Illinois organic corn project shows promise, but needs more farms in trials

By Lauren D. Quinn

What if organic corn were developed for and by organic farmers? For farmers getting by with the limited options currently on the market, it may seem like a pipe dream. But a year-old University of Illinois project has big plans to make this happen.

“I think it’s super important to develop new varieties for organics rather than trying to make a conventional hybrid fit into an organic system,” said Will Glazik of Cow Creek Farm in Paxton, Illinois. “So when we were approached by the university, I thought this would be a fantastic idea, a way we could help. We offered support and land where we could trial new varieties and find something that’s going to work for organic growers.”

The concept, known as participatory research, pairs farmers with agronomists and plant breeders to select and test crops that fit the landscape, benefit the soil, and meet farmers’ specific market needs. Farmers grow experimental lines using everyday practices and feed information back to breeders, who make adjustments until the crop is ready for market. But it doesn’t stop there.

“Our project is unique because it integrates all the components of the food system, from the field to the table; it connects researchers, producers, consumers, and farmers,” said Carmen Ugarte, the University of Illinois researcher leading the project. “Traditionally, farmers stop worrying about what happens to their corn after it is delivered to the grain elevator. But we’re trying to select cultivars with the end product in mind. And, we are keen to connect producers and consumers.”

The underlying goal of the project is to identify high-yielding, nutritious, nitrogen-use efficient, weed-competitive genotypes adapted to organic systems and compatible with market opportunities. It’s a tall order, given the wildly different soil conditions, management practices, and philosophies of the organic sector. To make it happen, they need more farmers.

On-Farm Research

In 2018, 16 farmers stepped up to participate. Most of them—13 farms in Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Indiana—set aside about a quarter of an acre for strip trials, to test the performance of eight to 10 varieties on-farm under normal management.

“From a farmer side of things, this is a nice, easy trial to put in,” said Glazik, whose family farms 640 acres and was missing from the market. The answer came in all shades of blue—blueberries, for sure, but they eventually expanded to black currants, aronia berries, elderberries, honeyberries, juneberries, and plums. The soil on their perennial farm is covered with vegetation throughout the year, an intentional approach to virtually eliminate soil erosion.

They took a two-decade intermission from active farming to work in organic inspection and other realms, but returned to farming in 2009. Their decision to farm again was partly spurred by the beckoning of a piece of land. During their farming hiatus, they had rented out a 5-acre field to another organic grower who constructed an 8-foot-tall deer fence around the perimeter, with the understanding that the fence would remain when they stopped renting the field. Well, that grower stopped renting the field, leaving Jim and Joyce with a fully fenced 5-acre weed patch. Surely there was a better way to use this land, they thought.

They looked around at what other growers in the region were producing in order to determine what was missing from the market. The answer came in all shades of blue—blueberries, for sure, but they eventually expanded to black currants, aronia berries, elderberries, honeyberries, juneberries, and plums. The soil on their perennial farm is covered with vegetation throughout the year, an intentional approach to virtually eliminate soil erosion.

Their fruit is marketed fresh and frozen, mostly in bulk 5-lb boxes and bags, along with a smaller amount in clamshells. Two-thirds of their sales are wholesale, mostly to restaurants and breweries, with the remainder being sold directly to consumers at the farm or through pre-arranged deliveries. They also make jams and juices and sell them under Minnesota’s Cottage Food Law, which allows individuals to sell up to $5,000/year worth of processed goods made in a home kitchen.

All of their fruits are high-antioxidant, nutritional markets,” said Carmen Ugarte, the University of Illinois researcher leading the project. “Traditionally, farmers stop worrying about what happens to their corn after it is delivered to the grain elevator. But we’re trying to select cultivars with the end product in mind. And, we are keen to connect producers and consumers.”

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MOSES expands specialist network

By John Mesko, Executive Director of MOSES

MOSES is committed to supporting organic farmers—aspiring, transitioning, and current—as well as those farmers who want to harness the natural forces our planet offers to regenerate soils and build the productive capacity of their farms through an agroecological approach to farming. Our past work has resulted in volumes of information available on our website, in fact sheets, and annually through our programming at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference. Our staff collectively has dozens of years of direct farming experience in a broad range of areas including: managed grazing, grain production, vegetable and fruit production, pastured poultry and layer production, and even cut flower production. We have staff with experience in direct marketing, CSAs, farmers markets, marketing to restaurants and co-ops as well as wholesale markets.

Farmers call our Organic Answer Line (888-90-MOSES) with questions about certification, organic standards, and best practices all year long. MOSES organic specialists are there to answer specific questions and point producers in the right direction for more information.

Our summer field days are designed by our specialist staff to be accessible to a wide range of producers throughout the Midwest. We select field day hosts and topics based on the needs of our community as communicated through surveys, program planning opportunities, and communication through our partner organizations. Through our publications and website, our organic specialists offer technical support, comment on emerging issues in organic, and respond to specific questions from the community.

Lauren Langworthy, our program director and a farmer herself, leads our organic specialist team. Jennifer Nelson has been with us for four years, and continues to manage our beginning farmer and mentoring programs. MOSES has just hired Caleb Langworthy as our newest organic specialist. Caleb is based out of the MOSES office in Spring Valley, Wis. He provides outreach to NRCS conservation staff, transitioning organic grain farmers, and train the trainer opportunities.

As the organic, regenerative, and sustainable farming community continues to expand to meet consumer demands, MOSES is expanding our specialist force as well. We seek to provide access to deep expertise to a wide range of farmers and farming professionals. As calls for our expertise expand geographically, we realize we can’t be in multiple places at once. Our answer is a team of experienced organic farmers who can extend our reach by going to local field days and other events to share our resources and farming expertise with even more farmers.

This team includes: Chris Barnier, who has expertise in organic certification and agricultural finance; Chris McGuire, focusing on vegetable production and marketing; Dave Bishop, who works on our OGRAIN project supporting organic grain producers; Mariann Holm, an expert in organic dairy and certification; and Rachel Henderson, who answers organic fruit production, and livestock and grazing questions.

You can meet these team members at the MOSES Conference, where they’ll be staffing our booth in the exhibit hall. Be sure to stop by.

I hope you plan to attend MOSES 2019. We’re marking 30 years of successful advocacy and promotion of organic. We’ll also mark a new beginning of sorts. The organic farming community can feed the world, and the Organic 2051 forum, taking place just prior to the MOSES Conference, will build the roadmap for the future. I can’t wait to share with you the results of this forum. If you have ideas to contribute, please share them through the form at mosesorganic.org/organic2051.

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IFOAM North America offers organic community forum to air diverse opinions

By Brian Baker, IFOAM North America

IFOAM Organics International, organized in 1972 to lead and unite the world’s diverse organic movements, is one of the oldest and most established organic agriculture organizations in the world. As such, it is recognized globally as the voice and conscience of organic agriculture.

The worldwide organization operates through regional bodies, including the recently formed IFOAM North America (NA), which has about 40 members from Canada, the United States, and the English-speaking Caribbean. These include farmers associations, trade associations, certification agents, for-profit companies, and nonprofit organizations that work in organic agriculture.

IFOAM NA will hold its annual membership meeting at People’s Food Cooperative in La Crosse, Wis., Feb. 20, just prior to the MOSES Organic Farming Conference. This meeting will give members of the organic community an opportunity to come together and shape the future. Details are at bit.ly/IFOAM-NAAnnualMeeting.

IFOAM History

IFOAM established a set of four principles of organic agriculture: health, ecology, fairness, and care. Soil health is key to the principle of health. The principle of ecology ties the organic and agroecology movements together. Fairness encompasses everyone in the organic community as well as all other living creatures. The principle of care, sometimes called the precautionary principle, requires a level of stewardship and an awareness that today’s actions have implications for tomorrow’s possibilities.

The membership of IFOAM has reflected the evolution of organic. In the early years, IFOAM members consisted primarily of farmers organizations, but also had a significant number of academics. As the market for organic food grew, IFOAM attracted more certification bodies, trade associations, and companies that traded organic food. Many of the certification bodies, such as the Soil Association, had their roots as farmer groups that provided certification as a service to members.

IFOAM has been approaching the world’s organic movement in phases. The first phase (Organic 1.0) formed the philosophical foundation of the movement, led by pioneering visionaries. Once the guiding principles were established, they were not enough to transform agriculture by themselves. This was followed by the establishment of a market for organic food, which required the development of formal standards (Organic 2.0). Formal standards took the ideals expressed by the early philosophers and made them practical guides for a healthier and more ecologically sound agricultural system.

IFOAM’s standards were influential in shaping certification programs, such as the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA), Farm Verified Organic (FVO), and the Organic Growers and Buyers Association (OGBA). The European Union regulation on organic farming was largely a codification of the IFOAM Basic Standards at that time.

Current Approach

As the organic market has grown, we’ve faced pressure to compromise on the basic principles underlying the organic movement. IFOAM’s current phase (Organic 3.0) addresses this while moving organic from a market niche into the mainstream. Organic agriculture is poised to take on global problems like hunger, poverty, and climate change. These issues require an approach that is not strictly market driven and goes beyond government regulations. IFOAM seeks to establish best practices, not compliance with the standards, as the goal. Adoption of organic practices will become more attractive if the market reflects the true and hidden costs of producing non-organic food. Wider interests in sustainability are accepted in a more inclusive approach, while still protecting the organic label.

Organic 3.0 requires that we set aside differences with like-minded movements and find common ground to work with them. We may not agree on everything but can still find common ground. It also requires fostering a culture of innovation and an openness to try new things. With that come many challenges and possible contradictions.

IFOAM Organics International consists of several self-organizing structures, of which IFOAM NA is one. In addition to regional bodies, IFOAM also includes various sector groups. One is the International Network of Organic Farming Organizations (INOFO), which is an umbrella group of organic farmers associations. Other sector groups include those for seeds, animal health and welfare, technology and innovation, and aquaculture and apiculture.

