farm food business, as Diane and Baard Webster realized in starting the Borner Farm Project, a unique 22-acres property located in the center of the town of Prescott, population 4,000.

“We never intended to start a pizza farm,” shared Diane Webster with a grin. “This journey really began with our desire to take care of this very unique property and do it in a way that helps support a local food system and build community.” An opportunity came on her radar that offered small grants for repeatable events that would create local community, which helped fund the pizza oven. Local response was strong. They now do about 13 pizza nights a year.

Be Open to Change.

Adding a food service element to your business mix undoubtedly will impact your core farming business. Be aware and open to change, advised Heather Secrist of Suncrest Gardens Farm. In 2017, after running her pizza nights for over 12 years, Secrist stopped the CSA side of the business as the pizza nights and other value-added items were significantly driving the farm business. “It was a very hard decision for me to make as we had been providing food to many of our members for years and I watched – and fed – their kids as they grew up.” Secrist saw an opportunity in utilizing her kitchen for other prepared food products and started doing frozen items like soups and pizzas at the Winona Farmers Market. “Our CSA customers still were really interested in these convenience foods that were healthy and local.”

Download the manual, Come & Get It: What you need to know to serve food on your farm at renewingthecountryside.org/on_farm_food_service.

Lisa Kivirist manages the MOSES In Her Boots project. She and her family run Inn Serendipity Farm and B&B outside Monroe, Wis.

Home Loam

A poem by Mariénne Kreitlow

I ride the current of the fence
and shoot around a hundred acres
in the winkin’ of an eye,
humming through emerald pastures,
where milkweed spills the dry cocoon.
Harper parachutes sail rip tide winds.
I surge past juniper and oak,
where red squirrels spring from tree to tree
and deer leave chiseled prints
where they nibbled yesterday.
With weasels gone, grey fox remain,
and coyotes do their best to outsmart wily hunters.
I arc over loam of fields fresh-ploughed
with names like Lester, Glencoe, St. James:
a legacy of prairie grass and giant oaks
composted into velvet black
that reaches way down deep,
where moles and gophers burrow in,
escaping traps and high strung dogs.
I charge through banks of velveted thistle,
and Indian mounds are rumored to have been.
I parallel the trick‘n that trickles to the ‘Crow’
that longs to join the Mississippi,
where muskrats swim unseen and wood ducks quack and flap
and guard their tender young.
I see roots grow from his feet
that longs to join the Mississippi,
and Indian mounds are rumored to have been.
I circle cow paths that twist and turn
like aged, lazy rivers
to end up where I started.

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Organic Corn & Soybeans — from page 6

production. Perhaps there has never been a better time to get into the organic market.

“We’re definitely seeing more interest at the grower level,” reported Louis Paquin, sales director for feed and corn for SunOpta, Inc., a specialty grain supplier and processor. “They want to better understand the agronomics and economics of the market. Farmers see that organic has continued to move upward even while CBOT [Chicago Board of Trade] moves downward.”

Since January of this year, according to USDA reports, farm-gate prices in the U.S. have risen from $17.70 per bushel for feed grade organic soybeans to $19.98 as of June, a 12.9 percent increase, while corn has risen from $8.95 to $10.47, up 17.0 percent. During the same time frame, the average price paid for imported organic soybeans rose just 6.1 percent, from $16.00 per bushel to $16.97, while the price for organic corn imports dropped 24.6 percent, from $11.41 to $8.60 per bushel, showing a clear disfavor for the corn imports. (See tables at right.) While the recent rise in domestic prices may be somewhat a reflection of short summer supply and strong demand, continually growing demand for U.S. product should keep prices attractive for American farmers for at least the next few years.

Encouraging Market

“We expect to see further expansion of this market going forward,” Paquin said. “Poultry is pulling demand and more large poultry processors are getting into the market.”

According to a 2018 consumer study published by OTA, retail sales of organic meat, poultry, and fish hit $1.2 billion in 2017, growing 17.1 percent from the previous year. Poultry represented 62.9 percent of those protein sales and grew at 20.0 percent, leading the category’s growth.

Regarding prices, Paquin added, “Although we are expecting a big organic crop this year, prices should stay flat to bullish for corn and perhaps there are more upside opportunities in soybeans as there was a lot of corn planted.”

Clarkson Grain’s Dallmier was happy to see that, even with the collapse in prices of conventional soybeans and corn, organic soybeans were still selling at over twice the price of conventional; organic corn prices were nearly three times higher.

While organic prices are not directly tied to CBOT, there has been a casual relationship between the two, with organic crops typically selling at two to three times the price for conventional,” Dallmier explained. “With these prices and the opportunity to have a guaranteed price contract, there is clearly growing interest in organic with more farmers asking how they can transition.”

