Community works on collective vision of organic future  
By Lauren Langworthy  

More than 100 changemakers joined forces to create a path forward for organic farming into the year 2050 and beyond during Organic 2051, a forum held in conjunction with the 2019 MOSES Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse, Wis.  

Through dialogue, facilitation, and art, these community members shared how they want our food systems to evolve to support the world’s population as it grows past the year 2050, when it’s expected to reach 9.8 billion. Small groups worked together to define gaps, brainstorm resources, and develop action steps.  

“Organic 2051 was emblematic of what MOSES does every year, at every event and conversation—tap the wisdom, energy, and ideas of the crowd,” said Sylvia Burgos Totness, one of the forum participants. “Farmers and ranchers, policy makers, economists, marketers, and consumer advocates put their heads together over thorny and complex challenges. They identified key opportunities, drilled down to the major obstacles, and worked to express possible strategies.”  

Former board member and long-time farmer friend of MOSES, Audrey Arner acted as facilitator for the day. Groups gathered into 15 issue areas, including climate change, rural community revitalization, market infrastructure, and more.  

At the end of the day, many people shared that they appreciated the space and facilitation to express and hear diverse perspectives on these topics.

Commodity system creates persistent losses  
By Ken Meter & Megan Phillips Goldenberg  

This article is based on the MOSES 2019 workshop, “Strengthening Community-Based Food Systems,” presented by the authors. Here, they explain the context in which organic growers operate—the prevailing commodity system. In the next issue, the authors will focus on organic markets. Some data have been updated since the conference, as more complete data sets became available.

To begin with, let’s consider the economic context all organic farmers operate within. Setting the terms under which we farm, this dominant, conventional commodity economy both creates the potential for organic farmers to thrive, and simultaneously limits it.  

Chart 1 shows the history of U.S. farming over the past century. On this chart, the orange line shows the net cash income of the farm sector—production expenses subtracted from cash receipts. While farm families have other ways to earn income, this red line shows how profitable it is to raise crops and livestock.

Commodity production, but these encourage the market conditions that lead to persistent losses. These results are both a testimony to the fragility of all farm enterprises—due to farmers’ dependence on the weather and other uncertainties—and a caution about the actual efficacy of public policy.

Yet it is also important to consider this same data from a slightly different perspective. The value of the U.S. dollar has declined over the past century as a result of inflation. This means a dollar earned in 1910 was worth about $25 today. So we like to adjust this data for inflation to show what these same trends look like in today’s dollars. That adjusted data is shown in Chart 2.
Board of Directors announces leadership change

By Audrey Alwell, MOSES Communications Director

Earlier this month, after much deliberation, the MOSES Board of Directors ended John Mesko’s tenure with MOSES.

“The MOSES Board recognized the need for a leadership shift to move MOSES forward in line with its mission, vision, and values,” said David Perkins, Board President. The Board has tapped Program Director Lauren Langworthy to be the Interim Executive Director.

Langworthy has been with MOSES four years. She has been deeply involved in all aspects of the organization’s work, especially the annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference.

“We’re confident in her abilities to assume the leadership role,” Perkins said. Langworthy and her husband, Caleb, own a 153-acre grass-based farm in Wheeler, Wis. They rotationally graze a 200-ewe flock of sheep and a small herd of Highland cattle. Prior to investing in livestock, they had a certified organic vegetable operation for six years, marketed through wholesale accounts and direct-to-consumer.

In 2017, the Langworthys were selected as the state representatives to the Farmers Union Enterprises leader development program, a one-year training to cultivate new leadership for the organization. In 2018, Lauren was elected to represent her district on the board of the Wisconsin Farmers Union for a three-year term.

Langworthy has represented the MOSES community of farmers at multiple meetings in Washington D.C., and takes a keen interest in policies that advance organic and regenerative farming. She is also engaged in graduate studies pertaining to nonprofit management and board governance.

“Tying forward to continued work with our partners in the organic and sustainable farming community to encourage farmers’ success,” she said.

Perkins also expressed confidence in the full MOSES staff.

“We are fortunate to have 10 very talented staff members who are dedicated to the organization’s mission,” he said. “Their skills ensure MOSES continues to be a vital organization helping to shape a better future for farmers.”

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

NO weed can resist a Buffalo Cultivator

Scout1 Guidance

Can eating organic really reduce levels of pesticides in our bodies? A new peer-reviewed study published in the journal Environmental Research found that switching to an organic diet significantly reduced the levels of synthetic pesticides found in all participants in just one week. On average, the pesticides detected dropped by 60.5% after six days of eating an all-organic diet. The study was led by researchers from the University of California Berkeley and Friends of the Earth. We found that 91% of non-organic food contains pesticides. In some cases, these pesticides can mimic hormones and alter the way your body functions. This can lead to a variety of health problems, including cancer, diabetes, and autism spectrum disorder.

Studies show that pesticide levels drop dramatically after 1 week of eating organic. A new study published in the journal Environmental Research found that switching to an organic diet significantly reduced the levels of synthetic pesticides found in all participants in just one week. On average, the pesticides detected dropped by 60.5% after six days of eating an all-organic diet. The study was led by researchers from the University of California Berkeley and Friends of the Earth. We found that 91% of non-organic food contains pesticides. In some cases, these pesticides can mimic hormones and alter the way your body functions. This can lead to a variety of health problems, including cancer, diabetes, and autism spectrum disorder.

One study found a 25% reduction in cancer risk for participants who ate the most organic food matter. Another study found that even extremely small exposures to pesticides matter. We’re also increasingly understanding that even if the level of each pesticide is below legal limits, mixtures of pesticides can have an additive “push” in total toxicity. Various studies have shown that even small amounts of pesticides can act like drugs and alter our brain development, hormones, immune systems, and more. Chemicals that affect our hormone systems, called endocrine-disrupting chemicals, can be especially problematic at very low doses.

Organophosphate pesticides are a class of highly neurotoxic pesticides linked to brain damage in children. We found a 95% drop in levels of malathion, a probable pesticide linked to brain damage in children. We used in U.S. agriculture and because they have been found to end up in our bodies, called metabolites. Each participant provided a urine sample every morning. These were shipped to labs at the University of California at San Francisco and the Québec National Institute of Public Health. These labs looked for 18 different pesticides and the chemicals that pesticides break down to in our bodies, called metabolites.

Our study was designed to assess whether an organic diet could reduce exposure to pesticides, not to provide insight on the health risks associated with the pesticides in our diets. But we chose the pesticides we tested for because they are among the most commonly used in U.S. agriculture and because they have been associated with harm to human health.

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Understand employment law to get farm help you need

By Kelli Boylen

For farms to grow, farmers often need to hire additional labor, turning farmers into employers. As employers, farmers must know and follow employment laws.

“There are a lot of legalities,” said Ariel Pressman, who recently farmed at Seed to Seed Farm, a 13-acre certified organic vegetable farm located near Balsam Lake, Wis. If you follow the laws, you can avoid enormous risks, he added.

“Keep people happy and keep them safe,” said Rachel Armstrong, founder and head of Farm Commons, a nonprofit legal education organization dedicated to empowering farmers with business law.

Armstrong grew up on a dairy farm and is now an attorney specializing in business.

Armstrong and Pressman shared their insights about employment law for farmers at the 2019 MOSES Organic Farming Conference.

Seeking Applicants

Pressman encouraged farmers to set a reasonable budget and spend money advertising open positions.

“A good job description is meaningless unless it’s seen by the right applicants,” he said.

He recommended placing job postings on multiple venues, and tracking which venues bring you the most applicants so you know where to best spend your money in the future.

When hiring employees, it is against federal law to discriminate on the basis of:

- Race, color, or national origin
- Religion
- Sex, disability
- Age or genetic information

State law may protect against discrimination on additional grounds such as sexual orientation.

Armstrong discouraged checking out potential employees on social media. The easiest way to avoid being accused of discrimination is not having information about someone’s race, religion, or other protected status, she explained.

Pressman said that while it is not OK to ask someone their age, you can ask if they are capable of working up to 10 hours a day or if they can physically perform the job, but only if you make that a requirement for all new hires.

Make a list of questions to ask all candidates, and avoid “trick” questions, he said. Ask situational questions in an interview; instead of asking how someone deals with stress, ask the applicant to tell you about a time they felt stressful and how they dealt with that.

Onboarding

“The number one reason for quitting a job is that the job was not what the person expected,” Pressman said. A good first step to keep employees happy is writing a brief, to-the-point job description that details every aspect of the job. This should always include the specific wage, hours and seasonal commitment. He advised against saying “pay based on experience,” recommending instead to state what the base pay is and that wages may be higher based on skills.

