Conservation initiatives can support organic livestock management

By Caleb Langworthy

Every year, I make a point to get out onto a couple of other farms to see their operations. I’m always looking for innovations that I could glean from others to further my grazing operation. Last summer, I visited the Holm Boys Dairy in Elk Mound, Wis., where they raise certified organic, grass-fed custom heifers utilizing managed grazing techniques. As the group toured the farm, we learned how the Holms have used managed grazing to improve the health and productivity of their soil.

A DNR Wildlife Biologist pointed out rare grassland birds in the pasture and buffers around the farm. At the homestead, our local soil conservationist used a rainfall simulator to demonstrate the infiltration and erosion potential of soil from the pastures in managed grazing, as well as soil from neighboring fields under different management. The organic farm’s managed pasture absorbed the most water, had the least run-off, and filtered the most clear water. These are all measurements of good management.

On the Holm farm, it was clear that managed grazing meets the needs of the producer, encourages local wildlife, and contributes to productive soils, plants, animals, and clean water. The same management that led to their productive organic farming system also addresses several natural resource concerns that farmers can look to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for technical and financial support. So, if you’re working to improve your farm in similar ways, consider taking advantage of NRCS programs in order to achieve your goals.

Soil health is the foundation on which successful organic farming systems are built. The National Organic Program (NOP) actually requires certified producers to “maintain and improve the natural resources of an operation, including soil and water quality” (7 CFR § 205.200). The goals of improving soil health and water quality overlap with the USDA-NRCS mission “to provide resources to farmers and ranchers to sustain the long-term productivity of the nation’s natural resources.”

Organic food sales are the fastest-rising sector in the grocery industry, growing from $13 billion in 2005 to $47 billion in 2018 (Organic Trade Association). Moreover, dedicated advocacy has expanded markets far beyond the co-ops and smaller stores that initially launched the movement. By 2011, more than half of all organic food items were sold through traditional retailers.

Despite sales growth, there are difficulties in each of the largest organic markets in the U.S.: vegetables, dairy, and grain. As you’ll see, businesses that have created a basis of community support are best situated to weather these difficult times.

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Community-based food systems support organic markets

By Ken Meter & Megan Phillips Goldenberg

This article is based on the MOSES 2019 workshop presented by the authors. The first part in this story, “Commodity system creates persistent losses,” from the previous issue of Organic Broadcaster, is online at mosesorganic.org/commodity-system-losses.

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

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From the Executive Director

I’m humbled and honored to be stepping into this new role at MOSES. Four years ago, my husband and I decided that an off-farm job would help our farm’s cash flow. Since then, I’ve been steeped in the MOSES mission and mindset as its Program Director and Organic Specialist.

However, my journey with MOSES really began years earlier when I was a beginning farmer. Our farm would not have experienced the success it has without the support of this organization and its network of amazing farmers.

Even before we started to farm, we went to the MOSES Organic Farming Conference to collect tools and resources and develop relationships that we would eventually put to use. The event sent a jolt of excitement and hopefulness through me. As we began farming, we stayed with friends and learned on the volunteer discount in order to get the most out of the conference on our limited budget.

We also took advantage of MOSES free field days and found ways to participate in other learning opportunities. Every farm we visited offered something we could learn, whether it was a creative handmade latch design or a new cover crop. We never walked away empty-handed.

Our MOSES mentors were one of the biggest gifts the organization ever gave us. Kim and Rich took us under their wing and shared everything they could to ensure our success. From warming a cold lamb and helping it learn to nurse all the way to a sheep feed ration calculator, they gave us so many tools that could only come from a relationship with more experienced farmers. They gently guided us away from expensive mistakes and were available to diagnose issues as they arose in our young operation.

That’s the thing about MOSES—it encompasses an expansive network of amazing people with an almost endless store of knowledge among them. The MOSES community is focused on making things better for the next farmer who walks the path. MOSES farmers teach and share openly. MOSES farmers are always looking for the next innovation, the next improvement to their system, the next practical step that they can use to make everything better.

That is why I am so honored to step into this new role of leadership at MOSES. This community is simply invaluable and I look forward to fostering connections and helping farmers grow.

Just think of everything you’ve learned since you started your farming journey and how much value that could be if you offered it to the next farmer down the line. MOSES provides the space for you to do that, whether it’s through our Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program, our organic field days, the MOSES Conference, or this newspaper. Look for your opportunity to become involved. Together, we can build the future we want, with strong and profitable farms that care for the land, water, and communities around them.

The MOSES board and staff are headed in the same direction with shared goals and values. Our mission—to educate, inspire, and empower farmers to thrive in an organic and sustainable system of agriculture—remains our heartbeat; the community remains our focus; and the improvement of our food and farming system remains our goal. I’m glad to have you with us on this path.

— Lauren Langworthy, MOSES Interim Executive Director

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New label assures integrity of grass-fed farming

By Melissa Hughes, Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative

Earlier this year we joined with our friends at Maple Hill to launch the Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program and certification mark: a new, third-party certification that creates a universal definition and verification of grass-fed organic farming standards and products. Today, certifiers are training to uphold the integrity of grass-fed organic dairy farming through the new program. And, in just a couple of months, consumers will start buying dairy products featuring the new seal that helps ensure they are getting what they pay for when they buy grass-fed products.

This seal will soon identify dairy products that meet standards for grass-fed production under a new add-on certification to USDA organic certification.

When the journey toward this grass-fed organic seal started years ago, one thing was for sure: any seal created to protect the integrity of grass-based livestock farming must have the USDA organic program at its core. We all wanted to empower the farmers and certifiers that are already on the ground, with mud on their boots, ensuring organic standards. Anything created had to work for the farmers, the certifiers, and, ultimately, the people buying and drinking grass-fed dairy.

From the start, the Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program was designed to use the same certifiers and farmers that are already going through the certified USDA organic process. The program currently has about a dozen USDA organic certifiers ready to do inspections and verifications on nearly 400 farms. This grass-fed organic certification process is incorporated into the regularly scheduled USDA organic inspections—it’s not an entirely new process.

The Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program is not run or endorsed by the government. It is not verified by the USDA, and is also not beholden to the USDA. Instead, the program and certification mark are governed by Organic Plus Trust Inc. (OPT), a public benefit entity created to advance organic agriculture. This program is administered by EarthClaims LLC on behalf of OPT to ensure unbiased and transparent management and distribution of the certification mark. The certification mark is registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and will only appear parent management and distribution of the certification mark. This program is administered by EarthClaims LLC on behalf of OPT to ensure unbiased and transparent management and distribution of the certification mark. This program is administered by EarthClaims LLC on behalf of OPT to ensure unbiased and transparent management and distribution of the certification mark. The certification mark is registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and will only appear parent management and distribution of the certification mark. This program is administered by EarthClaims LLC on behalf of OPT to ensure unbiased and transparent management and distribution of the certification mark. This program is administered by EarthClaims LLC on behalf of OPT to ensure unbiased and transparent management and distribution of the certification mark. The certification mark is registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and will only appear parent management and distribution of the certification mark.

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This program’s foundation was built with farmers at the center of the process. Any certification needs to work for farmers and shouldn’t be an extra burden to already stressed farm families. The Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program is designed to keep farmers farming and give consumers what they are looking for. There are new requirements for farms and brands to meet, but they are all achievable and clearly set out in the program. This program will help grow and build the foundation of grass-based farming with integrity and transparency.

Balancing between what will work for farmers and certifiers is no simple task. That is why the certification focuses on farming practices like time on pasture, forages, and dry matter intake. And, after balancing between farmers and certifiers, OPT is also focusing on creating a seal that meets industry and consumer demand.

Program Details

To be certified under the new OPT standard, dairy cows must be fed a grass diet, with zero-grain, and given plenty of pasture for grazing. Any farm claiming grass-fed organic certification must first be certified organic to participate in the program. The Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program criteria also require all animals receive 60% of their dry matter intake from pasture over at least a 150-day grazing season.