Based upon the amount of organic corn and soybeans imported in 2016 and 2017, annual U.S. production appears to be short to the tune of nearly one million metric tons of organic grain, or about 600,000 acres of these crops. If the average organic operation is around 300 acres (USDA estimates), the U.S. market needs at least 2,000 more farms producing organic feed grain to meet current demand. Given the standard rotation of three to four years for organic crops, the needed acreage grows even larger—a big reach, indeed. Clearly, opportunities are there for both small and large producers to enter this rapidly growing and profitable market segment.

Peter Golbitz (peter.golbitz@agromeris.com) is president of Agromeris, a consulting firm focused on the unique needs of the specialty food and agricultural marketplace.

Organic & Conventional Corn, Price per Bushel, 2018

Source: USDA FAS GATS & USDA AMS

Ask a Specialist — from page 4

Once the crop is up, it is advised to stay out of it and avoid driving through it. Anything that sets the crop back will increase the likelihood of delayed maturity and ergot forming.

The seed is patent-protected; growers cannot save seed for planting or selling the following year as the saved seed will not be true to type. (not advisable with a hybrid anyway as the saved seed will delay maturity and ergot forming.

If a grower buys hybrid rye seed, they must have a marketing plan for the crop at the time of purchase. There are companies that will buy hybrid rye grain [Brooks Grain in Jeffersonville, Ind.; Scoular in Omaha; and, Grain Millers in Eden Prairie, Minn.], and there are feed producers and livestock farmers who are interested in the grain as well due to its near complete absence of ergot.

In fact, winter rye is routinely fed to pigs and other livestock in Europe and there are ongoing feed studies in the U.S. to evaluate hybrid rye as a viable animal feed vs. corn, wheat, and other available grains in the Midwest. Rye grain is very high in soluble fiber, which is beneficial for both animal and human health. Incorporating more rye into livestock rations could have wide ranging beneficial effects on the farm landscape.

In short, hybrid winter rye is a promising new crop option for Upper Midwest organic producers.
What are the principles and practices that Gabe Brown employs to build soil and encourage soil health?

Brown describes the impetus, process, and results of shifting the focus of his farming operations to building soil. He emphasizes the importance of soil health and argues that improving soils should be the approach taken by conservationists. Brown’s practices include using cover crops and livestock to repair and build soil, providing “green manure” for subsequent crops, and maximizing long-term sustainability.

How has Gabe Brown’s approach to farming impacted his family and community?

Brown’s approach to farming has had a profound impact on his family and community. His techniques have improved soil health, reduced erosion, and increased crop yields. This has led to a greater sense of resilience and sustainability within the community. Brown’s efforts to educate others about the importance of soil health have also inspired a broader movement towards sustainable agriculture.

What is the impact of Brown’s personal and professional experiences on his approach to farming?

Brown’s personal experiences as a “reckless abandonment” of traditional farming practices have shaped his approach to farming. He has thrown his influence and expertise into shifting the focus of his operations to building soil. His personal and professional experiences have inspired him to share his knowledge and inspire others to adopt similar practices.

What are the benefits of using cover crops and livestock to improve soil health?

Using cover crops and livestock to improve soil health has multiple benefits. Cover crops help to build soil structure, improve soil fertility, and reduce erosion. Livestock can help to incorporate manure into the soil, provide organic matter, and improve soil tilth. These practices also help to increase microbial activity, which is critical for creating healthy soil. Overall, these practices are an effective way to improve soil health and sustainability in agriculture.

What is the significance of Brown’s personal and professional experiences in shaping his approach to farming?

Brown’s personal and professional experiences have been instrumental in shaping his approach to farming. His experiences as a “reckless abandonment” of traditional practices have led him to question the conventional wisdom of his industry. His践行 his personal principles by deliberately building soil. Brown’s personal experiences have also given him a perspective that is unique to his farming operations.

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Brown’s personal experiences as a “reckless abandonment” of traditional practices have been instrumental in shaping his approach to farming. His questioning of the conventional wisdom of the industry has led him to question the status quo and explore new practices. Brown’s personal experiences have given him a perspective that is unique to his farming operations. His approach to farming has had a significant impact on his family and community, and has inspired a broader movement towards sustainable agriculture.

What are the benefits of using cover crops and livestock to improve soil health?

Using cover crops and livestock to improve soil health has multiple benefits. Cover crops help to build soil structure, improve soil fertility, and reduce erosion. Livestock can help to incorporate manure into the soil, provide organic matter, and improve soil tilth. These practices also help to increase microbial activity, which is critical for creating healthy soil. Overall, these practices are an effective way to improve soil health and sustainability in agriculture.
Pasture Walks — from page 5

We were able to review her soil test results again with the group and confirm that the previous owner’s excessive application of manure had built up the levels of soil nutrients so she didn’t need to apply more. And we reminded her to follow-up with the soil testing lab to update her soil test recommendation to give a nitrogen credit for the legumes growing in her pasture.