He noted that within the first few weeks of employment many people decide how long they want to work there and how much effort they are going to put in. Remember communication is incredibly important,” he added. Be sure to check in with a new employee often and make sure to answer all of his or her questions.

“Recruitment is expensive, it is important that employees feel they are treated fairly,” Armstrong said. Although an employee manual is not required legally, Armstrong and Pressman said the establishment of consistent, clear policies will make life easier for you and your employees. They did caution, however, to keep in mind that an employee manual should not accidentally create a contract, but it should instead be a good reference to make sure things are understood by the employee. Armstrong said a poorly written contract can cause issues so it is important to do it well.

A free sample employee manual is available on the Farm Commons website at farmcommons.org/resources/sample-farm-employee-handbook.

Worker Classifications

Employers sometimes prefer to classify those working for them as an independent contractor because it is not required to pay workers compensation or take out taxes. In general, farm independent contractors set their own schedule and are hired for a project, are not permanent and aren’t performing core tasks. Farmers cannot direct the means or tasks the independent contractor uses to accomplish a broad objective, Armstrong said.

Armstrong used the example of hiring someone to keep a vegetable field weed-free. If the farmer directs how the work is done and when it will be done, that person likely should be classified as an employee. If a farmer hires someone to keep the field weed-free and says they don’t care when the person works or how the job gets done, the hired person supplies their own tools and offers that same service to others, then that person is likely an independent contractor.

If you are hiring someone as an independent contractor be sure they understand they are not covered by worker’s comp and that you are not taking taxes out of their payment. If you misclassify someone, Armstrong explained, you can be responsible for back wages, back taxes, and penalties.

Legally, the definition of employing someone is to “permit” a person to work for your operation, so an intern has the same minimum wage, overtime, and salary rules in most cases. The only exceptions to this are when it is an educational environment designed for the student’s benefit; there must be no displacement of paid workers and no or little benefit for the employer. The presenters noted that waivers or agreements with interns cannot override the law.

“If you have interns who are not paid, be very careful,” Pressman cautioned.

Another classification to be aware of is the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Worker program, the federal program that allows farmers to bring foreign nationals to the U.S. to fill temporary agricultural jobs.

To Employment Law on page 12
Pioneering CSA farmers retire, encourage others to share connection to land through CSA

By Chris McGuire

One of the region’s oldest community supported agriculture (CSA) farms, Vermont Valley Community Farm in Blue Mounds, Wis., delivered its last CSA share in December. Owners Barb and David Perkins ended the thriving CSA so they could retire after 24 successful seasons. Their farm story highlights the many layers of community in organic farming. They hope their success inspires current and upcoming generations of CSA farmers.

Over the past two decades, the Perkinses have pioneered best practices for CSA management and efficient vegetable production, generously sharing their knowledge with other growers through workshops and field days. They developed innovative models for subsidizing CSA memberships for low-income families and donated thousands of pounds of produce each year to schools, community centers, and food pantries.

Barb and David started their farm in 1994, near the beginning of the CSA movement in the Midwest. They came to their new farm with clear goals: first, they had to discover if the core concepts of CSA were real; second, they would farm only if it worked financially since both were leaving city jobs behind and expected to earn similar incomes as farmers. They also set a third goal: they would farm only if it worked financially since both were leaving city jobs behind and expected to earn similar incomes as farmers.

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The three Perkins children—Jesse, Eric, and Becky—each gravitated to different roles on the farm. Jesse was heavily involved in all aspects of field work and equipment management. Eric directed produce washing and packing. Becky cooked for the farm crew.

David oversaw field production and maintained equipment and infrastructure. Like many produce growers, the Perkinses found they needed to bring outside labor onto their farm. “When we began farming, we did not foresee the labor needs we would have as the farm grew larger,” Barb said. “Labor management was not our strength, and we needed to learn quickly as we became managers of more and more employees each year.” The farm’s labor force was diverse including workers shares, family members, full and part time employees, and a seasonal contract crew.

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“The worker shares expected to be closely managed. They didn’t come with vegetable farm experience but wanted to learn and be productive,” she explained. Barb had high expectations and worked together with the crews, giving detailed, clear instructions, correcting mistakes and having fun. Overall, Barb views their worker share program as extremely positive.

It was a gift that our children worked with us on the farm for so many years,” Barb said. “They are not letting us down by not continuing the CSA.”

The Perkinses started a worker share program their second year and had as many as 60 worker shares a year working on the farm in return for their CSA share. Barb developed effective methods for managing the worker shares and in turn they proved to be a fantastic addition to the farm.

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The illustrations on this page and the front page show some of the work that happened at the forum. The Organic 2051 website, mosesorganic.org/organic2051, has links to all of the groups’ original worksheets, which MOSES staff is organizing into a road map for the organic community to move forward. We’ll keep you updated as we move forward with this project.

As participants mull their conversations from the forum, and as those conversations and information spread throughout our community, we hope that everyone will find places where their skills, talents, knowledge, and networks fit into the grand vision. None of us can do this work alone—the community is stronger when we all leverage our unique capabilities.

The shared vision of a better future for agriculture and our food systems that we developed at Organic 2051 is very powerful. Together, the long-standing MOSES community—and the new partnerships we have yet to cultivate—have the power to create lasting and impactful change.

Lauren Langworthy is the Interim Executive Director of MOSES.
Management ‘wall’ creates efficiencies, reduces labor costs for market farm

By Hallie Anderson

When I read The Lean Farm by Ben Hartman a couple of years ago, I was completely floored by the inefficiencies I could see in our farm operation. We have spent the last 2 years adapting to new processes, but by far, the way we changed how we managed our time—both within a single task and over the course of a season—has had the biggest impact on our bottom line and the overall stress on the farm.

Our farm, 10th St. Farm & Market, is a diversified vegetable farm serving a four-season CSA, wholesale markets, and a well-attended farm stand in Afton, Minn. When we started farming 8 years ago, our goal was to build an efficient, sustainable farm that two of us could run to serve our local community. Efficiencies were on our mind from day one, and governed how we set up our markets. We thought we were fairly successful in our farm endeavor, utilizing our resources well, keeping costs as low as we could, and expanding each year.

But when I got to The Lean Farm chapter titled “Ten Types of Farm Waste,” I was struck by #2, “Waiting.” I started writing down all the ways our operation was plagued by this type of waste: waiting for the days’ schedule, produce waiting to be washed, time spent looking for a box, or taking the time to answer interns’ questions about their tasks while mine went unfinished.

After making this long list of “waiting wastes,” it dawned on me that we had set up management from a manager’s perspective and not from a job-is-done perspective. The manager—farmer, who wants to spend time farming, was doing a lot of managing tasks while the jobs themselves got done in the nick of time with a little luck and a lot of sweat. We wanted to re-think our system so that the jobs got done on time, the right way, with a little luck and a lot of sweat. We wanted to re-think our system so that the jobs got done on time, the right way, decreasing the stressful part of the manager role.

This board also became a convenient place to write down notes and reminders in the middle of the workday without actually interrupting the flow of the job to have a conversation. This meant two things started happening: 1) meaningful conversations happened before or after the work was done; and, 2) important ideas and tasks did not get forgotten.

The third item we added to our management wall was the task sheet. These sheets are small (4.5x7 inches) and have the same map of our fields as our wall. They have room to write down the jobs to accomplish that day. At the top is a line for the name of the worker and the date.

I fill these out every day, one for each person on the farm including myself. Each task and the bed where that task will happen is highlighted in the same color. That way, no one is confused about where they need to go even if it is their first day on the farm. I also write down any tools they need and any other relevant notes to get the job done efficiently. Each person takes these sheets to the field with them so if they have a question they do not have to come and find me or go back to the barn, they can reference their sheet. At the end of the day, everyone puts them into a folder hung on the wall.

Adding these task sheets allowed people to get their jobs done efficiently, in less time. The sheets also allowed people to manage themselves rather than me having to check on them. This allowed me to get my jobs done. Before this system, I spent a lot of time answering questions or delegating, fixing issues, and problem-solving while my list never really got done.

Now I have a list in my pocket so when I get interrupted, which does not happen as often anymore, I pull my list out and get back on track. Another benefit to these task sheets is figuring out how long it actually takes to get specific tasks done. As soon as we started using them, we rarely worked overtime because we were able to schedule the right amount of time for each task and could assign tasks to the right people, utilizing each person’s skills effectively.

We then added all sorts of “cheat sheets” to our management wall, out in the greenhouse, and in our high tunnels. This made it easy for everyone to have the right information in the right place so tasks were not interrupted by looking up an answer in a book or doing some “quick” math. We learned that people can either think or do, but doing both at the same time took way more time. The cheat sheets took the thinking out of the equation.