This program requirement is double the dry matter intake minimums in the organic standard, but any grass-fed claim needs to be set apart as a distinctly different type of organic dairy farming. Rotational grazing, pasture management, and preventive care are all essential parts of organic dairy farming, but grass-fed takes those skills to the next level.

And what makes grass-based farming distinctly different shows up in the milk. People can literally taste the difference. Current research on the benefits of grass-fed dairy products shows higher levels of omega-3s and higher levels of CLA (conjugated linoleic acid). The difference is there. Grass-fed dairy buyers are listening and looking for the difference that grass-fed organic dairy provides.

Organic buyers are demanding different animal care and diet standards for farm animals. In fact, we’ve seen 300% growth in the organic grass-fed dairy industry just since 2015. Stores are looking for dairy products that bring people to the store, and right now grass-fed organic dairy is doing just that. People are voting with their dollars, and we believe they will vote for a verifiable standard for grass-fed that is trustworthy and meets their high expectations.

The Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program is unique from other grass-fed certifications in that it also requires a full supply chain verification to use the certification mark, creating a much higher level of transparency. The farm and dairy processor are certified to ensure grass-fed milk is segregated and authentic all the way to the packaged grass-fed dairy product.

Although the first two organic dairy brands to join the program were Organic Valley and Maple Hill, Natural by Nature is already committed to using the seal as well. We expect 50 different dairy products will feature the seal on packages by the end of this year.

The Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program is built with organic as its foundation. Organic farmers focused on grass-fed dairy deserve to have a standard that protects their way of farming. People who buy grass-fed dairy deserve to have a transparent standard for the grass-fed organic products they buy for their families. The new grass-fed organic livestock program creates higher standards on the farm that will help farmers deliver what the market demands.

For more information, see organicplustrust.com.

Melissa Hughes is Chief Mission Officer at Organic Valley,
landowners to aid them with conservation.” The agency’s goal is to ensure private lands are in harmony with the environment.

The 2016 NOP Guidance on Natural Resources and Biodiversity Conservation provides recommendations of conservation practices that a producer may use to meet the requirements of the 205.200 mandate about natural resource maintenance and improvement. That guidance also addresses the availability of USDA-NRCS assistance to implement many of these practices.

A farmer’s interest in creating productive, organic farming systems—through soil building, increased soil organic matter, erosion control, and plant and animal productivity—may coincide well with conservation goals of NRCS. NRCS works with landowners across the country through conservation planning and assistance to address natural resource concerns unique to the property.

I’ve worked closely with my local NRCS conservationist to identify and address conservation priorities on my own farm. Utilizing support from the agency, my wife and I have been able to invest in necessary equipment, facilities, prescribed (or managed) grazing, forage and biomass planting, and forage harvest management. An NRCS conservationist or a Technical Service Provider (TSP) can work with you to plan and design these practices to meet your objectives.

The best way to start the conversation about what practices might work for your grazing operation is to visit with the conservationist at your local USDA Service Center. You and your local conservationist can work together to determine your shared objectives. Then, through the development of a plan, you and a grazing lands specialist can assess the operation and formulate workable solutions to natural resource concerns.

Both NRCS conservationists and TSPs can complete a Grazing Management Plan. NRCS provides funds for farmers and landowners to retain the services of a TSP who can do the work of developing the plan and submitting it to NRCS. Pasture management and grazing provide good examples of potential overlap between organic system requirements and NRCS programs. Organic ruminant livestock operations must graze pasture during a growing season. That grazing season cannot be less than 120 days in length. During that time, pasture must make up a minimum of 70% of the ruminant animal’s Dry Matter Intake. Farmers must manage their pasture as a crop and develop a pasture management plan, submitted with their Organic Systems Plan (OSP), to their certifier in order to comply with the rule.

Organic livestock producers can create a pasture management plan to submit with their OSP while also utilizing the technical assistance that NRCS has to offer by contacting their local USDA Service Center. The pasture management plan that needs to be submitted to your certifier can be developed by you and a NRCS grazing specialist in collaboration through a “Grazing Management Conservation Activity Plan” (CAP 110). The “Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition” (CAP 138) may also be an option for livestock producers transitioning to organic production. The CAP 138 Organic Transition Plan will also allow a producer to access certain NRCS programs. These plans may include grazing as a component, but they may also be more broadly focused on transitioning to organic production. Completed CAP 138 Organic Transition plans may also be submitted by a farmer to their certifier to satisfy the natural resource and pasture management plan part of their OSP.

In the development of the Grazing Management Plan (CAP 110), a grazing planner from your local service center will visit your farm and observe it with you. They will provide recommendations based on what they are seeing and what they understand of your goals as a producer or landowner. They will provide you with information about the various soil types in your fields, as well as the potential forage productivity you can anticipate. Together, you will evaluate each potential pasture, consider goals for animal units, and identify major pasture species. Your TSP should be able to help you understand your pasture’s major plant species and how palatable they are to your preferred livestock species, how they would respond to grazing, and how plant productivity might be enhanced through specific managed grazing techniques.

Unfortunately, many regions lack enough available TSPs to meet the demand of producers seeking NRCS support. You should plan to schedule a TSP who is certified to complete Grazing Management Plans as soon as you are approved through your local office. Some states where there’s a shortage of TSPs, the NRCS office can work with producers on a plan. A producer can access EQIP assistance after completing one of these grazing or organic plans. Producers can access assistance with a S28 Prescribed Grazing conservation practice directly through the NRCS office.

As you can see, the goals of NRCS and the producers working in organic systems have many potentials to overlap and support each other. Through working with your local NRCS service center, you may be able to access both technical and financial support that can further your operation’s goals.

Caleb Langworthy is an organic specialist with MOSES who is working to help USDA-NRCS agents understand organic production and how the agency’s programs can support organic producers.

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NRCS Grazing Support — from page 1
Field days highlight organic farming practices

By Audrey Alwell

MOSES offers a dozen field days in 2019 to show farmers how organic production works. These events are free unless noted. Register at mosesorganic.org/organic-field-days or call 888-90-MOSES.

Begin a Farmstead Micro-Creamery
May 23, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. | Cosmic Wheel Creamery | Clear Lake, Wis.

Learn how and why these successful CSA farmers established a micro-creamery and carved out a niche by making a sought-after product—artisanal cheeses. See how they manage their 20-cow herd to keep costs under control and create the most benefit for their farming system. The event includes lunch from Farm Table Restaurant, featuring Cosmic Wheel Cheese and other locally grown, seasonal food. This event is sponsored by Wisconsin Farmers Union.

Organic Weed Management
June 12, 5 to 8 p.m. | Big River Farms | Marine on St. Croix, Minn.

Learn strategies to control weeds—even invaders such as thistle and quackgrass—to grow high-quality organic vegetables. This field day is organized by Big River Farms with support from MOSES. Cost is $20.

Promote Soil Health with Small Grain/Legume Rotations
June 12, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. | Mapleton Community Center | Oconomowoc, Wis.

Explore how crop rotations with legumes, manure, and other organic-approved fertility inputs improve soil health and crop yields. Presenters include Sandy Syburg of Purple Cow Organics, and Gary Zimmer, founder of MidwestBioAg. This is an OGRAIN event put on by the University of Wisconsin in partnership with MOSES.

Grow & Mill Small Grains for Artisan Bakers
June 25, 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. | Janie’s Farm | Danforth, Ill.

Harold and Ross Wilken farm more than 2,400 acres of certified organic grains. They will share how they successfully grow food-grade small grains and showcase The Mill at Janie’s Farm, their certified organic milling operation. This is an OGRAIN event put on by the University of Wisconsin in partnership with MOSES.

From Grain to Plate – Small Grains Field Day
June 30, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. | Meadowlark Organic Farm | Ridgeway, Wis.