IFOAM North America

As a diverse membership organization, IFOAM NA’s activities are member driven. In a survey conducted last year, the membership identified providing more timely information about organic agriculture around the world as the top priority. One anonymous member said that IFOAM NA should “serve as a voice of the organic community on the national scene in the U.S. and provide an important source of information and contacts to the organic movement in the rest of the world.” Another member suggested that IFOAM NA needs to “be a source of inspiration and place to learn what organic agriculture is all about.”

In that survey, advocacy for the increased adoption of organic practices was a close second in terms of priorities. The members provided a clear message that IFOAM NA should work closely with its members, and not duplicate existing services or compete with any existing organizations. IFOAM NA has the potential to serve as an umbrella organization and bring together like-minded organizations operating on a regional or national basis to have a broader impact. Members surveyed thought that IFOAM NA had a responsibility to advocate specific positions on contentious and divisive issues that face organic, including hydroponics, GMO labeling, appropriate scale of production, and international competition.

As a newly formed nonprofit, IFOAM NA believes in standing up for the principles of organic agriculture, but lacks the resources to weigh in on every issue and avoids positions where the members are deeply divided. Issues must be framed within the context of the principles and have an international impact.

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as an agricultural commodity if the cannabis plant is illegal. While the new Farm Bill has legalized hemp, the DEA still classifies all forms of the cannabis plant as illegal. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) officially made all types of cannabis oils for different purposes.

Hemp has a variety of uses, most stemming from its ability to produce fibers. Hemp contains less than .3% THC. Plants containing a higher level of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and, therefore, are psychoactive. In fact, hemp is now defined as containing no more than .3% THC. Any cannabis containing more is considered non-hemp cannabis (or marijuana).

State departments of agriculture or tribes that wish to participate in USDA programs (including organic certification) will be able to access crop insurance and fully participate in USDA programs (including organic certification and conservation grants). Provided producers adhere to the licensing and regulatory requirements of their state and the USDA, they will be able to access crop insurance and fully participate in USDA programs (including organic certification and conservation grants).

While the Farm Bill’s legalization of hemp production does create a potentially exciting opportunity for producers, it is important to note that it will take some time for the states and USDA to come to an agreement about how to structure and manage hemp production licensing. Cautious producers may want to wait for reclassification of cannabis by the DEA before planting to ensure their crops are planted on sound legal ground.

Finally, as with any new enterprise, producers adding this crop to their operation will want to carefully consider their seed sources, learn about the production practices and equipment needs that will help them be successful, fulfill the proper legal requirements, and begin the process by securing their buyer so they can enter the marketplace without fearing that they’ll be left with unsold product.

You can learn more about the production and marketing of industrial hemp and hear about the Minnesota and Wisconsin state pilot programs at the upcoming MOSES Organic Farming Conference. We’re hosting an Organic University and workshop to help producers understand everything they need to know before jumping into hemp production.

“They’d like to diversify my farm by planting ‘superfood’ fruits. Do you have tips on growing elderberries and aronia?”

Answer by Organic Specialist Rachel Henderson

Adding a plant like elderberry or aronia to your farm can seem like a great idea. For organic growers, these crops have many advantages. They are inexpensive to establish and well-suited to cold climates, as well as resilient in hot and dry summers; they experience very little disease, and have few problem pests; and of course, they are famed for their high nutritional value, which research supports.

There are also some downsides to growing these crops. Mechanized harvest is not easily available, and extremely expensive. For most growers, the only real option is hand harvesting. This can be very time consuming, expensive, or both. Be sure to consider the dates of harvest, and how the labor of picking berries will fit into your season.

While these fruits are rarely bothered by insect pests, deer and birds can be problem predators. Elderberries, in particular, will require protection. For deer, that can be a simple fence, which you may already have on your property. Bird protection usually requires some thought and planning, with careful consideration of design and placement. The goal is to create a barrier that is both effective and aesthetically pleasing.

To know before jumping into hemp production.

ABOVE: Elderberries require protection from pests; deer may help pollinate these crops. clockwise from top: Gary Heidema, MOSES Organic Specialist, a MOSES Organic Specialist at work, and a MOSES Organic Specialist harvesting elderberries.
Farm Bill provides increased support for organic

By Lauren Langworthy

The 2018 Farm Bill finally passed near the end of the year. In the coming months, more information about changes to funding and programs will become available as rulemaking and administrative processes take place. For now, here’s an update about some of the impacts of the 2018 Farm Bill.

Organic

• Supporters of the organic sector are excited that the Farm Bill establishes mandatory funding for organic research. By 2023, the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) can expect $50 million in annual funding. This money can be used to support necessary research and innovation for organic producers and handlers. Because the Farm Bill creates a mandatory baseline of funding, OREI will no longer have to negotiate funding from the ground up every time the Farm Bill is revised.

• Organic is also supported through the Transition Incentives Program. In this program, farmers with expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts can use the last three years of their CRP contract to begin the organic certification process. In the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), funds are allocated to states to support organic production and transition. The funds allocated to each state will be determined by that state’s number of certified organic and transitioning to organic producers, as well as acres in certified or transitioning production.

• The new Farm Bill also takes on increased enforcement support for the National Organic Program and states that the National Organic Program will be covered by state agricultural mediation programs. More resources (an additional $5 million) and authority were granted to the enforcement arm of the organic program to deter fraud in the marketplace and address import concerns.

• Organic cost-share was maintained in the final version of the Farm Bill, much to the relief of many organic farmers who utilize this program to help cover the expenses of certification. The program will receive $40 million in funding for certification-related cost reimbursements.

• Additionally, the Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives program received mandatory funding that will be used to collect and distribute organic market information. This initiative collects important data to help develop accurate market and production information across the organic sector.

• The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) also experienced some changes. The language defining the 2501 program—an alias for the USDA’s authority to bypass the NOSB’s authority to make changes to the National List—also included newly approved synthetics and prohibited naturals) would be considered a decision vote and require a 2/3 majority vote when a quorum of the board is present. However, the final version of the Farm Bill did not include a proposed change that would have allowed the USDA to bypass the NOSB’s authority to make changes to the National List.

Conservation

• Despite moves earlier in the process to combine them, Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) remain two individual programs in the final Farm Bill. Payment limits in the EQIP program’s Organic Initiative will increase from $80,000 to $140,000. The Farm Bill directs funds to be allocated to states in support of transitioning and certified organic production through the creation of an Organic Initiative within the CSP program. MOSES is currently working with NRCS staff to educate them about the unique needs of organic producers and to work together on a review of conservation program job sheets that could support organic producers.

• There was also an update to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that establishes a new “Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers” (CLEAR) initiative that supports conservation practices to benefit water quality. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program received increased funding and includes provisions for prioritized drinking water protection projects as well. These modifications and other conservation policy improvements will encourage cover cropping, crop rotations, and advanced grazing systems to help farmers improve water quality.

• CRP Grazingland Initiative was increased to 2 million acres by 2023, allowing ranchers to improve conservation cover on working grazing lands. Graziers might also be interested to learn that a new Conservation Grazingland Initiative was added to CSP. This changes how commodity base acres for long-term grass and pasture are counted into commodity payments and seeks to compensate those farms that have been denied payments in the past. Qualifying grass-based farms will get a one-time option to enroll in CSP at $18 per acre for five years.

• While the overall conservation title within the Farm Bill retained full funding, there are significant long-term funding cuts to the working lands conservation programs like CSP. This strategy will reduce the baseline funding for the program when the Farm Bill is next considered.

Beginning & Historically Underserved Farmers

• The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BRFP) and the program that supports other historically underserved farmer groups (also known as the 2501 program) combine forces in the new Farm Bill. The new program is called Farming Military Veterans and other historically underserved farmer groups can gain access to land coming out of CRP that could be more quickly certiﬁed for organic production.

Other Points of Interest

• The new Farm Bill combines the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLPPP) and Value-Added Producers Grant (VAPG) into a single program called the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP).

• The final Farm Bill’s language around Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, did not receive the proposed strict work requirements. Instead, the House bill language concerning anti-fraud initiatives did make it into the final bill, including the National Accuracy Clearinghouse which is concerned with preventing individuals from receiving SNAP benefits in multiple states.

• There is contention about a move in the new Farm Bill to expand farm subsidies. The final language mirrors some of the House bill, expanding some federal agricultural subsidies to nieces, nephews, and the first cousins of farmers—even if those relatives do not work on the farm. Some have expressed concern that this aid, designed to offset losses by farmers, will end up going to people who spend little or no time at the farm. There are also concerns that this creates a larger loophole that benefits the wealthiest farms and does little to support operations at the small family farm level.

In the coming weeks and months, details about our new Farm Bill will become clear as rulemaking and administrative reform take place. As these programs change become reality, there will be ripple effects down the lines of farmers from the programs available at your local NRCS office to possible changes in the make-up of the NOSB. MOSES will try to keep you abreast of these changes. We encourage you to keep your ear to the ground as you navigate them for your own operation.

Lauren Langworthy is the program director at MOSES and on the board of the Wisconsin Farmers Union.
began transitioning back in 2002. “The team provides the hybrids and the layout they want, and it’s a crop I’m already growing. I prepped the field like I normally would for corn and left a little section for this trial. Then, rather than planting the hybrid I normally do, I planted these different hybrids in the layout they wanted.”

He reported some basic observations back to the university team, things like emergence and tasseling dates, but graduate students Christopher Mubagi and Binod Ghimire did a lot of the heavy lifting during the field season. They visited each strip trial and evaluated indicators of soil health, measured additional plant characteristics, and harvested a subset. The research team has crunched the numbers, but Glanzik didn’t need numbers to know what he saw. “There were a couple of varieties that came out of the ground really nice, and some that had lots of surface area on the leaf. In terms of harvest, they dried down pretty good, and none of them fell over. Overall, they yielded fine. Didn’t see anything I didn’t like about them.”