We saw results across the farm. Greenhouse transplants germinated better, and we had the right amount—not too many or too few. Plantings in the field were spaced correctly and our yields were dependable. It was amazing how many little mistakes made on a weekly basis had impacted our bottom line and how a simple thing like hanging up a reference sheet solved the problem.

After implementing this management system, I then put myself on a strict schedule of planning out the following week’s schedule on Fridays. This was the difference between planning on being successful and hoping to be successful. I would do a farm walk, write down all the field tasks that needed to be done next week, then factor in our harvest and sales schedule.
Commodity System — from page 1

1910-1914 when the U.S. dominated global commodity markets and living costs were low. This era is still viewed as the standard for farm prosperity, and was followed by more robust sales, spurred by World War I, that lasted to 1920; b) the period during and immediately after World War II when wartime and recovery-era sales and new technology combined to boost farm income; c) the OPEC oil crisis of 1973-1974, when the U.S. sold massive shipments of grain to the USSR in order to retrieve its dollar supply; and d) the global housing debt crisis of 2008-2011 when speculators’ bidding up grain prices and rising ethanol use conspired to create a commodity price bubble.

What this adjusted chart shows is that the only truly prosperous periods for U.S. agriculture were due to global market power (a), which was lost in mid-century as other nations became competitive producers, or to external shocks (a-d). Overall, net cash income has trended downward, reaching levels lower than the Great Depression (1932) in 1983, 2000, and 2018. Moreover, each of these bubbles led to further declines, not to lasting prosperity for the farm sector.

Chart 2 shows only the income that farmers earn from selling crops and livestock and does not include other common sources of farm income. These include government subsidies, renting out land, and doing custom farm work for a neighbor (for example, harvesting their corn crop for pay). Incorporating these additional forms of incomes does make this picture a bit brighter, but not significantly.

The USDA also compiles data covering nonfarm sources of income, but unfortunately these are only available for 1960 and later years. These data (USDA ERS Farm Household Income and Characteristics, adjusted for inflation) show that in 1960 farm families earned about $40,000 per year, $20,000 each from farm and nonfarm sources. Today, more than $90,000 is earned off the farm, while farm income has barely risen, to $24,000 per household, despite the fact that farmers have more than doubled productivity.

The ups and downs in farm income inflict steep consequences for health, as well. This is obviously of great concern to organic growers and their families. As one example, let’s consider the aftermath of the prosperity bubble that commodity farmers enjoyed in 1973-1974. After the Soviet Union began growing grain for itself again, it stopped buying from the U.S. Commodity farmers were left with immense stocks of corn and wheat they could not sell. While following the advice of Agriculture Secretary Earl Butts, who had exhorted farmers to “plant fence row to fence row” in order to meet what he claimed was rising global demand, farmers produced record crops. Suddenly no one was buying. Country elevators stored huge piles of grain in the open air on their properties. Given this surplus, grain prices plummeted.

Meanwhile a new enzymatic process was introduced that allowed for the low-cost production of high-fructose corn sweetener. Since corn was cheap, it became easier for food processors to switch to High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS) as a primary product. Corn sweetener use increased rapidly from 1974 to 1985.

This had health consequences for U.S. consumers. Chart 3 shows that in 1974, just as HFCS was introduced, the number of youth who were overweight began to increase.

Chart 3: Overweight U.S. Youth — Percent by Age

Source: National Center for Health Statistics National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 1999 Chart by Melinda Hemmelgarn

Obesity is only one of several health conditions related to sweeteners. Today, one in every 10 U.S. residents (more than 30 million people) has been diagnosed with diabetes (Centers for Disease Control Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2017).

The American Diabetes Association calculates that the total medical cost of treating diabetes in the U.S. has risen to $327 billion per year, which is equal to 8% of all the cash receipts earned by U.S. farmers through the sale of crops and livestock. These medical costs, along with the costs of other diet-related medical conditions and environmental decades (such as the Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico and the decline of bee and insect populations), are only some of the external costs that are not taken into account when USDA calculates the production expenses of farming. Finally, ethnobotanist Gary Paul Nabhan captured a humbling trend in his new book, Food From the Radical Center (2018). Nabhan found that despite four decades of government intervention to protect our precious environmental resources, including actions for protecting clean water, protecting clean air, remediating brownfields, and levying fines on polluters, public support for environmental concerns has actually diminished. Citing Gallup Polls, he states that in 1991, 78% of all U.S. adults considered themselves environmentalists. By 2016, that figure had fallen to 42%. He continues by saying that what is actually working to bring people together to protect the environment are community-based conservation initiatives, more effective and less polarizing than broad federal programs. (Nabhan does not argue, nor do we, that federal programs are necessary, but they are essential policy tools. Yet they have not in themselves increased support for environmental protection.)

We’ll focus on community-based food systems in the next issue of the Organic Broadcaster, highlighting how organic growers are creating resilient markets.

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If you were at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference this year, you may have noticed Rama Hoffpauir running around to make sure volunteer posts were staffed. If you live in the Twin Cities area, you may have known Hoffpauir and her husband, Josh Bryceesion, for years as the Turnip Rock CSA ve-

table farmers from Clear Lake, Wis. Now, Hoffpauir and Bryceeson are becoming locally famous for the artisanal cheese they’re making in their farmstead creamery, Cosmic Wheel.

When Hoffpauir and Bryceeson started milking cows, they planned to ship milk off-farm and make cheese. Once they saw the way things are going in the dairy industry and after talking to buyers, they real-

ized that selling milk wouldn’t help them meet their financial goals.

Groups such as Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) have been working to address the causes of the current crisis, and believe that it’s not only possible but essen-
tial to have a dairy industry that supports farmers, processors, and consumers. Their current initiatives explore solutions based on supply management and stable pricing.

WFU Policy Associate Bobbi Wilson said, “While the overall state of Wisconsin’s dairy economy is bleak, direct market creameries are keeping some farms afloat by offering higher prices than farmers can find through conventional channels. Creameries like Cosmic Wheel occupy a niche in the marketplace by appealing to consumers’ love for the farm family and desire for locally sourced artisan cheeses.”

Clearly most dairies in Wisconsin don’t have the option to suddenly become artisan creameries, but Cosmic Wheel represents something to be optimistic about when it comes to the state of our cheese.

Aside from the advantages that come with direct marketing, many see grass-based dairy farms, like Cosmic Wheel, as a way of staying in the marketplace by managing costs. In a 2009 study, the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems at the University of Wisconsin-Madison identified high-quality pasture as the least expensive feed source for dairy cows, in a business where feed is the biggest share of expenses. At Cosmic Wheel, they only produce cheese during the grazing season, with the exception of some hay in the early spring. They see their farm as a complete ecosys-

tem, with each part interdependent on others.

While their small farmstead creamery can feel like a world apart from the turmoil of the dairy industry in Wisconsin, Hoffpauir said she feels the heartbeat of the consolidation that’s happening all around them and feels ali-

ed with other family farms.

“The other small farms in our area are important to our survival,” she explained. “Finding hay, et cetera, doesn’t happen unless there’s other small farms—hav-

ing families in our town with children in the schools, and all the other things we want in a thriving small town.” These sentiments tie into WFU’s work.

“Dairy Together is a movement to rebuild a viable
dairy economy for family farms and rural com-

munities,” Wilson said about Farmers Union’s current multi-state initiative. “Specifically, we are looking at federal policy options to manage overproduction and return a fair price to farmers.”

Dairy Beginnings

Hoffpauir and Bryceeson started farming as Turnip Rock Farm in 2009 with their vegetable CSA, but had a vision for a farm and business that included more. They had an interest in grass-based livestock, that stemmed from Bryceeson’s work with Heifer International, a global nonprofit that distributes animals and provides training for agriculture-based community development. Working for them in Arkansas, he developed a love for livestock, and saw a potential for real balance on farms that include ani-

mals on pasture. The fertility complements a vegetable farm, and the benefits of having a diversity in markets seemed essential for a family farm.

He spent a season milking at Poplar Hills Farm in Scandia, Minn., to gain some direct dairy experience, and learned more about grazing through MOSES workshops, Grassworks, and UW Extension. They both spent time talking to other dairy farmers, visiting small-scale farms, and reading all they could.

Meanwhile, on their own farm they started with one family cow, then three, making cheese for fun beginning in 2010, and developing recipes. At the time, they had 5 full-time employees and used cheese to help feed the greater farm family, and for gifts. They continued developing this hobby dairy until they could gather the financial resources to put in a licensed creamery.