Her current soil test report suggested adding nitrogen fertilizer based on the assumption of a pasture mix with no legumes. Given that the 30% legume content in her pasture will fix nitrogen biologically, adding nitrogen would have wasted money on fertilizer that she was already getting for free.

I recommend pasture walks to landowners and farmers to meet new people, build community, and see the world in new ways. Negotiating pasture leases or planning farm transitions can cause some people to close up to outside perspectives, but getting outside and using the senses of sight, smell, and touch open our minds.

If you are considering working with a farmer or landowner, invite them to a local pasture walk.

Manage Farm Stress — from page 7

Exercise also improves sleep, another important factor in stress management. While farming can be an active lifestyle, much of it can be repetitive motions and not balanced exercise for the whole body. In many cases, too, modern equipment has replaced hand labor, leading to less physical activity.

Farm Strong, an organization out of New Zealand, offers a free online “Farm Fit Challenge” program that includes a 4-week workout plan that gradually increases in intensity as the exerciser gains strength. (See farmstrong.co.nz/wellbeing-topics/farm-fit.)

Experts also recommend a healthy diet to reduce the effects of stress. “Eating the rainbow,” or a diet with a wide variety of types and colors of foods can reduce stress, lower cholesterol, and even help maintain a healthy weight.

“Eating the rainbow” includes:
- Feeling a sense of purpose;
- Connecting to the world;
- Releasing control;
- Expanding your support network.

The farming profession has long attracted rugged individualists who seek a quiet, self-sufficient lifestyle where success rests squarely on their shoulders. But, as anthropologists have noted, humans were meant to be part of a community — even the most rugged of individualists needs the support of family, friends, and neighbors for good mental health.

In our current economic environment, financial success on farms is more elusive than ever. Farmers need support to help them weather this economic storm if they’re to continue farming. But, there also needs to be room in our community for farmers to choose to change careers in order to maintain a healthy, productive life.

We are all striving for a healthy society and rural communities where organic and sustainable farms can have an impact for the long term. When a farmer commits suicide, we lose the farmer and often the farm. This is not sustainable. There is help available, and talking to someone isn’t a sign of weakness.

As MDA’s Matthews said when explaining why farmers call him, “It isn’t about what’s wrong with you. It’s about how you can make this life better.”

John Mesko is the executive director of MOSES.

Cover Crops — from page 8

It is not advisable to plant winter rye after corn going into small grains as it will be challenging to kill the rye before the optimal time to plant spring small grains. Having rye in your oats, wheat, or barley will reduce the desirability of your crop to marketers.

After Corn (silage), Soybeans, Dry Beans, Vegetables

When corn silage, early soybeans, sweet corn, vegetables or dry edible beans come off before the middle of September, there is an excellent window to seed a variety of cover crops beyond winter rye like brassicas and legumes. Brassicas and fall legumes should be seeded before Sept. 15 (can vary with latitude) in the Upper Midwest to provide the best chance for optimum growth and return on your investment; seeding the first week in September would be more ideal.

Oats or winter rye with radish, turnips or forage rape provide excellent late-fall forage and can hold onto spread manure. If you’re rotating into a higher-need crop like wheat or vegetables the next season, seeding peas with oats can help fix some nitrogen. Hairy vetch with oats or winter rye also work well in rotation if you have a cash crop seeding later (June).

Drilling the cover crops in after the cash crop is harvested will always give you the best establishment vs. broadcasting or other seeding methods. Always pay close attention to seeding depth when seeding multi-species mixes.

After Small Grains, Vegetables

If you’re harvesting a cash crop in early to mid-August, you have ample time to seed a wide variety of cover crops. Annual legumes in the Upper Midwest like crimson clover, berseem clover, faba beans, sunn hemp, cowpeas, and common vetch could be seeded with success in a mixture and put on reasonable growth before the weather turns cool. Diverse multi-species mixes of cool-season cover crops (like oats, winter rye, peas, radish, etc.) and warm-season cover crops (like buckwheat, sorghum/sudan, cowpeas, etc.) could be explored if the mixture were seeded around Aug. 15.

Depending on the investment you choose to make in cover cropping, you could even plant a series at this stage. For example, you could plant buckwheat directly after cash crop harvest then follow that with a cool-season blend of oat/peas/ radish or oats/radish. You could also save money by allowing a small grain crop to volunteer seed after harvest and drill in some higher-value cover crop species like clovers, legumes, or brassicas with it.