The seed came from a couple of private organic breeders—Walter Goldstein with the Mandaamin Institute in Wisconsin and Kevin Montgomery of Montgomery Consulting in Illinois—and were compared to a commercially available hybrid from Great Harvest Organics. Unlike modern conventional hybrids, Goldstein and Montgomery’s varieties were developed over many generations in cooperation with organic growers.

Next year, farmers in the strip trials will also have the opportunity to test several hybrids developed by Martin Bohn at U of I. Bohn has spent the last 16 years modifying conventional genetics to coax out characteristics important to organic farmers. This year, 10 of his hybrids were grown on Wyatt Muse’s farm in Champaign, Illinois, together with their parent inbreds to produce seed for the 2019 season.

With this sneak preview, Muse liked what he saw. “It’s really too early to tell what came out of it this year, but one thing I’m excited about is watching late-season standability. That’s one of the biggest challenges a lot of organic farmers face—getting that crop to finish upright and looking good for harvest,” he said.

Bohn’s hybrids were tested in 2018, just not in the strip trials. Instead, they were part of two intensive experimental trials set up in Illinois, with Jack Erisman and Joel Gruver as farmer collaborators. “I think what they’re doing is great, and it doesn’t interfere with their typical crop, but from a soil scientist’s point of view, that’s good. That’s investment in root growth can be considered wasteful, but from a soil scientist’s point of view, that’s good. That’s organic matter,” Vander explained. “It’s good to select for complex and massive rooting systems as long as it doesn’t compromise yield.”

It didn’t. A Goldstein hybrid tied with one of Bohn’s as the top yielder, and both were comparable to the commercial check.

Now that roots have been scanned, soil fertility quantified, and harvest completed, the researchers are ready to report some preliminary results.

“This first look at the data really reflects the two approaches of breeding: corn that was bred in organic ground versus the materials developed at U of I in a conventional breeding program. When you look at the root response, it is obvious that these hybrids have different strategies of coping with low fertility,” explained Michelle Warden, a soil scientist at U of I. “The U of I materials are very responsive. They take advantage of resources when they’re available, moving all their energy out of roots and stems and into producing grain. This reflects the conditions under conventional management and the fact that they were developed in Illinois soils that typically have higher inherent soil fertility and water-holding capacity.”

On the other hand, she said, Goldstein’s organically derived materials expect stress because they were selected in sandy and less fertile soils in Wisconsin. They produce massive root systems that help the plant in low-fertility conditions and also provide standability. Even if they’re grown in optimal conditions, they still show similar root characteristics.

From the conventional breeding point of view, that investment in root growth can be considered wasteful, but from a soil scientist’s point of view, that’s good. That’s organic matter,” Vander explained. “It’s good to select for complex and massive rooting systems as long as it doesn’t compromise yield.”

Results from the strip trials were all over the place, reflecting huge variability in soil conditions across the 13 farms. Overall, the more soil organic matter and fertility, the higher and more stable the yield across varieties. On farms with sandy soils and lower fertility, yields varied a lot more. But the good news was there were moderate to high-yielding varieties for almost every situation, including drought stress and soils with reduced organic matter.

Material harvested this year will continue to be analyzed for several other characteristics, including nutritional quality and taste. Ultimately, the goal is not only to provide a highly marketable seed product to farmers, but also to turn their grain into highly desirable food products that will fly off bakery and grocery store shelves or that will be palatable and nutritious in organic animal feed.

Need for More Farms

Although the results pointed to a few solid patterns, a big takeaway from the first year’s analysis is variability. To draw out more patterns, the researchers need to include as many situations as possible in their statistical analysis. That’s why they need more farmers to get involved in the strip trials.

“I think what they’re doing is great, and it doesn’t take much work from the farmer’s perspective,” Glanzik said. “I don’t know many farmers that wouldn’t want to make more hybrids available for organic production. Most people would agree that the breeding program for organic lines is falling behind conventional. There’s some, but the variety isn’t as near as big as it is in the conventional market.”

Muse credits seed companies for making significant strides in recent years, but admits the market is still limited. “They’ve gone from zero to…something,” he said. “The university is the only one doing research across multiple varieties that I’m aware of. I’m excited to see what comes out of it. Hopefully, their results can help people make an informed decision to transition their land into an organic system. Having an unbiased third party like the university administer something like this holds a lot of weight.”

Farmers participating in the Illinois corn research meet with the researchers, provide a small allocation of land, and make a few quick observations throughout the growing season. To get involved, contact Carmen Ugarte at cugarte@uiuc.edu or 217-300-5293.

The project also includes an educational network where members can exchange ideas and inform the direction of the project. See details at organicinfo.CASH.

Ugarte and her fellow researchers, all affiliated with the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at U of I, researchers will be presenting their work at the Organic Grain Conference in February in Champaign, Illinois. Information about the conference is at thelandconnection.org/OGC2019.

The project is funded by USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture through its Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative, grant no. 2017-88330-2715.

Lauren Quinn is with the University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.
Organic System Plan Update

Each year, organic certification agencies require that their organic clients update their organic system plans. The organic system plan is an important link between the organic farmer, the certification agency, and the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). This document details the many ways the farmer is operating in compliance with the federal organic standards. The annual update is an opportunity to communicate planned changes to your certifier. An additional organic inspection sometimes can be required due to potential changes or additions to types of crops being grown, livestock raised, or products planned for sale. For the certifier, knowing at the beginning of the year how many inspections need to be scheduled and when inspections need to take place helps to ensure they can meet a producer’s timing needs.

The best practice before adding any new input used for crops, livestock, or in processing is to contact the certifier for material approval. Inputs can be expensive and non-refundable. Certification agencies aim to work cooperatively with you, their client, to help ensure that your production is in compliance with the NOP requirements. Materials review of inputs is an ongoing and intricate process. Inputs can incur changes and lose their status as eligible for use in organic. Product labels themselves sometimes can also be misleading. A seed dealer, an agribusiness salesperson or a neighbor isn’t a good replacement for your certification agency’s approval for a product. Using a prohibited substance, even by misunderstanding, can throw land out of organic status for 36 months or cause an animal to lose organic eligibility. Updating any and all inputs listed on your organic system plan helps ensure that these items get reviewed by certification staff who can flag inputs that are no longer allowed.

Recordkeeping

Annual update time is also a good time to decide if your recordkeeping system is working well for you. If you dread inspection and find yourself putting off the necessary paperwork, perhaps you need to lift your spirits by refreshing how you keep records. Small but practical steps can go a long way. Set up a colorful, tabbed binder on your kitchen shelf to store invoices or receipts. Hang a big calendar in the barn as a visual reminder to reassess, and make new plans on the farm. The farm desk calls out for our attention as the season of taxes, seed orders, and paperwork has arrived. Record-keeping is a fact of life for all of us, but especially for those certified as organic producers.

On my own farm, we have been certified organic since 2004. First our land was certified, and our herd of Jersey dairy cattle followed the next year. I remember that our organic transition had a bit of a false start. Initially, we sent in $50 to a certification agency to begin the paperwork of organic transition. The agency sent us back a stack of papers somewhere between two and three inches high to read and review along with a lengthy application. Those forms sat on the desk for a year. We were just too busy, or perhaps that paper pile was just a bit too intimidating. The next year, as I remember, we asked for the paperwork once more. We paid for our procrastination—$75 was now the cost of receiving the paperwork. This time, we completed the paperwork with help and advice of those at MOSES and from our certification agency. Input from other organic farmers was invaluable to us, then and now. A little encouragement and guidance made the difference!

Now, as an organic crop and livestock inspector, I sit on the other side of the table from farmers at organic inspections. I appreciate all the forms and paperwork involved in organic certification because I have a much better understanding of the intent and purpose of them than I did over a decade ago. I also understand why confusion and frustration can arise over the process. The sight of that stack of papers remaining on the desk for a year remains vivid to this day.

Understanding what goes on at the certification agency can help us embrace the paperwork and appreciate the inspection process as vital and important. We, as organic farmers, are proving through verifiable documentation that our production methods have met the National Organic Program standards.

By Mariann Holm

Organic inspector shares tips to make inspection go smoothly

Annual Inspection

When your certifying agency receives your annual update, certification staff will do the initial review. If they have no further questions at that time, they will notify you that the initial review is complete and schedule your inspection. The initial review letter often contains reminders of items that will be covered or needed at inspection. Read your letter and spend a few minutes to review the items requested. Highlight the areas you know need your attention in your recordkeeping system. For example, if a document verifying adjoining land use expires soon, or soil or water tests need to be done, plan to have them completed in time for your inspection. Contacting neighbors and conducting tests can be a slow process.

You can save time, frustration, cost, and complica- tion by spending time on the front end to create an accurate and detailed organic system plan. The inspector visits your farm to verify that the organic system plan is accurate and that there are no impediments to meeting organic standards. An accurate and updated organic system plan sets the stage for an efficient inspection. An accurate plan can also minimize confusion and respect-fully follow up conditions from reviewers.

Inspectors see a diverse mix of farming operations in any given season. Part of the beauty of organic is the wide range of practices used and products that are being produced. For example, review at an inspection can vary between maple syrup, hops, fruits, herbs, vegetables too numerous to list, as well as agricultural mainstays like hay, soybeans, and corn. Crops, too, are increasingly diverse and the corresponding cropping systems can be wonderfully complex. Due to the diversity inspectors see, they need to ask a lot of questions, which can seem rather odd or even ignorant to any one producer. The inquiries made by your inspector are made to further understand your particular practices so they can accurately report to the certifier what is happening on the farm.