Cosmic Wheel was born when Turnip Rock started offering Cheese Shares as part of their offerings in 2015. Since then they’ve been milking up to 20 cows at a time, and have grown to making about 8,000 pounds of cheese per year. For reference, the FDA designates a small creamery as those making less than one million pounds of cheese each year. Hoffpauir refers to their operation as a “micro dairy,” a term that doesn’t have an official definition.

The CSA model remains the primary vehicle Hoffpauir uses to market cheese. Their existing CSA was a big part of what helped them make their creamery successful; it gave them an income stream that helped as they developed their dairy, and allowed them an instant market for the finished product. Since their vegetable farm was already well established, they also had the confidence of experienced farmers to make a budget that they could have faith in, and a knowledge of what they could sell.

Turnip Rock has mostly marketed their vegetables directly to consumers, so marketing wholesale has been a new world for Cosmic Wheel. As their cheese busi-

ness has grown, they’ve looked to wholesale to keep it viable. Twin Cities co-ops, specialty cheese shops, and a few restaurants have been receptive customers, excited about their product and story. They also have a handful of customers who love the cheese so much they buy whole wheels at a time at wholesale pricing.

Cheesemaking Education

Wisconsin, with its identity rooted in dairy, is the only state that requires a license to make and sell cheese. For Hoffpauir, getting that license amounted to required coursework on cheese making and sani-

tation through UW Dairy Learning Center, Center for Dairy Research, and the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association, as well as an apprenticeship with Castle Rock Dairy in Osseo, Wis. With farm and family already taking a lot of time, she said it took about 5 years to get through it all. During that time, she also engaged in informal education, doing research and reaching out to organizations. The Wisconsin Artisan Cheesemakers Guild and American Cheese Society were helpful, and she also worked with consultants.

They found that the state doesn’t have a clear path or web of resources for really small-scale dairy. Instructors in all of the courses wanted to be helpful, but they seemed perplexed by the extremely small scale. It was challenging to figure out how to take some of the rules that are geared toward an industrial scale and apply them to a farmstead creamery. Working directly with other small farms, who are doing what they were striving for, provided some of the best information.

Enrolling in some of the required courses, Hoffpauir was surprised that there was a handful of other very small producers interested in farmstead artisan cheese. She found herself in the minority, but definitely not alone. A growing interest in this type of
Collaboration, connections key to successful 2019 MOSES Conference

By Audrey Alwell

Sandwiched between snowstorms, the 30th Annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference brought over 2,800 people to La Crosse, Wis., to share ideas, discover new resources, and make connections to improve the success of their farms or businesses. “MOSES lights a spark in me every year that reinforces I am on the right career path,” said Han Tanberg of the Shakaopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community in Minnesota. “I believe in organic and farms that value our earth, and realize that we need to do a heck of a lot collaborating if we are ever going to compete with the machine.”

Collaboration was evident not only in the work-shop presentations, but also in the conversations throughout the dining and exhibit halls. It also showed in the list of sponsors of the conference.

“We have an outstanding group of longtime spon-sors who are the backbone of this conference,” said Tom Manley, MOSES Account Services Coordinator. “The financial and food support we receive from Organic Valley is crucial. Sitka Salmon returned to help us with an awesome dinner on Friday, and Blue River Organic Seed continued their consistent sup-
port. We also had several new companies—Patagonia, Kubota, and Valient, to name a few—join us to show-case their shared values. We couldn’t put on an event of this size without that kind of support, and I want to thank all of our sponsors for all that they do to help us host this community. We can all thank them by looking to them first for the products and services we all need to grow successfully.” Links to all the sponsors are online at mosesorganic.org/sponsors.

At the Conference Kick-Off, David Perkins, MOSES board president, presented the Organic Farmer of the Year Award to Jim Riddle and Joyce Ford of Blue Fruit Farm in Winona, Minn. These pioneering farmers have had a “profound impact on organic agriculture, not just as farmers, but also as educators, policy advo-
cates, and advisors,” Perkins said. “They have worked at local, state, and national levels to promote organic agriculture, and helped shape the country’s founding organic standards in the 1990s. In essence, they’ve been front and center in nearly every aspect of the organic world.”

Riddle and Ford shared their farm story and high-
lights from their years of travel and work to promote organic farming, interspersed with wise advice to the next generation of organic farmers.

“Be empowered to experiment on your own farms,” Ford said. “Be involved in organic organizations—we really need you.”

Riddle offered similar advice when he spoke as part of the Friday keynote panel, “Upholding the Legacy.” He encouraged young farmers to be engaged in policy as well as farming and to pay attention to what the organic label means.

“There aren’t a lot of industries that go to D.C. and say, ‘please regulate us,’ but we did,” he said as he explained how the growing organic community in the 1980s sought uniform national standards and a unified organic label. “Stay true to your roots, and continue to own this word!”

The keynote panel, moderated by MOSES board member Sylvia Burgos Toftness, featured five people, in addition to Riddle, who have had major roles in the organic movement: George Siemon, Audrey Arner, Francis Thicke, Faye Jones, and Atina Diffley. They shared insights from the years they worked to expand organics and helped a new generation of farmers understand what went into creating the organic label and the MOSES Conference.

When Atina Diffley explained how she and her husband, Martin, started Gardens of Eagan in Minnesota, she emphasized how much they learned by sharing information with other farmers, adding, “that’s why we’re all here today (at the MOSES Conference). We don’t see this in other parts of our American culture, this concept of sharing knowledge and that we’re all in this together.”

Audrey Arner picked up on that theme, saying the MOSES Conference was first organized because organic farmers were “so yearning for the sharing of information that was not available in the conventional farm information networks.”

The panelists shared personal stories of how they created change through their farms and in their commu-

nities. They encouraged the audience to carry the movement forward.

“Step out of your comfort zone,” Faye Jones said. “Make phone calls. Develop a relationship with your repre-sentatives... Because we aren’t going to really effect the kind of change we all want, we all believe in, unless more people step up.”

The speakers for the Saturday keynote each have stepped up in their own way to encourage organic farming. Dayna Burtness Nguyen shared how she and her husband, Nick, are paying it forward by launch-
ing an incubator farm on their property to help two beginning farmers get started. Dairy farmer Danny Borgerding put a drop of food coloring in a MOSES Conference mug to illustrate how one person can have an impact, especially when “we shake things up a bit.” Micro-farmer Alicia Raviz explained how her husband’s battle with cancer launched her into organic gardening and then into sharing what she grew through CSA, and also into a community through participation in Wisconsin Farmers Union, where she’s now her district director.

The Organic Farmer of the Year presentation and conference keynotes are on the MOSES YouTube chan-
nel at www.youtube.com/mosesorganic.

The MOSES Conference includes the Organic Research Forum and a juried poster session. This year’s winner is Hannah Phillips from the University of Minnesota with her research on using chickens to reduce flies in organic dairy pastures. Claire Flavin Hodge, also from the University of Minnesota, took second place, and Dylan Bruce from the University of Wisconsin took third place.

The conference provided the chance to remem-
ber long-time conference planner and presenter Chris Blanchard, who passed away late last year. His memorial scholarship has collected over $10,000 to send farmers to the annual MOSES Conference. Additional donations can be made at bit.ly/ChrisBlanchardScholarship2MOSES.

Audio recordings of conference workshops are avail-
able at mosesorganic.net—the MOSES online store. The MP3 downloads are $5 each. The complete set of work-
shop recordings comes on a USB drive for $75. This year, many presenters also shared their PowerPoints, making the audio recordings even more informative. The PowerPoints are posted online at mosesorganic.org/ conference/workshops.

The MOSES Organic Farming Conference will return to La Crosse Feb. 27-29, 2020. If you have sug-
estions for workshops or presenters, submit those online at mosesorganic.org/conference.

Audrey Alwell is the Communications Director for MOSES.
Above: Organic Farmers of the Year Jim Riddle and Joyce Ford share their farm story.
Top left: Young farmers express enthusiasm for the MOSES Conference.
Top right: Kubota’s tractor catches farmers’ eyes.
2nd row: Patagonia brought its new line of hemp workwear for people to try on. Hannah Phillips from the University of Minnesota shows off her first place research poster. Elders in the organic movement talk about the early years in organics and the start of the MOSES Conference.
Middle left: Synister Dane plays before the keynotes.
Left: The Organic Pheromones rock the crowd Thursday night.
Bottom: Dancers learn the steps at the Friday night square dance.

Photos by Laurie Schneider
Employment Law — from page 4

It’s a great way to get qualified farm workers, Pressman said, but there is a lot of paperwork, and the government closely monitors the program to avoid exploitation of the migrant workers. Workers must be temporary (not year-round), and must be provided free housing, meals, workers comp, and at least the equivalent of minimum wage. Using this program may be too expensive for smaller operations, but may be a good option for larger farms that need a reliable option for field work and harvesting.