Learn how to build rotations with small grains and how to access the food-grade grain market. This event, organized by Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, includes lunch and information for consumers about how they can help clean up the environment by supporting good farming practices.

Organic Row Crops in South Dakota
Aug. 1, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. | Johnson Farms | Madison, S.D.

Learn about organic growing techniques, crop rotation, and fertility management to grow the grains needed by artisan distillers. This is an OGRAIN event put on by the University of Wisconsin in partnership with MOSES.

In Her Boots: Success Strategies from the Soil Sisters
August 2, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. | Riemer Family Farm | Brodhead, Wis.

This workshop features several farmers from the “Soil Sisters” group that hosts the annual farm tour weekend in southeast Wisconsin. (See the next listing for details.) The workshop will focus on how to raise a variety of livestock for meat as well as offer insights to help women get started in farming. This MOSES In Her Boots workshop costs $25 and includes lunch.

Grow Row Crops for Distilling
July 10, 1 to 4:30 p.m. | McHugh Farms | Onalaska, Wis.

Learn about organic growing techniques, crop rotation, and fertility management to grow the grains needed by artisan distillers. This is an OGRAIN event put on by the University of Wisconsin in partnership with MOSES.

Add Unusual Fruits to Your Farm
August 21, 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. | Blue Farm | Winoona, Minn.

MOSES Organic Farmers of the Year, Jim Riddle and Joyce Ford, showcase how they grow all things blue. Focus is on unusual fruits, overhead netting, native plants, and mechanical weed control for orchards. Lunch will be provided.

Cultivating Farm Resilience for a Changing Climate
August 16, 1 to 4:30 p.m. | Rosmann Family Farm | Harlan, Iowa

The Rosmanns, the 2018 MOSES Organic Farmers of the Year, will highlight how they work small grains into their field crop rotations, use cover crops for rotational grazing, and discuss their farrow-to-finish swine operation. MOSES co-sponsors this Practical Farmers of Iowa field day.

Support farmers AND veterans with Locally Grown t-shirts!

A portion of t-shirt sales will go to MOSES and Farmer Veteran Coalition. Learn more at gemplers.com/pages/locallygrown.

MoseS Organic Field Day
Her Boots workshop costs $25 and includes lunch.

Soil Sisters Weekend
August 2 – 4 | Southern Wisconsin

Take classes, savor farm-fresh goodies, and tour women-owned farms during this jam-packed, award-winning culinary event celebrating rural life in the farming communities of south central Wisconsin.

In Her Boots: Diversifying with Flowers, Pizza, and Summer Camps
August 13, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. | Ladyflem Farm & Two Pony Garden | Long Lake, Minn.

Glean insights and inspiration from a trio of women farmers who run several businesses out of the same farm. This broad-based workshop includes tips on growing, harvesting, and arranging flowers, a look at on-farm conservation practices, plus great tips on ways to diversify farm income. This MOSES In Her Boots workshop costs $25 and includes lunch.

Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day
Sept. 18 | Gwenyn Hill Organic Farm | Waukesha, Wis.

Learn about organic growing techniques, crop rotation, and fertility management to grow the grains needed by artisan distillers. This is an OGRAIN event put on by the University of Wisconsin in partnership with MOSES.

Soil Sisters Weekend
August 2 – 4 | Southern Wisconsin

Learn about soil health and low-impact cultivation and see a variety of tools for precise mechanical weed control in both crop and vegetable fields. See in-field demonstrations of specific weed management equipment. This event is organized by The Land Connection.

Create Your Own Farm and Culinary Adventure
August 2 – 4 | Southern Wisconsin

Enjoy a guided bus tour showcasing a diversity of small farms and orchards. Lunch will be provided.

A Celebration of Wisconsin Family Farms & Rural Life
August 2 – 4, 2019 | www.soilsisterswi.org

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Open-Pollinated Corn — from page 1

trialed had protein levels over 10% while the hybrid he grew had only 8.41%. He figured the increased protein in the OP corn would save $1.16 per 100 pounds of a 16% feed ration. (Read more at bit.ly/SARE-OPcorn.)

While grain yields of OP corn varieties, often 75-150 bush/acre, are generally lower than the very best hybrids, whole plant production can be competitive with many of the hybrids. Also, the quality of OP corn silage is often good, and the seed price of OP varieties can be very reasonable.

Growing for silage, especially on smaller farms, represents the bulk of the OP seed that is sold. Many of OP varieties grown in the field (Reid, Moore, Krug, Minnesota 13, Wapsie Valley, Rainbow Flint, Silver King, Bloody Butcher, etc.) are also very reasonable for silage, and there are more seeds of more varieties available in quantity today.

OP seed markets have been rediscovering colorful varieties from across the Americas and beyond. Varieties like Glass Gem have reminded many that corn can be stunningly lovely, and they have proven the value in saving seed. Varieties with red, purple, blue, or spotted seeds have also been making a splash in recent years. One of my favorite new varieties has little eagles on the tops of the seeds, and was bred in Montana.

A few of us breeders are releasing or will soon release new orange varieties that have ancestors from South America. Tasty flint types from Italy, some of them orange, too, are also finding places in the expanding list of available OP varieties.

Some of the colorful types of corn are high in anthocyanins (blue colors like in blueberries) or carotenoids (yellow and orange colors like in squash and carrots), valuable phytonutrients. They make colorful dishes that delight the senses. Gardeners certainly appear eager to try more of these colorful varieties.

New Markets

The local foods movement has opened up some new market opportunities for OP varieties. In some locations, folks have rediscovered eating corn as grits (mush, polenta, maamaliga) or cornbreads. Cornbread recipes introductions, folks have rediscovered eating corn as grits (mush, polenta, maamaliga) or cornbreads. Cornbread recipes introduction that has been successful. It was developed here in the Midwest via Participatory Plant Breeding, a process where farmers take part in the selection and development of the variety with assistance from professional breeders. (Read more on how they developed Who Gets Kissed at moseorganic.org/organic-sweet-corn.)

A few years ago, Jonathan Spero bred and released Tophat and Tuxana, two OP varieties with the flavor, “mouth feel,” and productivity many of us look for in sweet corn. His newer projects include bicolor, orange, and multicolored varieties. Other sweet OP varieties coming along include earlier super sweet types and even a purple-seeded variety. Older classics like Golden Bantam, Ashworth, Aunt Mary’s, Sunshine, small-statured Yukon Chief, Orchard Baby, and more continue to flourish in the garden seed trade.

Popcorn remains a popular type of corn, and there are great OP varieties in the marketplace and among seed savers. Dakota Black is an old variety from North Dakota that has been showing itself to be productive in many locations. Some of the traditional popping types from Mexico, especially Chapalote varieties, are also moving into some catalogs and seed-saving projects further north. I have a multicolored variety that continues to be selected for earliness and popping expansion, and there are others coming from other breeders, too. A beautiful thing about popcorn is that no matter the color of the seeds, it always pops in a familiar color.

Breeding Issues

The introduction of transgenic hybrid varieties continues to be a huge problem for those who want OP and hybrid varieties with the natural genetic variation corn has had since it originated. Pollen flies a long way, sometimes several miles. This has always been an issue for growing pure varieties, but now there is also the constant irritation of having bacterial and other modified genes popping up in our seeds.

Several companies dropped well-known OP varieties a few years back when tests for transgene contamination kept coming back positive. However, tightened isolation protocols with distances of up to five miles, the use of more border rows, and regular testing for contamination in every seed lot, have allowed a small resurgence in OP seed availability. Tens of thousands of seed packets and many bushels of quality corn are still being sold annually with no contamination.

Gametophytic incompatibility is a trait where the silk on the corn plants only supports and guides the growth of pollen that also carries the same trait. This has helped with growing popcorn in areas with dented field corn. This trait has been a means of growing pure specialty corn varieties for many decades now. It is not absolute, but it adds an important tool for helping with isolation.