Increasingly, organic farms have multiple enter- prises. Multiple enterprises often make sense in organic production. Often, organic farms have multiple species of livestock. Hogs, poultry for eggs/meat, as well as goats, sheep or cattle for milk/meat/fiber/soap...
Inside Organics — from page 3

Regional or national matters may have an international impact, but political intervention at the local, state/provincial, or federal level is avoided.

Instead, IFOAM NA seeks to be a forum outside of government where the different members of the organic community can share their ideas and hopefully reach a consensus that members can each take to different legislative, administrative, or judicial venues. Such a venue is needed in the U.S., where so much of the debate over the future of organic has taken place within the context of the National Organic Program at the National Organic Standards Board. IFOAM NA won’t replace the NOSB but can offer a safe place where members of the organic community can express their differences of opinion outside of a regulatory context.

Ask a Specialist — from page 4

involves netting that must be removed each season. Netting for very large areas will be expensive. Some growers have luck with auditory devices for scaring away birds, or visual deterrents, but these are less dependable than netting.

While elderberry and aronia may be more reliable in production than other fruits, markets may be considerably less reliable. There seems to be a growing industry in processing and using them, as well as some exciting examples of “Super Fruit” products. In our region, there are a few groups, like aggregators and cooperatives, who buy directly from farmers to either sell in bulk or process them in the freezer, and even transporting them to other regions. This means separating the berries, which are quite small, from their clusters and stems. (The stems and leaves of elderberries contain a mild toxin.) This also may mean freezing the berries, holding them in the freezer, and even transporting them frozen. All of this preparation requires time and equipment that must be factored in when planting; so it’s important to be clear about these requirements.

Questions to ask an aggregator or cooperative include: How much can you accept? Is there a product minimum? When will I get paid? What kind of preparation is required?

When getting into a growing industry, there can be a lot of uncertainty. Elderberries and aronia can be difficult to sell fresh or direct to consumer. It’s important when you start a relationship with a buyer that you both set clear expectations. It can be difficult to accurately forecast a perennial crop. While many growers value these berries for their adaptability, the amount of care you give them will impact when you see a full harvest. Aronia, for example, can grow well without mulch and irrigation but will set more fruit faster when mulched and irrigated. When working with a potential buyer, make sure you understand the amount they’re looking for—both the minimum and the maximum—and that they understand your expected crop load.

Some aggregators do not pay growers until they have collected enough berries to sell or process a set amount—usually a very large set amount. This means a delay in getting a payment, which you need to factor into your cash flow for the year. You still have to get those berries picked, whether the labor is your own or hired.

Growers are often required by processors or third parties to completely prepare the berries. In the case of elderberries, this means separating the berries, which are quite small, from their clusters and stems. (The stems and leaves of elderberries contain a mild toxin.) This also may mean freezing the berries, holding them in the freezer, and even transporting them frozen. All of this preparation requires time and equipment that must be factored in when planting; so it’s important to be clear about these requirements.

As a specialty crop farmer, I appreciate seeing people all over the country start to recognize the health benefits of nutrient-rich food. It’s easy to get excited about the growth of this sector, and the possibilities for us growers. As with any type of farming, it’s essential to go into unusual fruit production with a solid plan and realistic expectations.

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Organic Inspection — from page 7

or other value-added products can add resiliency to a farm and bring in beneficial nutrients and additional revenue streams. Some farms have organic crops, livestock, greenhouses, processed products, and also have non-organic production.

For each organic species of livestock, crop, or product, the farmer needs to have records to verify production methods. Organic products must have the ability to be traced back to the sources, whether to the seed and field or to the origin of any one particular livestock. This sets organic apart from some other forms of agriculture at this time. For this purpose, NOP 205.103(b)(2) requires that records must fully disclose all activities and transactions of the certified operation in sufficient detail as to be readily understood and audited. This underscores the need to keep sales receipts and invoices for all inputs, crops, and livestock bought and sold, as well as for maintaining the identity of all individual livestock on the farm through records and tagging.

Many farmers find that once a good system of recordkeeping is in place, maintaining it becomes natural. Over time, they come to appreciate the value of having years of written records for making solid management decisions on the farm. You can find checklists for organic recordkeeping on the internet. Your organic certifier also should have tips to help you prepare for inspection. Take advantage of these resources. Small steps can result in confidence and peace of mind as you go through your annual organic inspection.

Mariann Holm is an organic crop and livestock inspector. She’s also a specialist with MOSES.

From standard setting through genetic engineering to climate change and carbon sequestration, IFOAM-Organics International has been at the forefront of many of the important issues that organic agriculture has faced over the past 40 years. IFOAM NA can draw from this knowledge and experience, adapting it to North America’s unique situation. The membership can help steer the vision and set the priorities of IFOAM NA as it establishes itself. The plan is to transform from a loose-knit volunteer organization to one that has the capacity to be more responsive to its members. The program and its projects will be member-driven and will depend on collaboration among its members.

Brian Baker is board president of IFOAM North America.
Organic transition allows family farm to remain profitable

By Jody Padgham


“There is just too much — too much milk, too much grain, too much livestock — thanks to tightening export markets and declining domestic demand for dairy products,” Goodman wrote. He put part of the blame on over-large organic dairy operations in Texas that “feed their thousands of cows a diet of organic grain and stored forage, with no discernible access to a blade of grass,” allowing them to produce more milk than all the organic dairy farms in Wisconsin combined.

While the future is always uncertain, this is an especially challenging time as agriculture goes through a serious adjustment, reflective of previous eras such as the 1980s, when thousands of farmers were forced out of the occupation. There has been much discussion, regionally and nationally, about the future of dairy, including organic dairy. But, as some farms are selling off, others are trying a new approach by transitioning to organic.

Reason to Hope

Brett Runde sees great hope and many positives in his recent transition to organic production. Runde believes that organic will be what allows his family to stay profitable and able to maintain a sustainable lifestyle.

“We won’t be getting rich,” Runde claimed. “But, we won’t be worrying about paying the bills. We’ll have a healthier bottom line.” He sees conventional farms around him forced to sell out and sees organic as the solution to keep their farm thriving.

The rolling hills of the Runde Farm in southwestern Wisconsin have been in the family for over 150 years. Homesteaded by Runde’s great grandfather, the farm has grown to 400 acres supporting 160 milking cows managed by Runde and his father, with help from Runde’s wife, Laura, and four children ages 5 to 16.

Runde credits a successful transition to the help of numerous neighbors who modeled diverse organic operations even before they chipped in with support and advice. “We watched our neighbors succeed with organic and had it in the back of our minds for about a year,” Runde said. “It was very encouraging about the potential.

At the same time the Rundes were considering organic, friends about a mile away were thinking about it, too, and many conversations were shared. With leadership from Organic Valley, a meeting with neighboring organic farmers was held in the Runde’s machine shed. “We spent the afternoon talking about potential problems. They shared their record books. You’d never find that in the conventional world,” Runde said. “It really meant a lot to us to have their support.”

With the non-GMO crops planted, Runde started experimenting with unfamiliar organic management of his dairy cows, such as organic remedies and fly control. Joe Klein, Midwest Dairy Pool Manager from Organic Valley, came out and helped the Rundes walk through a few financial reviews. Field days sponsored by the University of Wisconsin and MOSES through the OGRAIN program offered additional information and support. “We are very impressed by how organic people are willing to share ideas and information,” Runde added.

The first crop year went well, and so the Rundes decided to continue on the organic path. This past year, untimely rains led to weedy soybeans, but Runde hired a crew to hand weed the crop and was very pleased with the result. “They did a really good job. They saved the crop, and we ended up with a good yield,” Runde said. While there are lots of unknowns in organic management, he’s not as nervous as he was the first couple of years.

“The biggest learning curve has been developing a pasturing system,” Runde shared. “We’ve always grazed heifers and dry cows, so I expected it to be pretty easy. But, there is a careful balance between the grass and what you feed. If you feed too much, they won’t graze. They need to eat the forage, and we don’t want to waste any feed.”

Runde plans to attend more grazing meetings this winter to learn how to keep high-quality pasture established. Watching a neighbor struggle with overgrazing a first-year planting resulting in winter kill, Runde decided to let the pasture grow a year, harvesting hay before turning the cows out to graze the second year of growth.

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The first crop year went well, and so the Rundes decided to continue on the organic path. This past year, untimely rains led to weedy soybeans, but Runde
powerhouses. The blueberries sell themselves, but most of the other fruits aren’t as familiar to the American palate and have required a good deal of customer education. They developed their own educational brochures, do farm tours, and have given many presentations.

In addition to their fruit crops, they have integrated native plants—hairy mountain mint, anise hyssop, wild bergamot, milkweed, and other prairie species—into their farm landscape to create habitat for pollinators and beneficial insects. While they do have honeybees on the premises, the honeybees are found mostly on white clover. “The native bees pollinate the fruit,” Jim said. And native bees thrive when provided native plant habitat and protection from insecticides.

Beyond the native insectary plantings within their fruit field, they have established prairie in the surrounding land. As fruit harvest winds down in late summer, they divert their energy toward collecting seed from these native plants. They are lucky to have a ready market for this native seed just down the road at Prairie Moon Nursery, which sells native seeds and transplants across the Midwest.

Production of fruit, pollinator habitat, and native seeds is only part of Blue Fruit Farm’s mission. Jim and Joyce are also committed to community and education. They routinely welcome people to their farm, hosting tours for visiting school groups or welcoming folks to their own Blue Fruit Fest. But the farming and outreach they do today are just two of the many ways they’ve helped build and sustain the organic agriculture movement over nearly four decades.