Minimum Wage

Many states do not require a minimum wage for farms, but this only applies to farm labor, not value-added, processing, or ag-tourism. That said, Armstrong added that paying a livable wage can help in the long run by retaining reliable, trained employees.

Salaries or per-piece payments are not a way to skirt minimum wage, she said. An hourly wage can go up or down based on salary or per-piece, but it must always be above minimum wage for each hour worked if the minimum wage is required.

Workers Compensation

Workers Compensation was originally set up to protect employers, Armstrong said. Generally, employees are prohibited from suing a farmer who is carrying workers compensation for the employee’s work-related injuries.

Compensation laws vary from state to state, so it is important to learn about the laws for your location. Some states require it for agricultural employment and some do not. Even if you aren’t legally required to have it you still need insurance for worker injuries.

Rates differ for different sized farms, Pressman said. Covering up to $100,000 worth of wages cost his farming operation about $5,000 annually. Workers Comp insurance can be purchased through many insurance companies.

It is possible to purchase a different type of insurance to cover employees, but Pressman said those types of policies typically result in the injured person having to sue the insurance company for payment. “I thought it ethically better to purchase workers’ comp,” he says.

Asking employees if they have their own health insurance is not a good option. Some private insurance companies will not cover injuries at work. Being injured on the job often can result in lawsuits; health insurance policies may not cover lost wages or permanent disability.

Resources

There are many free resources for agricultural employers online at www.farmcommons.org, including guides to managing risks of interns and volunteers, classifying your workers, knowing the basics of farm employment laws, and OSHA and migrant worker fact sheets.

Kelli Boylen is a freelance writer who lives on a home-stead in Iowa.

Successful CSA — from page 5

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From the beginning, Barb and David set financial expectations the farm needed to meet. But, David added, “We were willing to fail.” If the farm didn’t pay enough, if the CSA model did not work, they agreed they would discontinue the farm. Clear goals, combined enough, if the CSA model did not work, they agreed

They held seven organized member events each year, and their members participated in their worker share program.

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Lender explains what’s needed for smooth loan processing
By Joshua Rynes

As I sat at my desk formulating how to attack the day, I received an email with an interesting question: “What would you like to see a farmer bring to the table when making a loan request?”

In all honesty, a lender wants to take as little risk as possible while making the most money possible. Farmers need to show they are a safe bet to repay the loan—that they are good at farming and keeping records. The difference between an approved loan and a denied loan can be as simple as how a farmer provides the farm’s financial information for the lender to review. Here are a couple of scenarios to help you understand what your lender needs for a loan request.

John and Jane Doe are in their mid-40s and have been customers of the bank for many years. They grow crops and keep dairy cows. Jane also raises vegetables to sell at the farmers market and is in charge of the finances for the entire farm.

Each year I schedule a meeting with them to discuss their business and financial needs for the upcoming year. My goal for this meeting is to walk out with a fiscal year-end balance sheet, production information, income and expense numbers, a list of any assets bought or sold in the year, and a projection for the upcoming year that would also include any potential new loan requests.

In the first few years, I would come out to the farm and sit down at the kitchen table. After an hour of sharing stories and pictures I would start asking for the information needed to complete the annual loan request. We would start with the balance sheet. John would reach into his pocket and pull out a crumpled up paper towel stained with iodine from teat dip. On this paper, John had all of his cattle numbers.

Next I would ask John about any inventories they had at year end. John would write down the number of piles of feed he had and the dimensions of the silos, and guesstimate how many hay bales were wrapped up in the field.

Next I would provide him a machinery list which they had now provided me with all of the information I needed to do the renewal and provide operating money for the year. As I gathered my things, they asked me a question: “So how long before you have the new loan approved?”

Based on the simplicity and size of the request, one would expect a decision to be made and have the loan closed within the week. However, with how they had provided numbers, it ended up taking 3 weeks.

Why so long? I had to build a balance sheet in the format that is accepted by the bank and the lending community from the numbers John and Jane had provided. I had to sort out all of the items in the shoe box and categorize them to the best of my ability. This had to be done just to build a projection for the upcoming year. Once all of this was done, I would have questions for John or Jane to answer, which would typically take a day or two for them to respond.

Once I was confident that I had all of my questions answered I would tell John and Jane what the terms of the new loan were to be. In those early years John always griped about the high interest rate we were charging and the time it was taking to get the loan.

Fast forward 20 years and here is how our annual meeting happens: Jane sends me an email around the holidays giving me dates that they are available to meet, noting they’d prefer to meet right away in January. A few days before the meeting, Jane has me hand a shoe box full of various check stubs for income they generated along with all of the billing records. The difference between an approved loan and a denied loan can be as simple as how a farmer provides the farm’s financial information for the lender to review. Here are a couple of scenarios to help you understand what your lender needs for a loan request.

For the projection, John would say, “Well, I don’t really see anything different happening this year so let’s just use last year’s numbers.” Jane would then hand me a shoe box full of various check stubs for income they generated along with all of the billing statements and receipts for the year’s expenses.

To get the production information from the previous year, John would run out to the barn and grab all of the bulk tank slips and feverishly add them up. He would then guess as to how many cows he averaged milking for the year to get production per cow. For crop production, he would figure out how many wagons of each crop he harvested and guess the capacity of each wagon to get a number.

They had now provided me with all of the information I needed to do the renewal and provide operating money for the year. As I gathered my things, they asked me a question: “So how long before you have the new loan approved?” Based on the simplicity and size of the request, one would expect a decision to be made and have the loan closed within the week. However, with how they had provided numbers, it ended up taking 3 weeks.

Why so long? I had to build a balance sheet in the format that is accepted by the bank and the lending community from the numbers John and Jane had provided. I had to sort out all of the items in the shoe box and categorize them to the best of my ability. This had to be done just to build a projection for the upcoming year. Once all of this was done, I would have questions for John or Jane to answer, which would typically take a day or two for them to respond.

Once I was confident that I had all of my questions answered I would tell John and Jane what the terms of the new loan were to be. In those early years John always griped about the high interest rate we were charging and the time it was taking to get the loan.

Fast forward 20 years and here is how our annual meeting happens: Jane sends me an email around the holidays giving me dates that they are available to meet, noting they’d prefer to meet right away in January. A few days before the meeting, Jane has me hand her any items I would like on the agenda and includes the financial statements. I show up to the meeting and am handed an agenda that lists time to catch up on news, recap of the previous year (production, prices, projects, income and expense statement), upcoming year projection, and banking details (loan renewals, existing interest rates, new money needs).

Along with the agenda, Jane hands me a completed balance sheet, income/expenditure statement, and a projection. This allows us to actually talk about the business rather than just gather data. Sometimes I even get the numbers ahead of time so I can review and make sure any questions I have are answered. Before I leave, John and Jane negotiate the new loan rate and terms. I am able to commit to a one-week turnaround time.

As John and Jane have become more experienced farmers, they’ve also become better business managers. By following their second example of providing good documentation, you will have a better chance of getting a loan. In times where margins are tight and credit isn’t as readily available, you need to be able to show your lender that you know your business. Just being a good producer doesn’t mean what it used to 10 years ago.

Joshua Rynes is the vice president of the Wisconsin Ag Business Banking Team at Bremer Bank.
Management Wall — from page 7

If I found that there was more on the list than could be accomplished in five days, I would have Saturday and Sunday to get caught up to be on-schedule or ahead of the game come Monday morning.

Being on schedule becomes the norm and allows me to have most weekends off. If I wait until Sunday night or Monday morning to plan, I find I operate all week in catch-up mode. When that happens repeatedly, it becomes much harder to get back on track.

Our new management system has decreased our labor costs significantly. In 2017, we spent almost $18,000 in hired labor costs compared to $11,000 in 2018 while producing the same amount. Our printed maps cost $80, the task sheets were $75 for 1000 sheets.

With the cheat sheets, a whiteboard, and a couple of other organizing tools our investment grand total was $225 to save $7,000.

The real impact of the management wall, though, is how much stress is lifted when the farm is always on schedule. I have the freedom to spend time with family and friends in the middle of the season, and the farm has better cash flow to buffer emergency expenses or to grow when it needs to. It has also become a record-keeping system, that in a way, keeps itself. I don’t have to spend extra time keeping records; I am collecting that data in tandem with planning my week’s schedule and task list. My task sheets have a detailed record of what happened each day, by whom, amendment/compost applications, plant varieties, etc. I organize them once a month into a paperclip, put a sticky note on top with the month they represent and place them in a shoe box in my office for easy reference later.