Matt Leavitt is an organic specialist with MOSES.
MOSES expands team of organic specialists to answer farmers’ questions

By Audrey Alwell

We’ve expanded our team of organic specialists to include more expertise from our farming community. This new team includes our lead organic specialist, Matt Leavitt, who is the point person taking questions to send out to the wider team when the topic falls in a team member’s expertise.

The new team includes Christopher Barnier, Dave Bishop, Rachel Henderson, Mariann Holm, and Chris McGuire. They attend events to represent MOSES, answer farmers’ questions in our booth at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference, and write occasionally for the Organic Broadcaster—see Dave Bishop’s “Ask a Specialist” answer on page 4 of this issue.

To access this expanded network of specialists, call our Organic Answer Line (715-778-5775) or submit your questions at bit.ly/AskaSpecialist.

Matt Leavitt
matt@mosesorganic.org
Matt holds a master’s degree in agronomy from the University of Minnesota. Prior to joining MOSES in 2017, he worked with Albert Lea Seed.

Dave Bishop
dave@mosesorganic.org
OGRAIN Consultant
Dave and his family have a 480-acre farm in central Illinois, PrairiErth Farm, with a diverse mix of crops and livestock. The farm has been certified organic since 2004. The Bishops are the 2017 MOSES Organic Farmers of the Year and received the 2018 Ed Vollmer Award for Sustainable Agriculture from the Illinois Department of Ag.

Rachel Henderson
rachelhenderson@mosesorganic.org
Rachel and her husband, Anton, own and operate Mary Dirty Face Farm near Menomonie, Wis. They grow 9 acres of certified organic berries, apples, pears, and plums. They’ve recently added livestock as an additional enterprise for the farm. Rachel is past coordinator of the Organic Fruit Growers Association.

Mariann Holm
mariannholm@mosesorganic.org
Mariann and her husband, Doran, raise organic dairy heifers on their grass-based farm in Dunn County, Wis. Mariann is an organic crop and livestock inspector, and serves on the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council and the Menomonie Market Food Co-op Board of Directors.

Chris Barnier
chrisbarnier@mosesorganic.org
Chris retired from the USDA Farm Service Agency and has been an independent organic inspector in Minnesota and Wisconsin since 2008. Chris and his wife, Claudia, live on a 50-acre organic crop farm near Maiden Rock, Wis.

Chris McGuire
chrismcguire@mosesorganic.org
Chris and his wife, Juli, have farmed since 2003 at Two Onion Farm in Belmont, Wis. They grow certified organic vegetables and fruits for CSA members, farmers markets, and local grocery stores on their 12-acre farm.

Audrey Alwell is the communications director at MOSES.
Inside Organics — from page 3

consumers. Reportedly, most of the consumption in alternative not-milks is by shoppers who are not vegans, vegetarians, or lactose-intolerant but erroneously think that these products are more nutritious and healthy.

In terms of growth in organic dairy production, all cows are not created equal. Managing animals in a confinement environment and pumping them full of TMR (total mixed rations) before sending them out on pasture means some herds have rolling production averages of, literally, twice as much milk as authentically managed organic cows. Cornucopia staff, including myself as our point person on dairy issues, have visited many of these operations. (I definitely do not call them “farms.”) We have also spent thousands to pay for aerial photography to surveille these giant facilities. But we really didn’t have to do any of that. All we needed to do was look at the regulatory documents that are required in each state, including the manure/nutrient management plans for these dairies.

Any experienced dairyman or woman knows that the numbers just do not add up. How can you actually milk cows, many thousands of them in a single facility, in semi-arid or true desert conditions, moving them in and out of the milking parlor sometimes three or four times a day? Real dairy producers know that it’s challenging to rotate cows to a fresh paddock even twice a day. When Cornucopia surveyed certified organic dairy producers nationwide, the nation, we found that they averaged approximately one acre of pasture per cow (that varied a little bit because some producers included young stock).

In contrast, regulatory documents show that some of the certified organic CAFOs have a stocking density of 10 cows per acre. In technical terms, at Cornucopia we call that a phenomenal “stretch.” But if you dig deeper into the documents, or interview some of the current or former employees of the dairies, you find that some of these operations are actually cutting hay off the same “pasture.” In technical terms, we call that a “joke.”

And what do these pastures look like? In many cases they are not based on well-established perennials, but rather annuals that burn up in the desert heat, giving these giant dairies a convenient excuse to replant, irrigate, and keep the cattle off. From a legal standpoint, we contend that they are not meeting the mandate to provide “access to pasture” if they have no pasture! And when USDA investigators confirmed our allegations, once again, McEvoy and the NOP let the giant dairies off the hook.