With support from the Organic Farming Research Foundation, some breeders have been developing and releasing lines with these traits in order to grow organic corn for feed and seed that is free of transgenic and other contamination. The genes being worked into new field corn varieties include Ga1s, from South American popcorn, and also Ga25s and Tcb1s, both from teosinte, the weedy relative of corn. Breeders across the country, public and private, are working these genes into new hybrids and OP varieties, including sweet corn and other specialty types that are now in the pipeline.

The field corn OP varieties with gametophytic incompatibility (Ga1s) that have been publicly released in the last few seasons (Liberty, Rebellion, Revolt, Uprising) have been synthetic varieties. This term causes some negative reactions, but it is used in its original meaning as it has been used in corn breeding since the early 20th century. A synthetic variety is one that is bred up from a number of inbred parents that have all been proven to have good breeding value. Synthetics are OP varieties that are built up from many inbred lines, or synthesized, using old-style breeding and pollen-control techniques.

They are natural corn that has just been bred very intensively, and they can be maintained like any other OP seed once in farmers’ hands. Unfortunately, farmers in the north have had few synthetic varieties to consider despite their common use elsewhere.

The theoretical limit for yield of synthetics is about 95% of good hybrids, but such a yield would be very hard to achieve, especially in high-yielding environments.

For now, the grain yield of OP varieties is expected to continue to lag behind the very best single-cross hybrids, including under organic management.

It is the other values that OP corn varieties bring (independence, flavor, quality, low-cost seed, low-cost forage, tradition) that make them competitive and interesting for modern growers.

Frank Kutka has a doctorate in plant breeding and has worked with farmers across the country on small grain- and corn-breeding projects. He currently farms near Brussels, Wis.
Successful CSA farmers share tips for cultivating loyal members

By Katie Bishop

I’ve written before about our farm’s challenges with the CSA model and the innovative ways I have tried to overcome declining membership numbers. (See the January/February 2018 Organic Broadcaster.) While I’ve seen reports of some small farms calling it quits with their CSAs, I am also well aware of farmers who have successful CSA models with sell-out shares and high retention rates. As I head into our farm’s 10th year of CSA, I wanted to learn from those farmers and glean from their experience and knowledge. I wanted to be inspired by their longevity. So, I reached out to four successful CSA farmers to get their perspectives.

One of the things I wanted to know was how they were adapting to changing consumer demand. How were they dealing with the pressure of those dedicated subscription boxes like Hello Fresh, Imperfect Produce, or Blue Apron? I’ve witnessed farmers compartmentalizing this perceived competition by offering more “choice” options, market-style options, and flexible home delivery. Truthfully, I changed my own CSA in the last couple of years to meet that assumed need, despite a loss of profitability.

Surprisingly most of the farmers I spoke to aren’t changing to stay relevant in the CSA market. As an example, Kristen Kordert from Blue Moon Community Farm, near Madison, Wisconsin, has had a successful CSA for the last 16 years. She creates a model that’s functional for her farming systems and skills, and then attracts customers who want the same thing.

Corinna Bench, from Shared Legacy Farm near Toledo, Ohio, shared a similar approach. She and her husband, Kurt, have a 400-member program. True to the traditional CSA model, they select the items in the share each week based on what’s ready to be harvested. She says there are still plenty of consumers who want the traditional style she offers.

“We’re seeing a new market telling us what it wants,” Bench said. “The pendulum is swinging wide, and convenience and choice are getting more value. And that’s becoming some farmers’ opportunity. I say go for it! There’s still a customer that wants the traditional style like mine, but they are a different kind of customer with different wants and needs and motivations. The market is calling for both right now.”

One farmer who’s responding to the call for more choice is Lauren Rudersdorf. She runs Raleigh’s Hillside Farm with her husband, Kyle, in Evansville, Wisconsin, for the last seven years of farming. They’ve added 11 different sizes and delivery options, so they offer many consumers a trendier choice. The market is calling for both right now.”

The feedback is too hard to hear sometimes—it’s so tricky to please everyone. However, the survey is also a chance for the member to have a voice and that contributes to a sense of connection. Plus, you can use positive feedback to form customer testimonials to share as part of your marketing plan.

Considering the needs of your customers is vital to a successful CSA, but so is education. Annie and Zach Metzger own Laughing Earth Farm in Cropsseyville, New York. They offer a traditional CSA model that provides vegetables and meat to families for 35 weeks. I respect their perspective on adapting to the changing demands of CSA.

“I am more interested in changing the consumer to fit my model than in changing my model to fit the consumer,” she said. Her marketing looks a little different than most.

“We try to talk people out of joining instead of into joining,” Metzger explained. “We say, ‘Well, CSA isn’t really for you unless you already cook four nights a week or more. If you always choose a recipe and then go shopping for those ingredients, CSA might not be a great fit.’ It’s a better fit if you’re often open to change with your diet and you’re truly delighted with the produce.”

Her CSA-member education focuses on cooking skills instead of recipes.

“We put a lot of emphasis on teaching people the basics of assembling a meal rather than just following a recipe,” she said. “I really view what I do as selling a lifestyle rather than a CSA share. I’m modeling for people how you can have a very busy life, two parents working full time at the family business, raising a child, being active community members, and still have time to make a nutritious home-crafted meal for 20 out of 21 meals a week.”

Education is the cornerstone of Bench’s CSA at Shared Legacy. Her private Facebook group, exclusive to her CSA members, is a model for other CSAs all over the world. She has made it her mission to teach farmers how to create a successful group of their own. (Check out www.mydigitalfarmer.com.)

She employs a community manager to be a coach in the Facebook group, communicating with members, creating recipes, posting unboxing videos, and working on other education strategies. Bench also created a CSA Academy through Teachable, an online platform. It’s free for her members and consists of veggie e-books, video tutorials, preservation, and simple cooking techniques. It also includes a mini-course called “The Roadmap to CSA Success” to support new members. She points to this extensive education as the reason her members feel less “veggie guilt” and waste little of their weekly shares.

Rudersdorf from Raleigh’s Hillside Farm also has a robust education component to her farm’s CSA. She offers a weekly newsletter as well as membership in the farm’s private Facebook group. She and her husband created a worker share program where they trade services with a food blogger who helps generate content for the group. Rudersdorf also writes a blog, “The Leek and the Carrot,” with creative recipes (blueberry kobobabi chicken salad anyone?) and stories from the farm. They also teach future members with an active and engaging social media presence.

Speaking of teaching future members, I wanted to share something Bench said about cultivating prospective members. She said “I know how to cultivate leads, and I’m willing to be patient while I wait for them to warm up. And I’ve got such a strong customer base now, that I can lean into them and let them be my brand ambassadors, while they do a lot of referring and promotion for me.”

Letting your satisfied customers do the talking is what Kordert from Blue Moon said contributes to her program selling out early, year after year.

“In the last five years, we have met our membership goal each year with a relatively high retention rate,” she said. “We do very little marketing, and by far our biggest source of new members is referrals from current members.”

All four of these farmers put forth considerable effort into connecting with members. I think this is so important to the success of a CSA. Consumers can get organic food labeled as “local” anywhere. The CSA offers the power of seed. We believe in the power of seed.

“We want to know: Why do you grow? #WhyWeGrow Join the conversation!”

Always Organic. Always Independent.
little sense of who grew it. Larger growers, who have adopted the USDA Organic label in order to sell whole-
sale at higher prices, often lack long-term market power to maintain these premiums. Meanwhile, it continues to be a challenge to amass the capital required to invest in land and equipment at a scale required to meet wholesale demand, when prices are low.

While some supermarket shoppers seem content to trust USDA Organic label without probing into the actual practices of farmers in other nations, many organic growers across the country are selling direct to their customers without the organic label. These grow-
ers find that their buyers place little value on certification and instead buy from a farm they trust. This has resulted in a rise in food items marketed as “non-certified but chemical free,” or “better than organic,” among others, and sold through direct channels. Without third-party certification, it’s up to the consumer to verify these claims.