When you are making a profit on your farm, it is very easy to think you are doing everything as well as you can. But, as Ben Hartman explains in his book, we need to continuously improve; fix it and fix it again!

Our management wall was step one. Efficiencies are compounding, and I am looking forward to building upon them this next season and seasons to come.

Halie Anderson owns and operates 10th St. Farm & Market, a diversified vegetable farm in Afton, Minn.

Farmstead Creamery — from page 9

farming brings with it a network of support – small dairies that help each other answer questions, share resources, call each other with licensing questions or when they’ve suddenly run out of supplies. As they experienced with vegetable farming, this was an important resource to help them in the early stages.

Adding a creamery to their farm brought new complexity to the business. Like many farm couples, Hoffpauir and Bryceson started out sharing all of the work on their farm. As it grew to include livestock, Hoffpauir assumed that would continue.

“I wanted to milk the cows! Then I realized I’d have to worry about cross-contamination,” she said, talking about going in and out of their cheesemaking facility. Now Hoffpauir is in charge of anything cheese related, while Bryceson takes care of all of the livestock, as well as managing the vegetable production. This way, they avoid stepping on each other’s toes too much and each could focus on one aspect of the operation during the intensive learning process.

To maintain a healthy balance among their distinct farm enterprises, Hoffpauir emphasized the need to communicate well and often.

“Ok, are we pumping milk or not? How much is in the tank? Do we have to take a cow out of production? We keep working on getting better at that,” she said.

“Making peace with our roles can be challenging, but is getting easier the more we embrace where we are.”

Future Plans

With their commitment to producing high-quality, grass-based, artisanal cheese, Cosmic Wheel is unlikely to get much bigger. They see themselves as “at capacity” on their available pasture, and their creamery is not large enough to support much more production. Hoffpauir said they feel good about the size of their business. Her goals for the future are to continue to improve recipes, tweak their markets, and make sure they can make wonderful cheese and raise happy cows.

Far from seeing their niche industry as fiercely competitive, Hoffpauir is excited about connecting with other cheesemakers. Thinking about the potential for more farmstead creameries in Wisconsin, she urges people considering it to really focus on potential markets, since that was one of the most important ingredients in Cosmic Wheel’s success.

Rachel Henderson is an organic specialist for MOSES. She and her husband have a certified organic orchard and raise pastured livestock.

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Farmer shares challenges, costs, results, of pastured pig demonstration project

By Harry Hoch

At Hoch Orchard, we have been experimenting with animal rotations in our fruit plots for several years. We strive to create a perennial fruit system that mimics nature with animals feeding on plants and stimulating the soil to go through the soil. Our goal is to strengthen the soil, break fruit pest life cycles, and produce high-quality meat without taking land away from human food production.

In 2016, we received a grant to focus on this project from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant Program. Our project was more of a “proof of concept” than a research project that tests specific practices. We hoped to demonstrate the viability of adding animals to perennial fruit production, and believed this concept could be applied to any perennial system or even a mixed annual and perennial vegetable system.

**Infrastructure**

Although we had been rotating animals through our fruit plots prior to the grant project, we found many problems with our system that limited the scale of animal production on our farm. Our property is set up with a 10-foot woven wire deer fence enclosing about 60 acres of land. Just inside that deer fence is a high-tensile electric fence creating a ring pasture around the perimeter of the farm.

We used the ring pasture to move animals around the farm without having to go through the fruit plots. We used the pasture fence to power temporary ribbon fences with fencing and animal chores announced he was leaving for a full-time warehouse job the first week of December of Year 3 (2018). However, as is often the case in life, things did not go as planned.

Fall of Year 1 went well. Our intern worked with the harvest crew after apples were picked and almost all of the manure was put up. We saved money on posts by nailing multi-species woven wire fence to the windbreaks that divide the fruit plots. Then things went downhill.

While our animal production intern did a great job her first year, she had some life challenges in Year 2, making the responsibility of animals difficult. Piece by piece, we moved her animal responsibilities to others. We did not have time to install the corners and gates, and had to use portable fencing to close off the paddocks and use as gates. Even still, the permanent woven wire fence along the windbreaks made it much easier to set up temporary paddocks.

We had big plans to finish the corners and hang gates after harvest. That’s when the weather became a roadblock. Harvest ran late and an early hard frost made fence work impossible.

Year 3 presented similar challenges. In March, our cider salesman moved away, leaving me to manage cider sales and animal production. I sold off most of the feeder pigs in the spring and did not order any more gate posts would go in the ground in 2018. However, as is often the case in life, things did not go as planned.

In August, our part-time farmhand who had helped with fencing and animal chores announced he was leaving for a full-time warehouse job the first week of September. That left us short on experienced workers who could rotate the pigs through the fruit plots. So I set up a small run for the pigs just outside the animal shed. They could get outside to graze and root a little, but got all their nutrition from waste fruit dumped in the feed trough. We had a good crop of apples and lots of cider pumice and grade outs so the pigs got all the fruit they could eat.

In a typical year, we would move the pigs as fruit ripened. The raspberries finish in August, so we would flash graze through the patch to clean up the last over-ripe berries and take out some of the weeds. From there, they moved to the cherry trees and then on to

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**Fencing Project**

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In Year 3, October had record rainfall and the most challenging harvest of my entire career, with daily rounds of mud, rain-soaked workers, and stuck tractors. When we wrapped up harvest, it was far too wet to auger holes and build H braces to hang the gates. When it finally did dry off, we put the entire crew on fencing and built one last run and hung two gates to make two completely fenced plots. As soon as we finished, the temperature dropped below average and stayed there. The wet ground froze like concrete so no more gate posts would go in the ground in 2018.

**Project Results**

The main lesson we learned form this project is that sometimes you can’t control things that impact a schedule. While we had a good project, we fell short on good luck. Ours is a cautionary tale for other farmers; it only takes a few bouts of bad luck or bad timing to really throw off a project. Fortunately, our project was intended to be a demonstration, not strict research. Even though we did not get all the data we had hoped to collect, we were able to demonstrate how our concept could work.

We have data for two years of pasturing hogs in our rotational system. We tracked the time to feed, water, and move the pigs, including time to set up and take down portable fencing, and chase loose pigs.

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Fencing Project — from page 15

In 2018 (Year 3), we moved our one small group of pigs about five times. No time was spent catching loose pigs. Less than 10 hours was spent putting up temporary fencing to complete the perimeter of partially fenced blocks or to act as gates. Moving animals into paddocks was less than a half hour per move.

There is a huge savings of time when utilizing permanent fencing. After all the fences are complete with gates, we should be able to get the average time spent per animal down to under an hour each over the season—a tenfold reduction in hours.

Fencing Costs, Recommendations

We already had a perimeter fence in place and nailed 8-42-12 woven wire to windbreak trees. This lowered fencing costs quite a bit. We spent $3,118.81 on materials and had 199.5 hours of labor to install 4,870 feet of fence, creating 12 paddocks averaging four acres each. We did not install gates and have been using portable energized mesh fence to close off the paddocks.

The amount we spent on fencing simply serves as an example of how much cheaper fencing can be when using existing materials such as our windbreak. The pricing research I did is worth sharing to help other farmers estimate the cost to add fencing for pastured livestock.

The prices here reflect the cost of materials when I started the project three years ago, although fence costs have not changed very much since then. The cost of a straight run of fence is not very high; it’s the corners and gates that increase the price considerably.

A good rule of thumb if you are not planning to install the fence yourself is to double the materials cost. A professional will charge about as much for installation as materials.

Woven wire is $4.85 per foot and the posts are $9 each. 1,000 feet of fence is $3,150 or $1.35 per foot. One corner requires three posts in the ground and two posts for the top of the H-brace. Hardware for corners is about $10. One corner adds $55.00.

A gate requires an H-brace on each side. That is another six posts, hardware, and about $750 for the gate (depending on size) and its hardware. One gate adds $214.

A site that is not square and requires many extra corners is going to be more expensive. In fact, sometimes it is cheaper to run a longer fence than putting it in three corners to go around an obstacle. Farmer ingenuity can reduce costs. Using an oak tree as a corner, or running up to an existing barbwire or electric fence can reduce costs. Using an oak tree as a corner, or corners is going to be more expensive. In fact, some farms have a lot of high-tension, low-calorie wire that can be twisted tight on the post. Sliding the wire past a smooth round post works well, but sliding wire against a T-post can be put in fairly quickly with just a post pounder.

T-posts have a few disadvantages. Installing the woven wire can be trickier when you are stretching it and attaching it to metal posts than wood posts. This style of fence should be anchored at one end then stretched with a clamp system and a tractor on the other end.