The two started doing organic inspections in the early 1990s, a time in organic farming history that today’s young farmers never knew. There were no uniform standards from state to state and little inspector training or oversight; it was a sort of “wild west” back then, they said. Responding to these state-to-state disparities in organic standards and inspector training, Jim and Joyce helped found the International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA). The two ran IOIA, which provides training and accreditation for organic inspectors worldwide, for the first eight years out of their off-grid, solar-powered home office.

Their work “helped standardize the inspection process, the paperwork, as well as the Organic System Plan—those templates came out of our home office,” Jim explained. And, while Joyce concedes that certification may seem a little heavy on paperwork at this point in time, “it was developed in response to fraudulent situations.”

This work as organic inspectors triggered their pivot away from farming for the next two decades, during which time they got involved in other training, advocacy, and policy work. Their accomplishments and contributions to organic agriculture since the 1980s have been extensive and far-reaching. Presented with a dauntingly long list of accomplishments, I asked them to think back and tell me about a few of the things they’re most proud of.

“In the mid-1990s,” Jim said, “we were paying to get certified. I was inspecting other organic farms, and they would complain to me about having to pay to get certified. I had also enrolled our farm in various conservation programs where you could get cost-share dollars to do conservation work. Something clicked in my mind—why not have a cost-share program to help reduce the cost of certification? This idea just happened at a good time; I was asked by a state senator for ideas about how to encourage more organic in Minnesota. I took this idea to the Minnesota Legislature, testified in the House and the Senate.”

The organic certification cost-share was put in Governor Jesse Ventura’s first budget bill, which passed and became law in 1998. But Jim didn’t stop...
there. He worked with Senator Paul Wellstone’s staff and got organic certification cost-share in the 2002 Farm Bill. Now any certified organic operation—nationwide—can get 75% of their certification cost back each year. All you organic farmers reading this can thank Jim Riddle for that!

Jim was also influential in shaping the USDA’s first proposed organic rule. He told me this story: “The proposed rule was released on Dec. 21, 1997. I was scheduled to leave for a trip to Japan on Jan. 10, so I spent my entire Christmas and New Year holidays that year going through the proposed rule, line by line, identifying where it did not meet current organic standards, state laws, or NOSB [National Organic Standards Board] recommendations. I included replacement language, paragraph by paragraph, along with rationale for why each change should be made. My comments served as the playbook for other substantive comments, and were used by USDA to shape the content of the current regulation. Having submitted and circulated my comments, I left for Japan! The rest is history!”

But those two accomplishments just scratch the surface of what these two have done. To name a few more, Jim has spoken at conferences worldwide; served on the founding steering committee of the Land Stewardship Project; worked for seven years as Organic Outreach Coordinator for the University of Minnesota; served for six years on the leadership team for eOrganic, a multi-university Extension portal; served nine years as the elected Supervisor of the Winona County Soil and Water Conservation District; served on the USDA National Organic Standards Board from 2001-2006; coordinated organic research grant programs at The Ceres Trust; and served as founding steering committee chair of the Organic Farmers Association.

Joyce served on the Organic Growers and Buyers Association Board of Directors; co-authored the Organic Trade Association’s Good Organic Retail Practices manual; served two terms on the MOSES Board of Directors from 2003 to 2008; served on the Minnesota Healthy Food Charter Steering Committee for two years; and currently serves on the Accreditation Committee of the International Organic Accreditation Service.

Despite all this organizational and political leadership over decades, Jim’s first response when I asked him what he was most proud of was farming. “It makes it all real. I’m not just talking about something I’ve read in a book. I’m out there doing it. Being grounded is critical to me. And, that means spending time in nature. Not just farming, but listening to nature. That’s really paramount,” he explained.

Now that Jim and Joyce have reached retirement age, they are thinking about a transition plan for Blue Fruit Farm. They are thrilled that a seasonal employee of theirs is interested in taking over the business. They plan to make the transition gradual, so they’ll be pretty involved with farm operation over the next couple of years.

While Jim and Joyce may be eyeing an exit from farming, I’d wager we’ll be hearing from them for years to come. They are sought-after speakers and consultants and have worked on organic issues on every continent (besides Antarctica). Let’s hope they continue fighting for organic integrity across the globe and teaching up-and-comers about organic farming, while keeping their roots in the Midwest! And, without question, let’s be proud to welcome them as Organic Farmers of the Year at the 2019 MOSES Organic Farming Conference.

Dana Jokela owns and operates Sogn Valley Farm, a 22-acre certified organic farm near Cannon Falls, Minn.
The cows started transition a little over a year ago, becoming certified organic in November 2018. “The cows have transitioned really well,” Runde said. However, the economics of the situation led him to significantly change what he was feeding. “We were buying in a lot of protein and had to stop as we couldn’t afford to buy organic feed and only get conventional milk price during the transition.”

Now the cows are eating a lot more forage, with no purchased inputs other than mineral. “Milk yield dropped about 10 pounds, from 65-70 per cow to 55-65 pounds, but we’re saving $8,000 per month on purchased protein, and feeding only what we have on hand.”

Runde noted that the organic cows are really healthy, with vet checks only once per month and a significant reduction in health problems such as ketosis, milk fever, and transition issues. “Now we only use organic-approved products, but use them much less often.”

There has been transition in the machine shed, too, as Runde replaced chemicals with cultivators. “We got some pieces back that we had lent to neighbors and spent about $20,000 on cultivators, but that is what we would have spent on chemicals in just one year,” Runde said. It took some time to figure out how to use each specific piece. “We need to find where everything works best, and each year is a little different.”

After three years, he finds he has more confidence knowing what to do. “Organic is a lot more work, and I have to get used to doing things different, but I’m enjoying learning new things. It’s like learning how to farm all over again.”

As for challenges with organic transition, Runde mentioned that it was hard to change who the family did business with. Some of their buying relationships went back multi-generations, with grandfathers buying from grandfathers. Some of the old vendors have worked to pick up organic-related products, but there is what we would have spent on chemicals in just one year,” Runde said. It took some time to figure out how to use each specific piece. “We need to find where everything works best, and each year is a little different.” After three years, he finds he has more confidence knowing what to do.

“Organic is a lot more work, and I have to get used to doing things different, but I’m enjoying learning new things. It’s like learning how to farm all over again.” Even his dad, Greg, is feeling a little fire of new things. It’s like learning how to farm all over again. “Part of the success in transition in this challenging market will be in how much you have to change,” Runde said. “The potential must be assessed farm by farm.”

Along with the financial benefit, Runde notes other positives to their organic transition. “I really enjoy not handling chemicals anymore, knowing that the only thing we have to keep the kids away from on the farm is the bull.”

The thing that Runde has most appreciated is the camaraderie and positive support of the organic community. “At that first meeting, we were all nervous, on pins and needles about going organic, and the experienced guys were laughing and having a good time.”

“When financial stress goes away, when we get a fair price, we have a cushion that allows a few mistakes,” someone in the group said. “We have less to worry about.”

Runde concludes that organic transition has gone pretty much as he thought it would and has been a good fit for the family. “The first year I woke up a lot at night worrying if I was doing the right thing, but it’s gone well.” He really enjoys looking out the window and seeing his healthy cows out on grass. Plans for now are to keep milking as many animals as the farm will comfortably support; no expansion is planned. Depending on the milk market, the Rundes may eventually cut back on cows, and focus more on organic grain production, where demand is growing. “There’s been more to this than we realized when we first jumped in, but it has been good,” Runde said. “We are excited about the future, where we were more nervous before. Hope is a wonderful thing.”

Jody Padgham writes from her grass-based farm in Boyd, Wis. She works on the OGRAIN project for the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
Book honors African roots while providing guide to small-scale farming

By Karen Washington

I met Leah Penniman at a farming conference in 2010, and have watched her grow into a powerful leader, starting her own farm, holding antiracism workshops, and developing a justice and leadership program for youth, all while holding down a teacher's job. We continue to work together, breaking down walls of oppression while seeking out opportunities and justice for our people.

For centuries our ancestors have cried from beyond the voyage of time for us to hear the truth so that their deaths were not in vain. In Farming While Black, Leah Penniman has heard them. Given the centuries of falsehoods, misconceptions, and stolen information, Leah has heard their cries for salvation!

Out from the shadows of darkness we are taken on an emancipated journey of truth, power, reclamation, and fortitude with a resounding Amen. With humility and respect, she pays homage to our ancestors as she articulates our agricultural history.

Confronting everything from the destruction of the continent's original populace to the tyranny of colonialism, this masterpiece of Afro-indigenous sovereignty sheds light on the richness of Black culture permeating throughout agriculture. Throughout the book we are reminded that we were the pioneers (Harriet Tubman, Booker T. Washington), the inventors (George Washington Carver, Booker T. Whatley), and visionaries—interweaving and interconnecting our spirituality and farming.

Farming While Black teaches us the fundamental acts of growing food and growing community. While entertaining us with family adventures, Leah shares stories, cultures, chants, recipes, curricula, and much more from her life's work as a farmer and co-founder and co-director of Soul Fire Farm.

We are reminded that as Black farmers we cannot do this work without consulting the wisdom of our sacred literature (Odu Ifa) and receiving spiritual permission from the deities of the Earth and universe (Orisa) to plant our seeds, to grow our food, to share our harvest, and to give back to the Earth.

We are also reminded of both past and present forms of trauma and oppressive behavior, from colonialism, to the present day slavery of mass incarceration, and yet, globally as a people, still we rise! In the struggle for civil rights and human rights, Black farmers have always been there. We have endured the test of time in our resilience and resolve. Our power is in the soil, the land, the Earth. Our skin hues are a testament to our belonging.

Farming While Black encourages us to reach for the greatest and settle for nothing less. Know your history. Share and tell our stories. Pay respect and honor our elders. Pass on the gift of knowledge and fortitude to our youth. Find strength in family and community, but above all love one another, love the Earth, and be true to one's self.