Yet many organic farms that built their businesses by reaching out directly to consumers through mecha-
nisms such as a CSA or farmers market sales now feel hemmed in by these relatively confined, direct markets. Some want to move into less labor-intensive wholesale markets. Consumers are experiencing direct-market fatigue, too—CSA renewal rates and farmers market sales have diminished across the country as shoppers turn back to supermarkets for convenience, lower prices, and year-round supply.

This dynamic and competitive food sector requires that farmers innovate to create new opportunities. One of the best models is Fifth Season Co-op in Viroqua, Wisconsin. Here a savvy core of experienced grow-
ers reached out to Gunderson Hospital and Reinhart Foods, and asked workers to join them on the board of a multi-stakeholder co-op. In the absence of a public policy framework that creates supply management and fair pricing, this cluster of collaborators has created a system of their own.

This innovative approach was only possible because the community of Viroqua had built exceptional bonds of trust over the past five decades. Few communities across the U.S. have built such social connectivity.

On the direct sales side, community also is the core. These farms that have built the strongest connection with their CSA members are the ones that report the best renewal rates. Similarly, those farms that have formed a personal bond with farmers market consumers are the most likely to sustain loyalty. At both larger and small scales, community-building is key to economic success.

Organic Dairy

Now, let’s look at the dairy industry. While the organic produce industry is characterized by scattered farms, large and small, supplying retail and wholesale markets, the organic dairy trade is supported by larger farms that coordinate production and processing, selling milk and derivative products like butter and cheese primarily through wholesale distributors. One prime example is Organic Valley, a long-time sup-

While Organic Valley has built its business by building community. This has allowed the co-op to flourish when times are good, and also seems to be critical to maintaining cohesion when conditions are harsh. Thus, for those valleys and farmers that have formed a tight nexus of trust, transparency, and loyalty, in part, this is because grain, which is relatively easy to store, maintains its nutrient value for a longer time using fewer energy inputs. A second reason is that grain lends itself to three separate operations that complement each other: a farmer harvests grain, which can be milled into flour, which can then be baked into bread. Each adds value to the product in a community. This creates excellent opportunities for effective business clusters that help create a culture of community collaboration and engage diverse customers.

At MOSES Organic University in 2017, panelists Thor Oechsner of Oechsner Farms (Newfield, New York), Harold Wilken of Janie’s Farm (Danforth, Illinois), and John Weeping of Meadowlark Organics (Ridgeway, Wisconsin) talked about these types of collaborations. Oechsner farms heritage grains to order through his on-farm mill and has built a bread CSA. Wilken has 2,400 acres of organic grain production and has now built a mill on his farm. Wilken purchases from neighbor-
boring farms for the mill, selling high-quality flour into the Chicago, St. Louis, and Ann Arbor-Detroit markets (full disclosure: Phillips Goldenberg represents Wilken in Michigan). The Weeping family is collaborating with Paul Bickford (Bickford Organics), to raise organic grains that they mill through a collaboration with Lonesome Stone Milling. The Wepkings also are pursu-
ing a unique land transfer arrangement to gradually acquire Bickford’s farm.

These are privately owned firms in which the own-
ers establish collaborative relationships. Each panelist spoke of the importance of building solid relationships of mutual trust, and operating in a highly transparent manner, as the foundation for these clusters to succeed.

The past few years have been increasingly dif-
ficult for the dairy industry. Several new large-scale producers entered the market, expanding supply but depressing prices since overall demand is limited. Ironically, this expansion has occurred in part because of Organic Valley’s success in raising the price for milk. As this more lucrative market was created, conventional producers converted to organic production. As the chart shows, Organic Valley’s price pay for milk peaked in 2015. In 2018 when supplies exceeded demand, Organic Valley made across-the-board reduc-
tions rather than asking any farmers to leave the co-
Farmers take multi-pronged approach to build resilient specialty crop farms

By Tony Ends

All too often in the 24 years my wife, Dela, and I have practiced Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), we heard sad tales of specialty crop newcomers succumbing to farming risks. Like the time a shock- ing deluge sent melons floating out of a field all the way to the Mississippi River; and, the time a beginning farmer, excited by a string of 70-degree days in April, transplanted thousands of bedding plants that turned to blackened goo in early May with a plummet to 28 degrees and killing frost. Losses like these are heart-breaking.

In the early years of a farm, as you’re busy accumulating equipment and building infrastructure, there’s often nothing left to set aside to hedge against risk and ruin. Farming is, without doubt, risky business.

Little wonder America’s agricultural policymakers and private industry formulated crop insurance 81 years ago. Crop insurance has become an increasing focus of national farm policy in the past 20 years, according to the National Crop Insurance Services, which represents all 15 companies writing policies for U.S. agricultural producers. Last year, the Federal Crop Insurance Program covered 335 million acres—that’s 90% of the nation’s farmers, purchasing 1.1 million policies.

However, many specialty crop farmers—especially those farming organically—aren’t taking advantage of this protection. Part of the reason is that traditional insurance options don’t recognize the price premiums of organic production.

The USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) introduced Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) several years ago to help remedy this.

“RMA recognizes organic farming practices as good farming practices and continues to move forward in improving crop insurance coverage for organic producers and producers transitioning to organic production,” said Duane Voy, Director of RMA’s regional office in St. Paul, Minn. “We want farmers to be able to take advantage of the safety net that WFRP offers for organic producers, including price protection.”

RMA rolled out a dozen revisions and clarifications to WFRP this year based on feedback from stakeholders, including organic producers. One of the major changes to the policy includes revised eligibility requirements for first-year insureds with less than five years of tax records who qualified as a Beginning Farmer and Rancher in the previous year.

“Talk to your local crop insurance agent for more details to see if WFRP will work for your operation,” Voy added.

Farm financial adviser Paul Dietmann said, “Risk management a la crop insurance for specialty crops is tough.” Dietmann is a co-author of the MOSES book Fearless Farm Finances and a senior lending officer at Compeer Financial, a member-owned, Farm Credit cooperative serving rural communities in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

“The new Whole Farm Revenue crop insurance policy is better than the AGR-Lite policy that it replaced, but it still hasn’t been widely used,” he acknowledged. “The challenge is that the program requires a cropping history that doesn’t match the way many small, diversified farms operate.” As alternat- ives, he suggests growers take Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage through USDA-FSA.

When he’s advising specialty crop farmers, Dietmann recommends additional risk management strategies such as adding a hoop house for a protected growing environment, adding irrigation and soil amendments, getting health insurance coverage through an ACA exchange, and sharing equipment with neighbors instead of personally taking on large capital investments.

Farmer Clare Hintz has practiced similar strategies to maximize gains and minimize losses on her farm in Herberet, Wis., near the southern shore of Lake Superior. She established Elsewhere Farm in 2001, after working full-time to save money to buy land. She earned a Ph.D. in sustainability education to give her- self a “fall-back” career in case she gets injured or needs to get out of labor-intensive farming at some point.

“I was fortunate in my Ph.D. dissertation to interview 14 experienced women farmers in Wisconsin and Minnesota about their persistence strategies in farming,” Hintz said. “Their advice also informed my financial risk management strategies.”

Most of these women said it took about 10 years for their farms to “gel,” growing from lots of experimentation to a greater focus on what worked. During that time, they had off-farm income, a partner with off- farm income, or a backer who owned the farm, Hintz explained. She appreciated it when one woman told her, “Don’t expect your farm to carry you when you are just developing it. Give it room to grow first.”

Hintz followed a similar 10-year timeline, working full time off the farm until 2011 to finance the farm’s infrastructure. She now works part-time in the winter editing an open-source academic journal and mentor- ing graduate students through distance learning.

“These jobs provide about half of my basic living expenses for the year,” she explained. “They provide a level of financial resiliency as well as a change of pace and skills.”