Installing the woven wire can be trickier when you are stretching it and attaching it to metal posts than wood posts. This style of fence should be anchored at one end then stretched with a clamp system and a tractor on the other end. Sliding the wire past a smooth round post works well, but sliding wire against a T-post can snap. The job will require a few more sets of hands.

Attaching the wire to the T-post also requires a special clip or cutting thousands of pieces of malleable wire that can be twisted tight on the post. Attaching the wire to wooden posts just requires pounding a few simple U-nails.

Posts should be spaced with the type of livestock in mind. High-tensile woven wire fence can be stretched tight and will not break if cattle or other heavy animals lean on it or push into it. You can space your line posts as far apart as 24 feet for some grazing animals.

Hogs are a different story. A mid-size feeder pig or adult hog can get his snout under the wire and push it enough to slip under. By spacing posts 10 feet apart, there is not enough slack for a pig to get under.

A literal interpretation of the National Organic Program rule is no use of treated posts in any new fence construction or the replacement of broken posts. A certifying agency may require a 24-inch buffer between treated posts and the organic livestock. I have been told I have to fence off my corner posts so the animals cannot contact the treated posts.

I have been using metal T-posts for line posts and cedar for the end posts and H-braces. In some cases, the certifying agency may allow treated posts for paddocks that are used for flash grazing. This is contrasted with fencing that is used for corrals or feedlots where the animals are near the posts for extended periods of time or in regular contact with the posts. A farm that is transitioning to organic production will most likely have the existing field fences grandfathered in, but cannot use treated wood to replace broken posts.

Always talk to your certifier before you install fencing with treated posts. If you do install new treated posts and don’t get caught right away, don’t expect to plead ignorance if you get caught years later by a stricter inspector. If you install treated posts after you have started your transition process you are out of compliance and could end up having to re-fence or abandon a pasture.

If you work out an agreement with your certifier to use treated posts in paddocks that are only flash grazed, be sure to get your agreement in writing. Some of the larger certification agencies have a lot of staff turnover. Just because one certification specialist told you that your posts are not a problem, doesn’t mean those same posts won’t be a problem for a new specialist, certifier, or executive at your certification agency.

Harry Hoch and his wife, Jackie, own Hoch Orchards and Gardens in La Crescent, Minn.
MOSES In Her Boots Podcast
The MOSES “In Her Boots” podcast currently features interviews with Erin Schneider from Hilltop Community Farm in LaFarge, Wis., where she grows wide range of vegetables, herbs, flowers, and perennial fruit. New episodes post every Friday. Subscribe on iTunes or Stitcher, or listen at mosesorganic.org/in-her-boots-podcast.

New Organic Resource Directory
MOSES just published the 11th edition of the Midwest Organic Resource Directory. The 80-page book lists buyers, processors, suppliers, certification agencies, consultants, resource organizations, state and federal agencies, and university programs. Suppliers are broken out by tools, supplies you need quickly and seed to help you find the supplies you need quickly and easily. The directory is available online as a free PDF download at mosesorganic.org/organic-resource-directory. To request a printed, spiral-bound book, email info@mosesorganic.org or call 888-90-MOSES.

Workshop for Women Landowners in Wisconsin
Are you a Wisconsin woman who owns agricultural acreage but doesn’t live there? This event can help you learn how to care for your land.
Do you rent from a female landowner? Please share this opportunity with your landlord.
The MOSES In Her Boots project is again partnering with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Women, Food, and Agriculture Network (WFAN) in a unique Women Caring for the Land workshop that specifically targets women absentee landowners, helping this group learn about soil health and conservation principles as well as connect to federal and local programs that can fund conservation projects.

This free workshop will be held March 24 in Madison and May 1 in Elkhorn. Two sessions will be offered each day at each site—a breakfast or lunch session—offering identical programming to give women scheduling options. The workshop includes breaks for lunch. The program is free but registration is required. See mosesorganic.org/in-her-boots/events.

Donation from Salmon Shares
Sitka Salmon Shares, a major sponsor of the MOSES Conference, has donated over $600 to MOSES for farmer education. The funds were raised through the company’s give-back program—25 members of the MOSES community purchased seafood shares during the one-month special offer.

NOSB 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. The NOSB has posted proposals and discussion documents online at 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.nationalorganiccoalition.org/events.

NOSB Openings
The USDA is accepting nominations for five open seats on the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), the 15-member board which makes recommendations on the production, handling, and processing of USDA certified organic products. Each member serves a five-year term and represents specific sectors of the organic community. Current openings include one seat each for an environmental protection and resource conservation representative, organic farmer, and organic retailer, and two seats for organic handlers. Nominations are due by May 17, 2019. See bit.ly/NOSBopenings.

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SO4 is Smart Sulfur. Pelletized. Spreads evenly. Ideal solubility. Meets plant needs all growing season.
Food Hub Opportunity for Farmers

Fresh Picks Farmer Alliance, a collaborative food hub network of organic and sustainable produce, meat and dairy farmers selling into Chicago land, is seeking additional farmers. The Alliance has three anchor hubs: Springdale Farm in Plymouth, Wis., PrairiErth Farm in Atlanta, Ill., and All Grass Farms in West Dundee, Ill. To learn more, email shelly@freshpicks.com or call Shelly at 847-410-0959.

Organic Corn Research

Organic corn growers in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin can contribute to research on genetic diversity of U.S. corn. Cathleen McCluskey, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is interviewing farmers to better understand how they perceive and manage genetic diversity on their farms. Growers will receive a $100 stipend in exchange for their time. To be considered for this research, email cmcluskey@wisc.edu.

Heartland Forum & Farmer Bill of Rights Rally

On March 30, the Heartland Forum and Farmers Bill of Rights pre-forum rally will be held at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa. The Heartland Forum seeks to surface new, high-impact ideas for revitalizing America’s heartland communities. Presidential contenders are asked to present visions about these events and register online. Wisconsin Farmers Union members are invited to join a group bus trip to participate in these events. Links to more information: Heartland Forum: heartlandforum.splashthat.com

Wisconsin Farmers Bill of Rights: www.farmaction.us/fbor

Organic Pollinator Research

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison are looking for grower collaborators in Wisconsin for a pollinator research project in the summer of 2019 and 2020. The project will evaluate the impact of pollinator habitat on the wild bee community, crop pollination, and yield. Farms must have established pollinator habitat and be willing to grow cucumbers and melons. For information, contact Dr. Hannah Gaines Day at hgaines@wisc.edu or 774-392-0498.

Risk Management Resources

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF), in cooperation with USDA-Risk Management Agency, recently published two guidebooks: Introduction to Crop Insurance for Organic and Transitioning Producers explains how crop insurance works for organic and transitioning farmers, as well as tips on working with crop insurance agent. Reducing Risks Through Best Soil Health Management Practices in Organic Crop Production explores research on best soil-building practices for resilience in the face of climate change. Both publications are free online as PDFs at ofrf.org/reports.

Managing Birds on Farms

Wild Farm Alliance has published a new resource, Supporting Beneficial Birds and Managing Pest Birds, to educate farmers on how they can use birds to aid in farm production. It includes information about using birds as a part of pest control, creating on-farm habitats for beneficial birds, and increasing biodiversity and farm resilience. See www.wildfarmalliance.org/bird_resource.

Organic Fraud Prevention Solutions

The Organic Trade Association has launched its Organic Fraud Prevention Solutions program, which establishes a framework for businesses to continuously improve internal programs for achieving organic integrity throughout their associated supply chains. For details, see lota.com/news/press-releases/20518.

Documentary on Regenerative Farming

A new documentary series, “Farmer’s Footprint,” showcases the grassroots regenerative agriculture movement. The first film, “Farmer’s Footprint: The Beginning,” showcases the grassroots regenerative agriculture movement. The first film, “Farmer’s Footprint: The Beginning,” showcases the lessons learned and granting victories of the four-generation Breitkreutz family of Stoney Creek Farm in Redwood Falls, Minn., as they navigate away from conventional practices to regenerative agriculture—just a few years of embracing regenerative practices has healed their land while cutting their costs. See farmersfootprint.us.
Small grain, grasses and cover crop seeders to save a trip. Gandy and Valmer models, multiple sizes. Starting at $2900. Call Paul at 763-286-2037.

Farrmall Super C with sidesslide attachment. Very good condition. Also have 3 pt. mist sprayer with blower, like new, 319 559 0737


Wildcat Compost Turner. Model FX7003 point model. Requires 110 HP tractor to operate. $5800 or make offer. Call for info. 715-284-2606.