As we move toward alternative ways of farming, living, and being, away from our oppressors, we cannot fall victim to replicating their behavior. Leah has paved the way by addressing our fears, wants, and desires.

Thank you, Leah, for giving us this gift. Farming While Black is the book we will turn to when we need to be grounded, reminded of our heritage, our greatness, our resources, our networks, and the reason why as Black people we farm.

Forum set to create path forward for organic agriculture

By John Mesko

Organic 2051, the forum on the future of farming, will bring together 100 people from the organic community for a visioning session that will plot the path forward for organic and sustainable farming. The forum takes place Feb. 21, during Organic University in La Crosse, Wis. The list of participants is posted on the Organic 2051 webpage (mosesorganic.org/organic2051) along with a form to submit ideas for discussion at the forum.

There has been a lot of interest in the forum. These are some of the frequently asked questions and answers to help readers understand its purpose.

How did Organic 2051 come about?

MOSES believes deeply that organic, regenerative, and sustainable farming practices can feed the world. It’s time for our community to deliver a plan with solutions to the issues of a growing global population and its pressure on the limited resources of our environment. Organic 2051 is designed to bring the community together to develop that plan.

How is Organic 2051 funded?

MOSES is contributing staff time and resources to this project, and some additional funding comes from a USDA Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) conference grant.

Why are there only 100 participants?

The forum is designed to be a place where leaders in our industry come together for an insightful discussion of the key topics and issues which need to be addressed and resolved if organic and sustainable farming practices are to become the norm by 2050. With limited funds available to host the event, we need everyone there to be fully engaged—each voice matters. Participants are contributing to the event, not just coming to observe, but to share the best ideas they have, to put their work on the table, taking advantage of this time to build the community for the future.

How did you advertise the opportunity to apply?

We explained the application process to our 15,000 subscribers to the Organic Broadcaster newspaper and our Organic Link newswire. We also asked partner organizations from a broad section of the organic and sustainable farming community to promote the event through their channels.

How did you select the participants?

A review committee of experts in the organic field came together to develop and implement a process for selecting 100 participants from the pool of applicants. Selection criteria included ensuring we had representation from as much geographic, gender, and experience as possible, and also considered farming type, professional affiliations, and the completeness of applicants’ ideas for advancing organic agriculture.

Even if I was not accepted to the event, can I still participate?

We are going to continue to take input from the community. Everyone, not just those in the room will have a voice. Those who applied and were not accepted, or those who for whatever reason were unable to apply are encouraged to engage with those who did prior to the event, asking them to represent those ideas and plans which are needed to move organic farming practices forward. Please share your knowledge and ideas online at mosesorganic.org/organic2051 under the link, “Engage with Organic 2051.”

Finally, we are exploring ways to live stream Organic 2051, which will further enhance people’s ability to participate.

What will happen with the information from the forum?

The day of the forum, participants and the community will receive a summary of the conversation, with an outline of the path forward. In the months following, MOSES will publish a more detailed proceedings with specific recommendations and steps to move the organic discussion forward in alignment with the findings from the forum. MOSES will shepherd this resource into the future, ensuring its relevance and continued development.

We are actively fundraising for a future work designed to accomplish the goals determined at this event. Undoubtedly, there will be regular updates and communication about the findings and the future. Interested donors, sponsors, and participants are welcome to contact us with ideas and support. You can reach me by email: john@mosesorganic.org.

John Mesko is the executive director of MOSES.
New year provides good point to assess financial outlook, set goals

By Aimee Schomburg

The start of a new year is a good time to assess your farm’s financial condition. The steps outlined here and in the Fearless Farm Finances online course highlight best practices we’ve seen from farmers enrolled in Farm Business and Production Management at Western Technical College (WTC).

Start by identifying the farm’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (known as a SWOT analysis). If you are lucky enough to have others on your farm team, have everyone do this individually, and then discuss what you’ve each identified.

From there, you can set goals. You can find plenty of research out there that shows those who take the time to set goals, write them down, share them, and review them throughout the year are more successful. Make sure you are setting personal growth goals as well as family and business goals. If you want to be able to set money aside for retirement or your children’s education, include those goals in your plans.

The first two modules of the Fearless Farm Finances online course walk you through the reasoning behind a SWOT analysis and goal setting. You can use the companion worksheet to structure your goals.

Balance Sheet & Cash Flow

If you didn’t complete a year-end balance sheet, you can do that now for 2018. List everything you own (assets) and everyone you owe (liabilities). This helps you not only establish some farm financial ratios, but also gives you the ability to see your net worth from year to year to ensure it is going in the direction you want.

This is also a good time of year to create your farm’s annual cash flow projection. The goal is not to meet the plan 100%, but to help you think through your farm’s production, marketing, and finances in a more thorough way. The projection helps you put all the pieces together. Then have your farm management team review it and ask “what if” questions. What if this market doesn’t happen? What do we need to make up for a loss of a crop? You can use this cash flow projection to monitor your progress as the year unfolds.

The Fearless Farm Finances online course covers balance sheets and cash flow in modules 5-7. These modules include companion worksheets that show you the numbers you should track.

As you work on your cash flow projection and other budget sheets, keep in mind your family living costs. What does the family need to live? Many times, we find that farmers do not track these costs well. Sometimes, it isn’t the farm that is the problem financially, it is the family living costs that may have risen without the farmers realizing it.

Professional Help

A farm business professional can help you complete an analysis of your farm business. This analysis should include your financial statements, reveal costs of production, show your numbers for the farm financial standards measures, and much more. The analysis can cover the whole farm or dive deeper into each enterprise on your farm.

You’ll need to provide beginning and ending balance sheets, plus records of production, income, and expenses. The companion exercises from the Fearless Farm Finances online course can help you create these records.

Performing an analysis each year will reveal trends, identify inefficiencies, and stimulate discussions that can be brought into your daily work.

Finally, take time in your “off-season” for yourself. You are a critically important and valuable asset necessary for your farm’s success. Use these winter months to read about those things you questioned during the growing season. Winter is certainly the time for workshops and conferences—attend some! Invest in your personal growth and get energized for the growing season that will soon begin.

Aimee Schomburg is a farm business instructor at Western Technical College in partnership with MOSES.
Weather, markets, more create risky environment for farming
By Lauren Langworthy

Farming is inherently a risky business. Our operations face danger from the weather, marketplace instability, larger environmental concerns, and a myriad of small daily events that could easily set our farm’s future on a different track.

A farmer’s best defense is to identify potential risks and take steps to lessen the impact if any should occur. While we all have a general awareness that our farm might be one bad season (or bad day) away from disaster, we don’t always think about factors that could shift the balance out of our favor. To begin noting the vulnerabilities in our operation is also to begin empowering ourselves to address them.

As many of us know firsthand from the past few seasons, climate change is affecting weather patterns and having increasingly severe impacts on farms—from high winds to polar vortexes, heavy rains and flash floods to droughts. Spring planting, fall harvests, and livestock all are subject to weather that can affect your farm’s bottom line and ability to operate.

Consider your farm business and what tools you might have to address these weather and climate concerns. You might need to add infrastructure or equipment to your farm. For example, irrigation might help protect your crops or pastures from drought and a high tunnel might protect a vegetable crop from an early fall or late spring frost. Think through contingency plans that could be used in abnormal years to protect your operation. Perhaps no-till planting, perennial grazing, forage crops, or later cash crop rotations might help you in an especially wet spring. As you consider the problems your farm faces more regularly, you can begin to build backup plans to mitigate your more regular risks. Similarly, you can think through what options you’d have if the most unthinkable weather patterns threatened your farm. Thinking through the problem ahead of time can help you prepare so that if a situation occurs, you are able to move through it more easily.

Consider having a conversation with your insurance provider about protection, as well. When you’ve identified your vulnerabilities and the problems most likely to occur on your farm, you want to think through what can be done to protect you. If your barn is essential to your operation, you want to make sure that it is properly insured against damage, fire, or other calamities. It might be worthwhile to speak to several different insurance companies to hear how each of them might be able to support your operation. The more you understand your operation and what opportunities are available in the world of insurance, the better protection you are likely to get.

Another area where farmers often experience a significant amount of risk is their marketplaces. Farmers don’t always have the time or tools to market their products effectively. Sometimes there only seems to be one or two buyers for a product, whether that’s because of your location, product, or consolidation in the marketplace. Many farmers are used to being “price takers;” but, this can put them in a vulnerable position when a buyer backs out or offers too low of a price. Before that happens, take a look at where you’re marketing your products. Consider what other options you’d have if something fell apart with that buyer relationship. In many cases, this thought experiment will lead producers to consider adding a little more diversification into their operation. With a reasonable amount of diversification, farmers can help protect themselves a little more from market fluctuation and the whims of specific buyers. A diversified farmer might have a bad year with their corn, but have a good hay crop that they can sell direct to other producers and protect the farm’s bottom line.

If you need help thinking through your risks and how to manage them, sign up for Reduce Risk in Your Farming Business, a full day Organic University class offered Thursday, Feb. 21 in La Crosse, Wis., just prior to the 2019 MOSES Organic Farming Conference.

Margaret Krome is the course instructor and has years of experience in the sustainable and organic farming and policy communities, as well as extensive knowledge about insurance programs that can support producers in these areas. To learn more about that course and register, visit OrganicUniversity.org.

Lauren Langworth is the program director at MOSES.
MOSES Conference
Advance registration closes Feb. 7 for the 30th Annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference, which takes place in La Crosse, Wis., Feb. 21-23, 2019. The country’s largest event focused on organic and sustainable production, the conference features 60 workshops, 9 intensive Organic University classes, a 2-floor exhibit hall with more than 170 vendors, plus great organic food. Register online at mosesorganic.org/conference.