Hintz also likes having a mix of enterprises on her farm. Her diversified operation includes market gar- dens, perennial fruits, laying hens, and pork, marketed through winter and summer CSAs, a local farmers market, and some wholesale accounts.

“One of my overarching design strategies on the farm is to have enough enterprises that my risk from any of them is cushioned by the others, whether it’s in the context of crop failure, slower markets, or monthly cash flow needs,” she explained. “For instance, having pork for sale gives me some cushion against flooding damage in my market gardens—something that I now have to manage with climate change.”

She also has developed a business plan that spreads her workload throughout the year with a winter CSA out of her greenhouse and storage.

“The wholesale markets give me consistent cash through the main growing season while the CSA shares give me a cash influx at otherwise slow times of the year,” she said. When she started farming, she researched what she wanted to grow, what it would cost to produce, and what she would need to charge. “Even though all these numbers have changed with experience, my up-front legwork gave me a solid place to start,” she added. Hintz noted that better tools have been developed in recent years to help with these deci- sions, such as the “Fruit and Nut Compass” and the “Vegeggie Compass” from the University of Wisconsin Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems.

“All of my enterprises and markets support each other biologically as well as financially, and it’s important to make sure they are doing both.” When she expanded her laying hen flock to sell more eggs, she found it wasn’t economical. However, she wanted to keep the chickens since they provide important fertility and pest control in her orchards. Her solution was to scale back the flock to provide enough eggs just for her CSA members, “which gives me an important niche in the competitive CSA market here,” she added. She was able to cut back on her egg enterprise with- out financial loss because she had made a conscious decision to only have a minimal amount of equipment.

“My remaining chickens have a very comfy winter coop, but I wasn’t stuck having to sell elaborate water- ing systems, an egg turner, automatic egg washer, etc. when I downsized.”

To Resilient Specialty Crop Farms on page 14

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“Talk to your local crop insurance agent for more details to see if WFRP will work for your operation,” Voy added.

Farm financial adviser Paul Dietmann said, “Risk management a la crop insurance for specialty crops is tough.” Dietmann is a co-author of the MOSES book Fearless Farm Finances and a senior lending officer at Compeer Financial, a member-owned, Farm Credit cooperative serving rural communities in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.
Hoop houses offer many benefits to diverse market farm

By Dave Bishop

A hoop house—or high tunnel, if you prefer—can be an important addition to a diverse farm operation, providing a protected growing environment and extending the growing season. At PrairiErth Farm, we’ve constructed six hoop houses over the past 20 or so years; the latest one—a 30 x 150—we built just this spring. We’re still using all of them.

Our hoop houses have helped us produce and market fresh fruits and vegetables (and retain good employees) year round—even in Illinois, where winters can be relatively snowy and cold. If you happen to live in a part of the country where winter tends to drag on, and on, and on, a hoop house can be both a good investment and good for your spirits. There’s something about walking out of the house on yet another bitter winter morning, face set against the sharp air, crunching through the snow, and stepping into a hoop house with green crops and that sweet earthy smell of spring! There’s definitely a “magic-factor” to be considered.

To help you decide if a hoop house might work on your farm, consider these insights harvested over the years on our farm.

**Value, Cost, Payback**

The first consideration is exactly how this investment will fit into the operation as a whole. For us, hoop houses make it possible to supply our customers with a wide variety of products. So the investment made in obtaining a customer—whether it’s an individual, store, or restaurant—is more rewarding by having a wide variety of products to offer them.

Financial assistance can be obtained through farmer grant programs such as SARE or local foundations, or through the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s EQIP initiative. We’ve found that, even without financial assistance, hoop houses can have a short payback period of two or three years if managed intensely.

**Site Selection**

You’ll need to provide electrical service and water, and you’ll be checking it frequently, especially during early spring and late fall, so easy access is important. About mid-January, I start wishing the house was directly connected to one of our hoop houses.

Many counties don’t require a building permit, but it’s a good idea to check. Site the hoop house far enough from trees so they won’t shade or fall on it.

Orientation is also a consideration. Generally, if you live above 40 degrees N latitude, orient the length of an individual structure east to west. If below 40 degrees, orient north to south. If you happen to live right on 40 degrees N as we do in central Illinois, it really doesn’t matter. (If you are planning multiple gutter connected structures, orient north to south at all latitudes. This orientation avoids the shadow that would occur from the structure just to the south of it in an east-west layout.)

**Hoop House Types**

There are many fine companies offering a wide array of designs and options. Peruse their websites, speak with representatives of different companies, and ask if there are examples of their products in use near you. Time spent visiting with other farmers about their hoop houses and how they use them is invaluable.

Essentially, there are two main structural designs for high tunnels: Quonset and Gothic. Quonset structures have a round roof with slightly shorter and curved sidewalls, while Gothic structures have a pointed peak (A frame) with additional supports across the peak. Gothic structures tend to shed snow and ice better than Quonset structures. Gothic structures also allow for a peak or gable vent to be added to the structure which facilitates air movement and ventilation. We have built both types, and have found Quonset structures to be less expensive.

Doors are hinged on 4x4 posts set 4 feet in the ground. In areas subject to high winds and thunderstorm wind bursts, strong end walls are extremely important. Most of the damaged hoop houses I’ve seen had weak end walls.

**Gothic hoop houses have additional roof support structures that can hold hanging fans or plant trellises.**

All photos by PrairiErth Farm

Cool-season salad mix fills one of the hoop houses at PrairiErth Farm in Illinois.

Fencing zip-tied to the poles keeps rabbits and chickens from feasting on the salad buffet when the sides are raised.

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Hoop Houses — from previous page

This hoop house features a hot water root zone heating system under the grow tables and a heated germination chamber.

Site Preparation

You can’t tell if a site is level by just looking at it. Get a transit or, if you’re not an experienced land contractor, hire one to prepare a level site and install proper drainage—it’s way cheaper than “fixing it” after the fact.

Once the site is leveled and proper drainage is installed, it’s critical to get the ground stakes installed (setting them in concrete isn’t a bad idea) at the correct elevation and positioned so the building is square. If you don’t have experience with that sort of thing, hire someone who does. If the foundation isn’t right, nothing else will be either. Once that’s done, assembling the frame is pretty straightforward.

Intense Management

To get the most value from the investment, a hoop house must be intensely managed—that means someone has to be present on a daily basis. That’s generally not a problem for farmers like us who raise livestock that also require daily attention.

Here in central Illinois, we begin planting (or transplanting) cool season crops like salad mix and spinach that also require daily attention. To get the most value from the investment, a hoop house must be intensely managed—that means someone has to be present on a daily basis. That’s generally not a problem for farmers like us who raise livestock that also require daily attention.

For example, to maintain a uniform temperature inside the structure and to reduce the incidence of foliar disease. The side curtains tend to wear out before the roof from the frequent rolling up and down. We use a double channel hip rail mounted 5 feet above the ground to secure the plastic. This allows the lower curtain to be replaced independently of the roof.

The plastic on our hoop houses lasts about six years. Plastic has come a long way in terms of durability against photodegradation. It’s the whipping from wind and rain that really beats it up. Plastic naturally shrinks as it cools and stretches as it warms. The only way to keep it taut is with an inflator. Plastic is expensive—invest in a good inflator to keep your plastic in good shape so it lasts as long as possible. Just as outdoors, it is the combination of plants and animals on the land that creates regenerative farming systems. We graze broilers on cover crops in our hoop houses as part of the rotation. This practice helps restore fertility and break up pest and disease cycles.