12 row 30” Red Dragon row crop flame with twin 1000 gallon propane tanks on a gooseneck cart. Units and tanks new in 2015 157,500. 12 row 30” Bourquin weed puller new in 2017 526,000 Vertical fold toolbar. Homebuilt 12 row 30” in weedier has Lilliston cutleys and Lely tide weeder units over the row $25000. 701-640-3476.


Farm For Sale - Take our Central WI farm forward: 20 acres, new garage with attached kitchen, a four-bedroom two bath remodel, and walk in cooler. Asking $250,000. Contact Randy Sculte@tznet.com. 715-307-5607.

For Sale: Chicken barn on 15 acres. Holds 20,000 chickens. Good business opportunity. 2 years ago. Asking price $95,000, or make good offer. 618-516-2828 or samzook5@gmail.com

For Sale or Rent: 80 acres certified organic standing grass hay near Curtis, Wis. Jim at 715-255-9236.

Looking for hard working, I mean hard working, individual or individuals, who want a career in organic crop farming. Not looking for an employee, looking for a business partner. Excellent earning potential. Northern Illinois. eclfisary@gmail.com

Certified Organic, grass fed Black Angus cows: 25 head bred to Black Angus bull. Due to calve April-May. Northeast iowa. 515-494-5204. michael.natvig@gmail.com


Looking for 12-24 feeder cattle around 8000 to purchase in April to finish on grass. Preferably Angus but willing to consider others. Please contact Mike at mike.lndj@agriverbeef.com.

We Stock Dr. Paul’s organic approved Animal Health Products including Health Tinctures, Boluses, Aloe Pellets with Garlic, Immune System Boosters, Calh Health Products, De-wormers and more. We sell wholesale and retail. Also looking for dealers to stock our organic certified kelp meal, Sea 90 Salt, Reed Sedge Peat (feed grade humated), etc. Sunrise Seeds Plus, LLC. Topkea, Indiana 260-463-0830.

Organic Onion Plants, Sedona, Redwing, Candy, White Wing, yellow and red Cipollini, and Leeks. Other varieties available upon request. $7 per 100, 1000 plant minimum, certified by MOGA. Glen 563-379-3951 gtfresh@gmail.com


Certified organic oats and succotash: Feed quality good test weight, 600 bushel of each. Northeast iowa. Call: 515-494-5204. Michael.natvig@gmail.com


We manufacture our own OMRI listed Amino Acid 15-0-1, a dry powder more nutritious than liquid fish. Will not clog drip irrigation. One lb. 5 lbs. or 55 lb. packaging, can be shipped UPS. Frommelt Ag Service, Greeley, IA. 563-920-3674.

For Sale: Tempered, insulated, double-pane glass. Large panes for sunrooms, solar homes, ag buildings, greenhouses or ??? One hundred fifty thousand sold since 1979. 32” x 74” x 1” double-pane only $490.00. We will be closing or selling Arctic Glass in 12 months. If you need glass now would be a good time! Arctic Glass, www.kissouglas.com, 715-639-3762 or joseph4249@gmail.com.

Certified Organic Alfalfa Hay in Bloomfield, IA. $30 Round bales. Shredded. Test results available. Range 140-167 RFV depending on cutting. Doug Schook at 641wzooeright0723 or nate.schook@gmail.com.


Deep Winter Greenhouse Field Day
April 4 | $ | Cold Spring, Minn.
Check out Green Winter Gardens’ DWG and learn about UWM horticulture, economics, and design research projects concerning this exciting and emerging production system. There will also be hands-on DWG production training for those interested in growing in their own DWG in the near future. Green Winter Gardens 320-363-4401 or Greg Schwestor 612-622-9706

The Herbal Apprentice: From Self Care to Community
April 7 | $ | North Branch, Minn.
WEI (Women’s Environmental Institute) presents a workshop on the intuitive art and solid science of botanical medicine with Master Herbalist Gigi Stafne. 651-583-0705

LSP Workshop: Farm Dreams
April 7 | $ | Minneapolis, Minn.
Farm Dreams is a four-hour workshop designed to help people clarify what motivates them to farm, get their vision on paper, inventory their strengths and training needs, and get perspective from an experienced farmer. Each registration fee covers up to two people per family or farm. To register call 507-523-3366.

MFA Class: Organic Fertility & Pest Prevention
April 10 | $45 – 8 p.m. | $20 | Manner of St. Croix, Minn.
This class will discuss strategies farmers can use to make smart decisions around fertility and also will discuss the organic inputs used at Big River Farms, and demonstrate how to safely and correctly apply them. Finally, review how to document usage for your records and Organic Certification. To register call 651-433-3676.

Meat Goat Workshop
April 13 | $ | Clear Lake, Minn.
Learn about grazing goats for profit, kidding and goat health, feed and marketing strategies, and farm security and more. Lunch is included. shonyofarm@yahoo.com or 612-810-0534.

Oyster Mushroom Cultivation
April 13 | $ | North Branch, Minn.
WEI (Women’s Environmental Institute) presents a workshop on growing oyster mushrooms year round on straw, coffee grounds, and other media using low-tech methods. Participants will take a small bag of inoculated substrate home to fruit. 651-583-0705

Homegrown Minneapolis Community Food Forum
April 17 | 5 – 7:30 p.m. | Minneapolis, Minn.
Program to feature Mayor Jacob Frey, Minneapolis City Council Member Jeremy Schnee, University of Minnesota professor Anu Ramaswami, and Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council Member Jeremy Schroeder, University of Minnesota professor Anu Ramaswami, and Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council and staff. 612-673-3553.

The Sun Hive – Making a Biodynamic Beehive
April 20 | $ | Minneapolis, Minn.
WEI (Women’s Environmental Institute) presents a workshop on the Sun Hive, a biodynamic beehive made of rye straw. This uniquely shaped hive is comprised of two skeps (baskets), held together by wooden support structures and uses top bar hive frames. This is a hands-on workshop and students will focus on the craft of weaving. 651-583-0705

MOSES: Women Caring for the Land
May 7 | 8 – 10 a.m. or 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. | Madison, Wis.
The workshop focuses on the best way to integrate the dairy into their existing business, the legal and regulatory requirements to start a value added dairy, marketing, and their decision to milk seasonally and once a day. 715-778-5775 or mosesorganic.org/moese-field-days/

MOSES Organic Field Day:
Begin a Farmstead Micro-Creamery
May 20 | $ | Clear Lake, Wis.
Cosmic Wheel Creamery is a micro-dairy that processes the milk from 20 grass-fed cows on the farm into artisan cheese that is direct marketed via CSA and farmers markets. We invite you to see their farm and creamy, discuss how they decided the best way to integrate the dairy into their existing business, and learn about conservation resources and how to best work with farmer tenants and management companies. 715-778-5775 or mosesorganic.org/in-her-boots/events

MFA Farm Tour: Season Extension & Farm Efficiency – 10th Street Farm & Market
April 27 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | $20 | Afton, Minn.
Hosted in partnership with Land Stewardship Project. 10th Street uses a combination of low acreage-high production farming methods, organic practices and extended season tools to grow their CSA, wholesale, and farm stand customers. Light snacks & refreshments provided. To register contact Laura at laura@mnfooddossociation.org, or call 651-433-3676.

MOSES: Women Caring for the Land
May 7 | 8 – 10 a.m. or 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. | Madison, Wis.
The 2019 workshops are uniquely tailored for women who own farmland but do not live on it. These landowners will learn about conservation resources and how to best work with farmer tenants and management companies. 715-778-5775 or mosesorganic.org/in-her-boots/events

The 2019 workshops are uniquely tailored for women who own farmland but do not live on it. These landowners will learn about conservation resources and how to best work with farmer tenants and management companies. 715-778-5775 or mosesorganic.org/in-her-boots/events

MFA Class: Irrigation
May 7 | 3:45 – 8 p.m. | $20 | Marine of St. Croix, Minn.
Learn about the different irrigation options for small-scale vegetable farming and the pros and cons of each, including a hands-on demonstration of how to install a drip-tape system. To register and find out about scholarships and multi-class discounts, contact Laura at laura@mnfooddossociation.org, or call 651-433-3676.

MFA Field Day: Asparagus
May 10 | $ | North Branch, Minn.
Learn the basics of asparagus production in Minnesota, including site selection, ground prep, sourcing crowns, equipment needs, installation, care, harvest, and markets. Taught by experienced asparagus farmers and extension educators, class includes planting asparagus at Big River Farms. Light lunch provided. Contact Laura at laura@mnfooddossociation.org, or call 651-433-3676.

OTA Organic Week
May 20 – 22 | $ | Washington, D.C.
OTA (Organic Trade Association) hosts members and others for 3 days of advocacy to advance organic policy priorities. ota.com

MOSES Organic Field Day:
Begin a Farmstead Micro-Creamery
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