The Friday keynote panel provides a look back at the conference’s origin story from six organic pioneers who helped start the MOSES Conference: Faye Jones, Audrey Arner, Atina Diffley, Jim Riddle, George Siemon, and Francis Thicke. Saturday’s keynote looks to the future with inspiring talks by young farmers Alicia Razvi, Danny Borgerding, and Dayna Burtness Nguyen. Other 30th anniversary include performances by two-time favorite conference bands: The Pheromones perform after the kick-off Thursday night, and Synister Dane warms up the crowd before the keynotes.

MOSES Conference App
All the activities and schedule for the conference are included in the free event app. Just search for “MOSES Organic Farming Conference” in your phone’s app store and start planning your conference must-see activities and exhibit hall stops.

Activities for Teens at MOSES 2019
Wisconsin Farmers Union camp staff will lead activities for youth ages 12+ in the Teen Space at the MOSES Conference. Teen Space is in the Radisson Hotel, and open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 22, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 23. Teens under 18 pay the child price of $80 for the full conference, and can attend workshops or hang out in Teen Space.

Meetings at MOSES 2019
Knowing that a large portion of the organic community is gathered at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference, many organizations host their annual meetings or offer educational content for conference participants. To see the list of planned meetings, go to mosesorganic.org/conference-meetings-at-moses.

Film Screenings at MOSES 2019
Alongside workshops, the MOSES Conference offers a great lineup of films about food and farming. Opening night will feature “Evolution of Organic,” a documentary about this country’s organic movement. Filmmaker Mark Kitchell will lead a panel discussion following the film. On Friday, “Dreaming of a Vetter World,” about the Vetter family of Grain Place Foods— the 2011 MOSES Organic Farmers of the Year— will include a panel with David Vetter. See the schedule at mosesorganic.org/conference/entertainment.

Savings on Salmon Shares
Sitka Salmon Shares, a major sponsor of the MOSES Conference, is offering the MOSES community $25 off any 2019 season share— just enter code “MOSES19” on the share order form at sitkasalmon-shares.com. The seafood company offers a range of seafood shares that support small-scale Alaskan fisherman who are dedicated to maintaining sustainable wild fisheries near Alaska. For each share purchased with the code, Sitka Salmon Shares will donate $25 to MOSES for farmer education. Sitka Salmon will be featured at the Friday night supper at the MOSES Conference. Good stuff all around!

In Her Boots Podcast
The MOSES “In Her Boots” podcast currently features interviews with Jennifer Nelson, a MOSES organic specialist and co-owner of Humble Pie Farm. New episodes post every Friday. Subscribe on iTunes or Stitcher, or listen at mosesorganic.org/in-her-boots-podcast.

New Staff at MOSES
MOSES recently added two new members to its team: Caleb Langworthy and Sophia Cleveland. Caleb, who is an organic specialist, has extensive experience navigating NRCS programs for his farm and will share that knowledge and more through our Organic Answer Line (1-888-90-MOSES voice or text) and our Ask a Specialist webpage. Sophia joined our team in October as our development coordinator, helping us engage with the generous donors and funders who make it possible for MOSES to provide resources and services to our farming community.

Farming Jobs
The MOSES Jobs board is bursting with opportunities to work on organic and sustainable farms, like Tipi Produce near Madison, Wis. New listings from across the country post every few days at mosesorganic.org/job-postings.

Farms with opportunities: Share your seasonal and long-term job openings through this free resource.

MOSES Organic Farming Conference
Celebrating 30 Years of Organic Education

NEWS BRIEFS

MOSES Meeting
The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meets April 24-26, 2019, in Seattle, Wash. This is the semiannual 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 April 4. Speaker slots are limited and are filled as requests are received. The NOSB also will hold public comment webinars April 16 and 18. See www.ams.usda.gov/event/national-organic-standards-board-nosb-meeting-seattle-wa.

National Organic Coalition Meeting
The National Organic Coalition (NOC) will meet April 23, the day prior to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting in Seattle. The meeting will cover the Farm Bill and organic policy updates, a Q&A session with Jenny Tucker (head of the USDA National Organic Program), strengthening enforcement of the organic standards domestically and internationally, regional updates from organic farmers, a discussion of sanitizer use in organic, and other topics. RSVP at www.nationalorganiccoaltion.org/events.

Climate Change Guide
The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) has published a guidebook, Organic Practices for Climate Mitigation, Adaptation, and Carbon Sequestration, which explores research on organic farming practices that sequester soil carbon and minimize nitrous oxide and methane emissions. The guide includes practical advice for reducing an organic farm’s “carbon footprint” and adapting to climate disruptions already underway. This publication is part of OFRF’s series on soil health and organic farming. To download the series, see ofrf.org/ soil-health-and-organic-farming-ecological-approach.

Specialty Crop Grants
Organizations that benefit Minnesota specialty crop producers are encouraged to apply for Specialty Crop Block Grants through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. These grants are available for a wide range of projects that help increase productivity and profitability. Applications are due Mar. 7, 2019. See www.mda.state.mn.us/business-dev-loans-grants/specialty-crop-block-grant for more information on eligibility and to submit an application.

Winter Greenhouse Manual
Greg Schweser from the University of Minnesota and farmer Carol Ford have written a guide to growing in a deep winter greenhouse. The 23-page production manual includes advice on soil and fertility, tools, food safety, and a daily log and crop list. To download the free manual, go to bit.ly/DeepWinterGreenhouseManual.

The Northland’s Winter Greenhouse Manual, a 118-page book written by Ford and Chuck Walbel, will be available in the MOSES Conference bookstore. It’s also online at mosesorganic.net.

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Real Organic Project Standards

“The Real Organic Project has developed provisional standards for its new add-on labels for crops and livestock. The standards are based on the principle that “real organic farming relies on the microbial activity of the soil to slowly release nutrients to the plant.” The group is taking comments on the standards through Feb. 1, 2019. See www.realorganicproject.org/provisional-standards.

Livestock Webinars

Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) will be hosting several free webinars in the next couple of months. Topics will include sheep shearing, treatment of parasitic infections in sheep and goats, and earning a living doing something you’re passionate about. Find the dates and more details at www.foodanimalconcernstrust.org/webinars.

Specialty Crop Webinars

North Dakota State University Extension will host free weekly Field to Fork webinars Feb. 6 to Apr. 17, 2019. The webinars will feature information about growing, processing, and serving specialty crop fruits and vegetables. Preregistration is required; the link to register and full schedule of topics is at www.ag.ndsu.edu/fieldtofork/webinars.

Practical Farmers of Iowa Farminars

Practical Farmers of Iowa hosts free weekly webinars each Tuesday through the end of February. Topics include regenerative grazing technology, no-till and low-till vegetable production, seeding methods for cover crops, and planning for farmland succession. Find the schedule, as well as archived farminars, at www.practicalfarmers.org/events/farminars.

Beginning Farmer Webinars

Michigan State University Extension presents webinars for beginning farmers on Wednesday evenings through April 3, 2019. The 12 webinars cover crop and livestock production, farm business, and marketing. Each webinar is $5, or $30 for the full series.

Grants for Farmers

The Lakewinds Organic Field Fund supports local and organic farms in Minnesota, northern Iowa, and western Wisconsin by providing grants to help farmers improve the health of their land, make the transition to organic, purchase necessary tools, and increase productivity. The deadline to apply is Feb. 1, 2019. See www.lakewinds.coop/community-2/loff.

Land Research Tool

FarmlandFinder has expanded its digital land research hub to 12 states in the Midwest. Users in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin are now able to search for extensive information on land in their area. The tool features real-time land values, up-to-date auction results, soil and topographic maps, active listings, a past sales map, and the ability to chat with a local land expert. The site provides actual sale results, not just past sales map, and the ability to chat with a local land expert.

Approval for Organic Production

Made for Organic Growers by an Organic Grower

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The Ahimsa Alternative, Inc.
For all things Neem & Karanja

The Sustainable Agriculture & Forestry Scholarship Endowment Fund is offering a $5,000 scholarship to upper level college students from Southeast Minnesota. Students need to attend school in the Upper Midwest and have a proven interest in sustainability or forestry. Applications will be open until March 30, 2019. Find more details and the link to apply at www.protectourresources.org.

Bioengineered Label

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) explained issues with the USDA’s new “bioengineered” labeling rule in its Jan. 8 blog: bit.ly/BioengineeredLabelIssues. The new label will be required on these bioengineered crops: alfalfa, apple (Arctic® varieties), canola, corn, cotton, eggplant (BARI Began varieties), papaya (ringspot virus-resistant varieties), pineapple (pink flesh varieties), potato, salmon (AquAdvantage®), soybean, squash (summer), and sugarbeet.

The rule exempts food sold by a very small food manufacturer with annual sales of less than $2.5 million; food served in restaurants, food trucks, trains, airplanes, and in similar establishments; and, food from animals fed a bioengineered substance—if there are no other ingredients in the food product that contain modified genetic material. That means bioengineered oil and sugar products refined to the point where modified genetic material is not detected are excluded.

NSAC cites issues with unclear language and blurred guidelines, including switching terms from “GMO” to “bioengineered.” The final rule also exempts products that contain up to five percent of any unintentional and unavoidable or inadvertent bioengineered substance, even though the industry standard for products that contain inadvertent or technically unavoidable genetically engineered material is 0.9 percent per ingredient.

Silvopasture

Earlier this month, Civil Eats included a piece about how the ancient, sustainable practice of pasturing animals among trees (silvopasture) could help shrink agriculture’s carbon footprint. The article (online at bit.ly/CivilEatsSilvopasture) featured Steve Gabriel, an agroforestry specialist at Cornell University’s Small Farms Program and author of Silvopasture. Gabriel will present two webcasts at the 2019 MOSES Organic Farming Conference on the topic: Silvopasture in Practice at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Feb. 22; and, Trees for Livestock Food and Medicine at 3:30 Saturday, Feb. 23. For details on these workshops, see moosesoc.org/conference/workshops.