Trial Run

Rather than investing in an expensive hoop house right out of the gate, cash-strapped beginning farmers could get creative and build something out of supplies on hand. That’s what we did for our very first hoop house some 20 years ago. We were experimenting with a vegetable crop enterprise and direct marketing. We made a half-acre commitment, growing mostly tomatoes and sweet corn. We cobbled together a 10x12-foot wood frame with cattle panel ends and a roof covered with cheap plastic. The purpose of this mini hoop house was to start tomato plants. It worked very well, except for the plastic, which disintegrated in a few months. We’re still using that structure today as a storage shed (with a newer plastic covering).

The Bishops, the 2017 MOSES Organic Farmers of the Year, farm at PrairiErth Farm in Atlanta, Illinois. Farmers interested in hoop house production/construction can email dave@prairierthfarm.com.
By Leslie Svacina

As a farmer it’s hard to not think about the weather. What’s the temperature going to be? Is it going to rain? Is it going to be clear for a stretch? Will we ever get any rain? Will the rain ever stop? Our lives revolve around the weather, more specifically precipitation, otherwise known as water, our lifeline as farmers to grow crops and raise livestock.

The book, *The Drought Resilient Farm*, by Dale Strickler, covers a number of approaches to aid farmers in maximizing moisture in their soil to benefit the crops, pastures, and livestock on their farms. This is about maximizing moisture in good way, not too much and not too little, as in the words of Goldilocks. The author succinctly summarizes his concepts in the book as: Get it (water) in, keep it in (the soil), and get it out (for crops/livestock).

Throughout the book Strickler applies his training and work as an agronomist and experience as a farmer. He also draws on data from university research and studies to support the farming practices outlined in the book, as well as reasonings to not pursue other practices. His desire to share his work stems from his own experience farming, where he transitioned the practices. His desire to share his work stems from his own experience farming, where he transitioned the right combination of factors to magnify the impact of droughts on farms. Throughout the book the author aims to explain the scientific process behind the farming practices, yet simple enough for someone without a lot of science background to understand. It features many visuals, including great photography, informational illustrations, and data charts. Strickler summarizes the book’s content in a checklist format, so farmers can start to put the practices into action on their own farm. The checklist touches on:

1. Creating a moisture-efficient soil: Covering how past and current farming practices have created the right combination of factors to magnify the impact of droughts on farms. Throughout the book the author covers what’s considered as typical farming practices and why those approaches might not be the best route for our soil in terms of holding moisture, keeping it and using it on our farms. Strickler then provides suggestions on innovative solutions for readers to help their own farms become drought resistant.

2. Managing pasture: and
3. Providing for livestock: Covers how to create water supply options for livestock, how to create drought-tolerant pastures, how to provide emergency forage in a drought, and how to make decisions on livestock during and after a drought.  

The book is divided into three parts:

1. Creating a moisture-efficient soil: Covering how past and current farming practices have created the right combination of factors to magnify the impact of droughts on farms. Throughout the book the author covers what’s considered as typical farming practices and why those approaches might not be the best route for our soil in terms of holding moisture, keeping it and using it on our farms. Strickler then provides suggestions on innovative solutions for readers to help their own farms become drought resistant.

2. Providing for livestock: Covers how to create water supply options for livestock, how to create drought-tolerant pastures, how to provide emergency forage in a drought, and how to make decisions on livestock during and after a drought.

3. Looking to the future: Covers moisture-efficient agriculture practices for semi-arid regions; and includes a checklist of action items to help make your own farm more drought resistant.

Overall the book is an easy read. It’s well written to explain the scientific process behind the farming practices, yet simple enough for someone without a lot of science background to understand. It features many visuals, including great photography, informational illustrations, and data charts. There’s also a list of further resources, recommended reading and films, and glossary of terms. Strickler summarizes the book’s content in a checklist format, so farmers can start to put the practices into action on their own farm. The checklist touches on:

1. Improving the soil
2. Feeding livestock practices
3. Managing the landscape on your farm
4. Managing pasture; and
5. Coping during a drought.

*The Drought Resilient Farm* is a book that serves as a guide to help farmers manage moisture on their own farms. It has enough information, supplemented with science and research, to understand the concepts of a new practice, whether that be using cover crops, implementing a livestock watering system or another practice. It gets the farmer started in the right direction to seek out more information in a specific practice to use on his or her farm so it is as drought resistant as possible.

Leslie Svacina owns Cylon Rolling Acres in Deer Park, Wis. She raises meat goats on pasture.
Researchers evaluate pastured broilers as means to reduce flies in organic dairy pastures

By Hannah Phillips, Roger Moon, Ulrike Sorge, & Bradley Heins

The face fly (Musca autumnalis), born fly (Haematobia irritans), and stable fly (Stomoxys calcitrans) are common pests on pasture-based dairy farms. These flies can transmit diseases and cause cows to exhibit an increase in fly avoidance behaviors—head throws, tail switches, foot stomps, and crowding—which can decrease the time spent grazing and lower milk production. Thus, flies are a nuisance to both cattle and humans.

To prevent flies, producers commonly use organic-approved repellents. However, repellents are only temporarily effective after topical application on the cow. The most effective method of fly control is to break their life cycle and reduce the population to below the pest level.

Adult female flies lay their eggs in fresh cow manure. The eggs hatch and the maggots develop into larvae, which feast on the nutrient-rich manure inside the safety of the manure pat. Once the larvae mature, they burrow under the manure pats to pupate and finish developing into adult flies. The cycle from egg to adult fly takes about 10 to 20 days.

Fly larvae may sound like a repulsive snack to humans; however, the high protein content and digestibility of fly larvae makes it a potential excellent add-in to the broiler chicken diet. Some producers believe that chickens will consume fly larvae from cow manure pats, and that grazing chickens and dairy cattle in succession is an effective method of fly control. However, no scientific studies have determined whether chickens can successfully reduce the number of flies that emerge from cow manure. Thus, the objective of this study was to determine if broiler chickens reduce the number of fly larvae from cow manure pats on pasture.

Experiment

The experiment was conducted from June to August 2018 at the West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) in Morris, Minnesota. The WCROC has a 250-cow research dairy farm consisting of a conventional low-input herd and an organic-certified seasonal grazing herd.

Fresh manure from the organic grazing herd was collected to form one-liter pats. The manure pats were randomly placed in the outdoor pasture. However, when broilers were exposed to their treatments until the larvae matured (3 to 4 days). The study was concluded in three complete replicates using a total of 99 manure pats and 150 broiler chickens.

Results

Broilers spent their time sitting awake (54 ± 7.6%), sleeping (21 ± 5.5%), or upright (24 ± 5.6%), either standing, walking, or running. The most performed behavioral event was preening (28 ± 9.2% of birds) followed by foraging (21 ± 5.7% of birds). These behavior results suggest that broilers spent the majority of their time resting. Only 14 ± 9.6% of the birds were observed in the outdoor pasture space where the manure pats were placed. However, when broilers were actively foraging in the pasture they were not observed foraging specifically in manure pats.

Conclusions

Hot weather negatively affected pasture ranging and foraging behaviors necessary to reduce flies on pasture. Therefore, the broilers had no impact on the number of fly larvae in manure pats in this study. Previous knowledge and results from the current experiment suggest that producers can maximize ranging and foraging behaviors by providing broilers shade in their ranging environment, especially when it is hot. Fly management for grazing dairy herds is difficult to address using only one strategy. Therefore, a multifactorial approach should be used to reduce flies on the farm. More information on fly management can be found on the WCROC website: https://wcroc.cfans.umn.edu/organic-dairy.

Hannah Phillips is a University of Minnesota (UMN) graduate student in animal science. Roger Moon is in UMN’s entomology department. Ulrike Sorge is with Bavarian Animal Health Services in Poing, Germany. Bradley Heins is in UMN’s department of animal science.
customer is paying for the experience, transparency, and the connection to the farmer. The personal connection to the land where the food is grown is significant, if only because of the corporate food industry’s inability to duplicate it.

There are a couple of ways to approach the creation of this farmer-member connection. Both Kordet from Blue Moon and Metzger from Laughing Earth have their CSA pickup exclusively on the farm. They create green space for the families to interact with each other or play areas for the kids. There are u-pick gardens for herbs, flowers, and cherry tomatoes.