Take the case of Aurora Dairy, the largest organic milk producer in the country, with giant CAFOs in Texas and Colorado. After adjudicating a formal legal complaint by The Cornucopia Institute a decade ago, career civil servants at the USDA found that Aurora had “willfully” violated 14 tenets of the federal organic standards and recommended they be decertified. Instead, Bush administration political appointees let them continue to operate with some modest adjustments to their operations under a one-year probation.

In 2017, we worked with The Washington Post on an investigative story that documented Aurora’s largest dairy, managing 29,000 animals, doing a token job, at best, of grazing. We filed another complaint. This time it was adjudicated by holdovers at the NOP from the Obama administration.

How did they handle it? They had dismissed other complaints we filed in 2015, after aerial surveillance documented no cows out on pasture on days quite suitable for grazing. In these cases, the NOP did nothing more than contact the certifiers, the inspectors paid large fees by the giant dairies, who assured USDA officials that they were “certified in good standing.” Case closed.

When it came to the Aurora complaint we filed last year, armed with the Washington Post evidence, they decided it warranted a direct inspection by USDA investigators. So they contacted Aurora executives, and their lawyers, and made an appointment to visit.

On hearing this, Francis Thicke, a longtime certified organic dairy farmer from Fairfield, Iowa, former Obama-era appointee to the NOSB and 2012 MOSES Organic Farmer of the Year, said, “Whoever heard of a law enforcement agency calling up a suspected meth lab and setting up a mutually convenient appointment to carry out a search?”

Saving the Organic Label

There are now effectively two “organic” labels:

One covers the true meaning of organic environmental stewardship, humane animal husbandry, and economic justice for farmers; the other has morphed into nothing more than corporate greed and exploitation—abusing the trust and goodwill of consumers.

Nowhere is this truer than in the dairy sector. Organic family farms are being forced out of business, and there’s a 50-50 chance that consumers are buying milk that isn’t meeting their expectations of organic. Based on most recent USDA records, the six certified “organic” dairies in Texas produce 1.4 times more milk than the 453 organic dairy farms in Wisconsin.

How do you tell the two organic labels apart? They both bear the same USDA seal.

The new Cornucopia Organic Dairy Scorecard separates illegal factory farm production—that burns out cows, is hard on the environment, competively disadvantages ethical farmers, and produces milk with substandard nutrients—from authentic organic milk.

Cornucopia has done the research, but, with about 10,000 members, has a limited ability to shift market share without all of us working together.

We need organic farmers, who are universally respected by consumers, to make your voices heard. We will shortly have some materials available that you can share on social media. Dairy producers should partner with dairy processors. Sample products at grocery stores in your region. And work with us to figure out clever and creative ways to reach the people with true economic power.

Together, we can make a difference. We can’t trust corporate agribusiness, or their lobbyists, or the political appointees at the USDA to protect us from fraud. There is a higher power than the USDA or the federal courts for enforcing the law—the consumer dollar! We must educate our family, friends, and neighbors. Together we have the power to move the needle.

We have a secret weapon in organics: Millions of consumers passionately care and want the safest and most nutritious food for their families, real organic food, and they want farmers to be treated fairly and respectfully.

It is imperative that we all work together to educate our consumer allies so they can vote with their food dollars to support the true heroes in organics, farmers and the brands their ethical processing and marketing partners control.

We will be supplying some hands-on tools that dairy producers, and other organic farmers can use to take action. I hope you will visit with us at the Cornucopia booth at the MOSES Conference this coming February. In the meantime, visit our website, www.cornucopia.org, and take advantage of materials to engage your friends, family, and customers. We need everyone in the organic community to stand today with organic dairy farmers who now have their livelihoods at risk. Please remember that the reputation of the organic label, something we all own together, is at risk as well.

Mark Kastel is a co-founder and Senior Farm Policy Analyst of Cornucopia Institute, a farm policy research group best known for acting as an organic industry watchdog.
Fact Sheet on Complying with FSMA

MOSES has created a new fact sheet in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to understand organic farming practices and certification requirements so they can better serve organic producers. He is working with the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) to take place Oct. 24-26 at the InterContinental Saint Paul Riverfront in St. Paul, Minn. This is the semi-annual meeting for the board to hear comments from the public about substances used in organic production. Written comments and requests for a speaking time at the meeting must be received by Oct. 4, 2018. Speaker slots are limited and are filled as requests are received. The NOSB will also hold public comment webinars Oct. 16 and 18.