Bioengineered Oil and Sugar

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The Sustainable Agriculture & Forestry Scholarship Endowment Fund is offering a $5,000 scholarship to upper level college students from Southeast Minnesota. Students need to attend school in the Upper Midwest and have a proven interest in sustainability or forestry. Applications will be open until March 30, 2019. Find more details and the link to apply at www.protectourresources.org.

Bioengineered Label

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) explained issues with the USDA’s new “bioengineered” labeling rule in its Jan. 8 blog: bit.ly/BioengineeredLabelIssues. The new label will be required on these bioengineered crops: alfalfa, apple (Arctic® varieties), canola, corn, cotton, eggplant (BARI Began varieties), papaya (ringspot virus-resistant varieties), pineapple (pink flesh varieties), potato, salmon (AquAdvantage®), soybean, squash (summer), and sugarbeet.

The rule exempts food sold by a very small food manufacturer with annual sales of less than $2.5 million; food served in restaurants, food trucks, trains, airplanes, and in similar establishments; and, food from animals fed a bioengineered substance—if there are no other ingredients in the food product that contain modified genetic material. That means bioengineered oil and sugar products refined to the point where modified genetic material is not detected are excluded.

NSAC cites issues with unclear language and blurred guidelines, including switching terms from “GMO” to “bioengineered.” The final rule also exempts products that contain up to five percent of any unintentional and unavoidable or inadvertent bioengineered substance, even though the industry standard for products that contain inadvertent or technically unavoidable genetically engineered material is 0.9 percent per ingredient.

Silvopasture

Earlier this month, Civil Eats included a piece about how the ancient, sustainable practice of pasturing animals among trees (silvopasture) could help shrink agriculture’s carbon footprint. The article (online at bit.ly/CivilEatsSilvopasture) featured Steve Gabriel, an agroforestry specialist at Cornell University’s Small Farms Program and author of Silvopasture. Gabriel will present two webcasts at the 2019 MOSES Organic Farming Conference on the topic: Silvopasture in Practice at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Feb. 22; and, Trees for Livestock Food and Medicine at 3:30 Saturday, Feb. 23. For details on these workshops, see moosesoc.org/conference/workshops.

Bioengineered Oil and Sugar
FORAGES


For Sale: 2018 Organic Alfalfa Hay. 3x3x8 large squares of dry hay. 3x3x5 1/2 square large squares of wrapped baleage. MOSSA certified. Wonewoc, WI. Transportation available. 608-553-1136.

For Sale: 2018 Organic Wheat or Barley straw. MOSSA certified. 3x3x8 large squares. Wonewoc, WI. Transportation available. 608-553-1136.

Certified Organic Grazing Dairy for Sale

2016 30ft CombCut Weeder.

Eco-Weeder: Excellent condition $3,800; 16’ Kovar Tine Weeder - Very Good Condition $2,800. Rain-Flo #1200 Water Wheel w/3 planting wheels for Planting 3 rows at 9’ spacing - Excellent Condition $2,150. Euro Rolling Produce Tables - Good Condition $130/ea. 920-412-1869. gronski.brian@gmail.com

12 row 30” Red Dragon row crop flame with twin 1000 gallon propane tanks on a gooseneck cart. Units and tanks new in 2015 $57,500. 12 row 30” Bourquin weed puller new in 2017 $26,000 Vertical fold toolbar. Homebuilt 12 row 30” in row weeder has Lilleston cutaways and Lely time weeder units over the row $2500. 701-640-3476.

2016 30ft CombCut Weeder. Only about 1,000 acres on it. Good condition. $30,000. Amenia ND. Call 701-388-0986 www.justcommonseine.eu/nta


Classified Ad Placement
Reach 15,000+ organic-minded readers.

Includes free listing in the Online Organic Classifieds at mosesorganic.org/organic-classifieds.

Submit ads online or write out your ad and send it with this mail-in form and payment to: MOSES, PO Box 339, Spring Valley, WI 54767.

Ads must be submitted by the 25th of the month prior to Organic Broadcaster publication date.

Name: ____________

Address: ____________

City: ____________ State: ____________ Zip: ____________

Phone: ____________ Email: ____________

Card #: ____________ Exp. (mm/dd/yy): ____________ CVV: ____________

I'm enclosing a check made out to MOSES.

Date: ____________ Method of payment: Visa | Mastercard | Discover | American Express

Price ($): $_________ Word rate: $20 up to 30 words; $5/each additional 10 words.

Place my ad in (price is per insertion):

- January - February
- March - April
- May - June
- July - August
- Nov. - Dec.

Word rate x number of insertions = _____ TOTAL

Payment Information:

I’m enclosing a check made out to MOSES.

Please charge $ ____________

Card #: ____________

Expiration: mm/dd/yy

Signature: ____________

This form good through December 2019.

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Signature: ____________

This form good through December 2019.
Farmland Access Bootcamp
February 9 | Newton, Iowa
This day-long session will provide beginning farmers with a comprehensive overview of land access strategies, tools and resources and help them plan their next steps towards land tenure. Contact EA Goodwell, ea@nrcs.usda.gov or call 620-208-8554.

Farmsherd’s Local Food Fair
February 9 | 7 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Stevens Point, Wis.
A local chef’s competition and over 70 exhibitors from local farms, businesses, and educational organizations sell their goods or share about their programs at this event. Call 715.544.6154 or email events@farmsherd.org.

Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Annual Conference
February 9 | 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. | St. Joseph, Minn.
It’s time to guarantee your space at Minnesota’s farmer networking showcase. Register 844-922-5573.

Webinar Series: Agronomy in the Field – Recognizing and Managing Farm Family Stress
January 29 | 6-7:30 p.m. | Online
Any interested women who would like to participate in upcoming sessions should contact Rock-Hinz or call 515-231-2803.

FACT (For Animal Concerns Trust) Webinar: Sheep Shearing – The New Zealand Method
January 29 | 12-2:00 p.m. | Online
The presenter, Amber Van Hove, is the owner of Barnhart Fields Farm in Washington State. Amber is a certified national sheep shearer.

FERTILITY NEEDS FOR ALL YOUR CROP’S FERTILITY NEEDS
616-656-0307 | nature-safe.com
Your Choice for Soil and Plant Nutrition
Manufactured from animal proteins like feather meal, meat meal and bone meal. Nature Safe is one of the largest organic fertilizer manufacturers in North America offering dry pelleted and wettable powder solutions for your crops.

Use Nature Safe as a starter fertilizer or a topdress – for any crop you are growing. Nature Safe offers high organic nitrogen and phosphorus formulations that can meet your agronomic or economic fertility challenges. Nature Safe’s all-organic products are listed by OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) and are allowed under National Organic Program (NOP) guidelines, validating its unrestricted use in the production of organic certified crops.

Available in bulk, totes and bags.

Organic Grain Conference & Trade Show 2019
Exploring advancements and issues in grain farming, today.
FEBRUARY 13-14
Champaign, IL

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Francis Thicke “Defending the Core of the Organic Standard”
SESSIONS INCLUDE:
Navigating Organic Certification | Grain Buyers Panel
USDA Add-on Labels | Managing a Parallel Operation
Legal Issues in Organics | Organic & Transition Budgets

Register at thelandconnection.org/OGC2019

Wisconsin Cover Crop Conference
February 20 | 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. | Stevens Point, Wis.
Many of the presenters will be Wisconsin grain and livestock farmers speaking from experience about what has worked and hasn’t worked in their Wisconsin conservation cropping systems. Email to info@ces.uwex.edu or call local UW extension agent.

MOSES Organic University
February 21 | All Day | Lucusse, Wis.
These in-depth courses take place the day before the MOSES Organic Farming Conference. 715-776-5775

30th Annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference
February 21 – 23 | Lucusse, Wis.
Join in the largest event in the U.S. about organic and sustainable farming, offering 60 workshops over 6 sessions, inspiring keynote, engaging roundtables, and a resource-packed exhibit hall with over 170 vendors! 715-776-5775

Farm Transition and Estate Planning
February 22 & 23 | Willmar, Minn.
This retreat is about farm business succession and family estate planning. Emphasis on how to transfer the ‘financial business’ and the ‘management and responsibility’ of the farm. 218-894-5441

Purdue Extension Indiana Small Farm Conference
February 28 – March 3 | Davieville, Indiana
Topics include vegetable crop planning, mushroom cultivation and biological orcharding, agri-tourism, and livestock processing. Exhibit hall features more than 50 vendors. 1-888-EXTINFO

2019 Indiana Organic Grain Farmer Meeting
March 6 & 7 | West Lafayette, Ind.
Purdue University Extension has expanded this annual meeting to a two-day conference with additional education and networking for organic grain farmers, 1-888-EXTINFO

LSP – Soil Health & Profit Workshops
March 7 | Dayton, Ohio
Roller crimper, weed control & soil health, with the University of Wisconsin’s Dr. Erin Silva. Contact Bryan or call 320-492-2526.

2019 Midwest Organic Pork Conference
March 8 & 9 | Waterloo, Iowa
This is the first conference of its kind to bring together both production practices and technical assistance for organic hog production. 515-202-7772

Farm Transition and Estate Planning
March 8 & 9 | Rochester, Minn.
This retreat is about farm business succession and family estate planning. Emphasis on how to transfer the ‘financial business’ and the ‘management and responsibility’ of the farm. 218-894-5441

Wyoming Bee College Bee-Keeping Conference
March 22 – 24 | Cheyenne, Wyo.
Attend pre-conference courses from 4 different topics, and follow with the 2 day conference to learn about everything from begin-ning beekeeping, journeymen to gardening for bees. Contact Catherine Wissner at (307) 633-4383 or email at cwhissner@uwyo.edu.