Party for Organic Prior to NOSB Meeting

The MOSES team is organizing a party the evening of Oct. 23 at the Amsterdam in downtown St. Paul to welcome the national organic community to the Upper Midwest. Special musical guest is Cloud Cult, ranked by Rolling Stone as one of the Top 10 Greenest Bands—lead musicians Craig and Connie Minowa just happen to be organic farmers! See www.cloudcult.com/about for more on the band.

A limited block of $50 tickets is on sale to the public. See mosesorganic.org/party-for-organic for details. Event sponsors include Organic Valley and Prairie Organic Spirits.

Webinars for NRCS Staff

MOSES Organic Specialist Matt Leavitt is presenting a series of webinars to help staff from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) understand organic farming practices and certification requirements so they can better serve organic producers. He is working with NRCS staff at the state and national level.

Organic & Non-GMO Forum

Handlers, buyers, farmers, and processors will gather in St. Louis Oct. 29-30, 2018 for the Organic & Non-GMO Forum. Presentations will focus on strategies to develop the organic and non-GMO supply chain. Matt Leavitt, MOSES Organic Specialist, will lead an international panel of organic farmers discussing systems for diversifying production capacity, optimizing profitability, and incorporating technological innovation. See www.ongforum.com.

Thank Chris Blanchard PageWeb

Chris Blanchard, host of the Farmer-to-Farmer Podcast, announced earlier this month that he is no longer able to produce the show. In his farewell letter, Chris wrote, “I believe too ill to continue its production, and I do not expect to get better.” The 3-year-old podcast has 176 episodes archived at www.farmerfarmerpodcast.com.

Friends and fans of his show have created a webpage, www.thankyouchris.com, to send Chris and his family notes of support and thanks for his years of mentoring market farmers. They’ve also reached out to MOSES to create a scholarship fund to send market farmers to the annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference, which Chris had such a hand in creating. He coordinated the workshops at the conference for over a decade and was also the co-director of the conference for many years. Chris was able to share his farming knowledge through the conference by presenting numerous workshops and delivering an inspiring keynote at this year’s event. (See www.youtube.com/user/mosesorganic/videos). To donate to the Chris Blanchard Scholarship Fund, see bit.ly/ChrisBlanchardScholarship2MOSES.

Organic Grain Producers Network

Farmers who grow organic grain or are just getting started in organic production will find an active support network in the OGAN (listserv maintained by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Recent discussions have covered clover removal, hybrid rye as a cash crop, and overcoming a boron deficiency. To subscribe to the listerv, email join-oganslists.wisc.edu. OGRAIN is a collaborative effort of the UW-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS), Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC), UW-Madison/ UWEX Organic and Sustainable Cropping Systems, and MOSES, with support from the USDA Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program.
Wisconsin Pollinator Research
Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison are looking for grower collaborators in Wisconsin for a pollinator research project in the summer of 2019 and 2020. The project will evaluate the impact of pollinator habitat on the wild bee community, crop pollination, and yield. Farms must have established pollinator habitat and be willing to grow cucumbers and melons. For information, contact Dr. Hannah Gaines Day at hgniness@wisc.edu or 774-392-0498.

Organic Grain Enterprise Budgets
Michigan State University Extension has published organic grain crop enterprise budgets in Excel to help farmers establish or expand an organic grain farm. Budgets are available for corn, soybeans, oats, winter wheat, and barley. They provide estimates of returns and selected costs from a variety of certified organic grain crop enterprises in central and southern Michigan. See www.canr.msu.edu/news/organic-grain-crop-enterprise-budgets-are-available.

New Podcast on Organic Grain Farming
Pipeline Foods has released a podcast called “Into the Weeds” that digs into the details of organic grain production, marketing, risk management, transition challenges, and more. The company also has created a video series called Going Organic that is following farmer Kade McBroom as he transitions land in Missouri. Access these media at www.pipelinefoods.com/blog.

New Organic Grain Facility in Iowa
Pipeline Foods recently acquired a grain elevator in Iowa, bringing its total to six organic processing facilities in the U.S. and Canada. The company purchased the Atlantic, Iowa facility from Archer Daniels Midland Company, and has been upgrading the elevator to open mid-September.

Opportunity for Local Food Producers
The Fifth Annual FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace is accepting applications for food and drink businesses from Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota for its event Nov. 30-Dec. 1, 2018, in Rochester, Minn. Exhibitors show, sample and sell their artisan food products to wholesale buyers and consumers during the two-day event. They also participate in a Friday tradeshow with networking and workshops. See www.local-feast.org.

Perennial Crops Resource
Savanna Institute has published Perennial Pathways: Planting Tree Crops, which describes ways to integrate perennial crops into existing farming systems. The 110-page book is $20 or free to download at www.savannainstitute.org.

Wisconsin Intentional Farming Community
Rock Ridge Community, an intentional group located between Ridgeway and Dodgeville, Wis., is seeking new members. Founded in the early 1970s, the group steward about 175 acres of land. For details, email rockridge.community.wi@gmail.com.

Podcast on Japanese Beetles
University of Minnesota Extension recently posted a podcast on Japanese beetles, with discussion on what is and isn’t working to manage them. See www.fruitedge.umn.edu/kalepodcast.

Minnesota AGRI Grants
The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is accepting applications for Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation (AGRI) Sustainable Agriculture and Demonstration grants. These fund two- to three-year research or demonstration projects on Minnesota farms that may make farming more profitable and resource efficient. Annual results of funded projects are published in the MDA’s Greenbook. Deadline to apply is Dec. 12, 2018. See details at www.mda.state.mn.us/sustagdemogrant.

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Dairy Jobs: Grazing/Organic farmers in MN, MO, NY, PA, VT and WI are hiring full-time employees to work and gain skills needed to become dairy farm managers and owners. Visit https://www.dga-national.org/

Employment Opportunity. Looking for marketer to sell Organic Grain on Independent Contractor Status. If interested please email mcDonald@muvt.net.

Breeding flock of Iceland Sheep. Includes about 30 females and 2 rams. 100% grass-fed, certified organic. Excellent mild-flavored meat and highly regarded fleeces. Aggressive browsers of buckthorn and mul-tiflora rose. Located near Wabasha MN. Includes free guard donkey. Contact hunter.ts@gmail.com.
Upper Midwest CRAFT Field Day: Ecological Agroforestry and Pollinators September 24 | 10 a.m. | $20 | Jefferson, Wis. Learn more about agroforestry and pollinator habitats: specifically integrating wildlife habitat, with a focus on pollinator habitat, into a farm operation. Free to members. Angelic Organics: 815-389-8455

Expand Production with a High Tunnel September 25 | 1 – 4 p.m. | Spring Valley, Wis. Get tips on selecting and building a high tunnel to help you decide if it’s a good choice for your farm. Topics include design and site considerations, construction tips, crop choices and more. The farmers speak Hmong, which will be interpreted to English. The English portion of this event will be interpreted to Hmong. MOSES: 715-778-5775

Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day September 26 | 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. | S Pozner Farm, Atlanta, Ill. From front wheelers to flex-tine harrows, come learn the principles and tools for precise mechanical weed control from farmers, researchers, and suppliers. Contact Mallory to register: 312-840-2128

Women Caring for the Land: Long Winter Farm September 27 | 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. | East Troy, Wis. Learn about conservation practices at Long Winter Farm where Rachel Anderson and her family farm 1500 acres and utilize no-till, strip-till, advanced covercrops systems, and more. Also hear about her brand new cut-flower business. Hosted by Wisconsin Farmers Union and partners. Wisconsin Farmers Unions: 715-590-2130

Growing & Marketing Minnesota Premium Garlic September 29 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | 38 | Minnetrista, Minn. Jerry Fass, director of Minnesota Garlic Festival, and Connie Carlson from University of Minnesota’s Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships discuss how to increase garlic production quality and marketing. Call Jerry at 763-344-6609

Upper Midwest CRAFT Field Day: Fall Biodynamic Preparations September 29 | 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. | Elkhorn, Wis. Zinniker Family Farm is the longest-running Biodynamic farm in the country. This a great opportunity to experience hands-on learning and make Biodynamic preparations. Potluck and bonfire at the farm after. Free to members. Learn more. Angelic Organics: 815-389-8455

Crosshatch Fall Field School September 30 | 8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. | Sutton’s Bay, Mich. In addition to workshops with brilliant teachers, Crosshatch Field School will include one-on-one consulting with farm expert Peter Polk, a four-course lunch, and a post-workshop social networking hour. This year will feature 5 full-day courses: Advanced Beekeeping with Dr. Meghan Milbrath of Michigan State University, Farm Resilience: Soil Health + Farm Design with Nic Welty of 9 Bean Rows, and Seed Saving with Ben Cohen of Massachusetts College of Agriculture. Contact Karla at 507-337-2808

Farm Tour: Featherstone Farm September 30 | 2 - 4 p.m. | Richfield, Minn. This 22-year old, 250 acre certified organic farm produces around 70 crops for local co-ops, restaurants, grocers, wholesale and CSA members. Hear from founder and owner Jack Hedin about 200 acres organically on a larger scale, and how scale affects all aspects of farming, from planning, to markets, to pest/weed control. RSVP to Laura @ 651-433-3676.

Land Access: Starting from Scratch Field Day September 30 | 1 – 4 p.m. | Hager City, Wis. Contact Doni @ 612-578-4497 to register

Farm Table Foundation: Seed Cleaning and Processing October 2 | 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. | Amery, Wis. The final stages of seed cleaning, using both low tech methods with common household tools and also the Farm Table Seed Shed equipment, will be demonstrated at this class. Bring seeds you’ve harvested. Class includes winter squash seed harvest; seed storage and record-keeping; and planning for next year. 715-268-4500

Nobel Conference: Living Soil October 2 - 3 | 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. | St. Peter, Minn. How do we develop sustainable agricultural practices that will protect against soil erosion and promote soil health? How might we best promote exploration of beneficial compounds from soils? These are just some of the questions that Nobel Conference 54 will address. Call 507-933-6000 to learn more.

Kenza & Silvipasture Field Day October 5 | 9:45 a.m. – 1 p.m. | Free | Lancaster, Wis. The University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Lancaster Agricultural Research Station will host a fall field day highlighting innovative grazing practices: managed grazing of Kenza, a perennial grain and forage crop, and silvipasture, where trees are intensively managed with pasture. To register call 608-723-5880.

Upper Midwest CRAFT Field Day: Humane Animal Husbandry Practices October 7 | 2 – 5 p.m. | $20 | Brodhead, Wis. Learn how to humanely care for goats, sheep, pigs, and chickens. Learn how to administer shots, trim hooves, use the FAVACHA method to check animals for worms, assessing body condition, prevent common ailments and more. Free to members. Angelic Organics: 815-389-8455

Webinar: Meeting the Challenges of Soil Health in Dryland Wheat Systems in the West October 9 | 1-5 p.m. Online Join the webinar to learn about challenges of soil health in dryland wheat systems with limited water in the arid west. This webinar will focus on large scale, on farm trials conducted in the west and West. How do you adopt cover crops in these dry, very dry environments? Online at conservationwebinars.net

MFA Fall Harvest Party! October 14 | 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. | $20 | Marine on St. Croix, Minn. Come celebrate the end of the season, meet your farm supporters, and party with food, music, games, and more. Minnesota Food Association: 651-433-3676

Cattle Handling, Pasture Walk October 22 | 12-3:30 p.m. | Collins, Wis. Ken and Laurie Schmitt raise about 60 grass-fed cow/calf pairs with 200 acres using rotational grazing. They will show off their “Bud Box” design and affordable chute and alley system that makes it easy to move cattle. 715-723-5561

Webinar: Role of Agroforestry in Supporting Pollinators October 24 | 3 p.m. Online Join the conversation to learn how agroforestry practices can be designed and managed to support pollinator conservation and services in temperate regions. Online @ conservationwebinars.net

Organic and Non-GMO Forum October 29 – 30 | All Day | St. Louis, Mo. The 4th Annual Organic & Non-GMO Forum 2018 distinguishes itself from other conferences by being the only domestic conference of its kind that brings together stakeholders from across the value chain to address growing opportunities.

2018 WFAN Annual Conference November 2 & 3 | Des Moines, Iowa This year’s conference theme is Stepping Into Action: Changing Foodscapes through Individual and Community Power. Learn more. WFAN: 515-460-2477

Minnesota FSMA PSR Grower Training November 8 – March 2019 | 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. | SPS | Cottage Grove, Minn. This training will feature a panel of farmers from four local farms who extend their production season. Find out how they do it! Space is limited for this field day, so RSVP soon! Free to members. Angelic Organics: 815-389-8455

North American Biodynamic Conference: Transforming the Heart of Agriculture: Soil. Justice. Regeneration. November 14-18 | 2 | Portland, Ore. The five days of programming will include field days at local farms and vineyards, inspiring and thought-provoking keynotes, hands-on workshops for beginners and experienced practitioners, delicious local and Biodynamic food and wine, artistic and cultural activities, facilitated conversations, and many new connections. 262-649-9212

Writing Your Annual Farm Report November 15 | 5:45 – 7:30 p.m. | $20 | Marine on St. Croix, Minn. The goal is to keep good records during the season of all your field activity and farm work. What can you learn from those records? Learn how to use your records to create a helpful summary of the past year to assist with planning for next year and future years. Minnesota Food Association: 651-433-3676

Cottage Food Producer Training October 17 | 1 – 5 p.m. | Minneapolis, Minn. This training focuses on food safety practices for all processes covered under the cottage food law. Learn how to produce, package, label, store, and transport a safe food product. Contact Karla @ 507-337-2808

MFA: CSA Contracts & Land Meeting November 29 | 9:45 – 1:30 p.m. | $20 | Location TBD This meeting will be an initial discussion between staff and farmers on market contracts for the following season. We will also discuss the Farm Operations budget and any other program changes for the coming year. Minnesota Food Association: 651-433-3676