“Having the farm as a community space and center of the CSA has been important to me from the beginning,” Kordet explained. “The CSA is structured to provide that experience.”

However, if you’re like me, your farm might not be close enough to your community for people to make the trip out. Utilizing social media, videos, and photos helps to create the experience your members crave. Also, being present at the CSA pickups is popular among many of these farmers.

The most important takeaway from my discussions with these farmers is to focus on the community of members. It’s not about the financial support they provide. It’s not about the soil and the 60 different varieties of produce we grow. While those are essential parts of the CSA model, it must revolve around the community of consumers we’re serving.

“Farmers need to remember that customers are in a relationship with our brand, and like any relationship, you have to tend it, or it dies,” Bench explained. “If we don’t grow with them and continue to find new ways to challenge them and excite them, then they will sense they are not important and will lose interest. We can’t just run CSAs the same way we always did 10 years ago. It’s not ‘rinse and repeat.’ No business can survive with that mentality. We always have to be innovating and adjusting to the market, growing with our customers, finding new ways to push them, surprise them, serve them, and sincerely engage with them.”

Katie Bishop runs the CSA for PrairieErth Farm in Atlanta, Illinois.

Resilient Specialty Crop Farms — from page 9

While her overall risk strategies have insulated her business, she has made her own share of “newbie mistakes,” Hintz admitted.

“I planted 350 dwarf apple trees (16 varieties) one spring early in my career to get the volume tree discount,” she recalled. “In the next 10 years, I learned that larger-sized, more hardy trees make more sense for my system and that not all varieties I planted work well on my land. If I were to do it over, I might first plant a quarter as many trees and four times as many varieties to test out what would work the best.

“I’ve employed this lesson with all the subsequent shrub fruit I’ve added to my system: buying as many different varieties as I can get my hands on, testing them out, and then propagating them to scale up.”

Glen Kadelbach, who farms with his wife, Stephanie, near Hutchinson, Minn., takes a similar approach to manage risk—diversification. They also protect their operation with crop insurance.

The Kadelbachs turned to organic farming in 2008 after watching a loved one who had practiced conventional production die of cancer. They shifted the 300-acre farm away from commodity crops to canning crops, such as sweet corn and sweet peas; seed production of small grains like rye; and, food-grade soybeans and edible beans.

Learning, experimenting, tinkering, and strategizing suit Kadelbach. He experimented with hemp production last season but said it didn’t do well so he won’t grow it this year.

“Don’t be afraid to try new enterprises,” Kadelbach explained. “You have to take some risks; you’ve got to think outside the barn.”

A trial that did go well on his farm last season was mushroom production, which Kadelbach managed in a barn he’d been utilizing. He transformed the barn into an efficient production space and produced several mushroom varieties that he sold mainly in farmers markets, but also to a couple of restaurants.

“It went really well,” he said. He stopped producing for the winter to avoid the need to heat the barn with propane over the winter.

“I think if I could have focused completely on mushrooms, I could have continued over winter,” he said. “The building was about a third full, if it had been full, it probably would have been profitable over winter.”

Kadelbach also tried dried beans and managed again with study and investment of time and effort to produce well in volume, yet he found most markets he approached were already loyal to established producers.

He’s since located a prospect and will resume dried bean production this year. He’s also trying his hand at specialized, multi-row flamer fabrication, building one off a neighbor’s model, but designing his own burners. He has Computer Assisted Design skills and a neighbor who is a helpful, retired engineer. Kadelbach hopes to put his first design to the test flaming weeds this growing season.

“You’ve got to go through some learning with any crop or enterprise, and it’s going to cost a little bit getting started, but you have to try,” he said of his multi-pronged approach to farming. “There are a lot of niche markets out there. You’ve just got to figure out what you would like to try and work toward it.”

Tony Ends and his wife, Dela, own Scotch Hill Farm, a certified organic specialty crop farm near Janesville, Wis.

To maintain a resilient farm, Clare Hintz not only has diverse enterprises, but also builds in varietal diversity. She has selected fruits so that there will always be something ripe for her CSA members.

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Katie Bishop runs the CSA for PrairieErth Farm in Atlanta, Illinois.
Team approach needed to address lack of meat processors

By Lisa Kivirist

Are you frustrated with the lack of local meat processing facilities near your farm? Do you have a need for specialty processing like aged curing and services not offered by typical facilities? You’re not alone. While there definitely is an increasing market for heritage meats, the challenge throughout the Midwest and the country remains a lack of local meat processing facilities, particularly butchers that can process small-scale, artisanal meats that need traditional techniques like dry curing or Charcuterie.

This lack of processors burdened April Prusia of Dorothy’s Range, a heritage hog farm in Blanchardville, Wisconsin. "It seemed like every couple of months there would be a long discussion on our local women in sustainable agriculture listserv about everyone’s frustration with lack of processing options, from how long you had to wait for an appointment to the fact that various fillers like corn syrup and MSG and other GMO ingredients were added in without our knowledge,” Prusia lamented. "Eventually I realized we needed to take this beyond talk to action if anything was going to change."

Prusia formed a team with other women farmers, including Betty Anderson of the Old Smith Place and Bethany Storm of the Little Red Home (Stead). Together they applied for and received a North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research Education (SARE) Farmer Rancher grant to assess the demand and feasibility of a federally licensed mobile slaughtering facility in south central Wisconsin. The goal of this project, as with all Farmer Rancher grant projects, is to develop learnings and insight that can be publicly shared so all of us in the sustainable agriculture community can benefit.

“We felt the challenges we were struggling with locally were issues that other farmers felt too, particularly women as more of us are raising animals,” Prusia explained. The team’s project, “Developing a Woman Farmer Butchering and Meat Processing Cooperative Plan for Southern Wisconsin,” assessed what it would take to start a cooperatively owned, federally licensed facility in south central Wisconsin. The goal of this project, as with all Farmer Rancher grant projects, is to develop learnings and insight that can be publicly shared so all of us in the sustainable agriculture community can benefit.

1. Gather kindred farmers

With a dose of strategy, you probably could form a team of other farmers like Prusia did in your local community who share your motivation to dig into a challenge and find solutions.

“Our team brought a diverse set of skills to this project,” said Betty Anderson of The Old Smith Place, where she raises cattle, goats, and chickens, and also produces various high-acid canned items under Wisconsin’s cottage food law. “April drives the big picture vision especially with her existing industry contacts to the project, Bethany adds in her writing skills along with a science background, and I bring my bookkeeping background and organizational skill set.”

When you have such a team and an identified problem, consider applying for a North Central SARE Farmer Rancher Grant, which can be for up to $27,000 for a group of three or more farmer team members. The call for proposals will officially come out in August with proposals due early December and funding decisions made in February. The Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI) offers free grant advising resource to help you in developing your idea and application.

“SARE Farmer Rancher grants provide opportuni- ties for farmers to research challenging issues and find solutions that can then be helpful to other farmers,” explained Beth Nelson, Director of Research and Education Programs for North Central SARE, which covers the 12-state Midwest region. “This project is a great example of how farmers coming together to creatively and collaboratively solve a problem and share information adds up to a stronger future for sustainable agriculture.”

2. Assess current resources

“Busy farmers don’t need to recreate the wheel,” Prusia advised. “The first step for us involved taking inventory of what information and ideas already existed.” This initially involved discussions with anyone involved with meat—from farmers to processors to consumers.

“Start the conversation with your community and chances are you are not the only one with needs who wants a project like this to move forward,” recommended Bethany Storm of The Little Red Home (Stead), where she raises goats, sheep, and pigs, and a variety of perennial food crops. “People in all walks of rural life understand, are interested in what you are struggling with and have resources to help—more than I ever realized at first.

“I have had conversations about this subject with a wide range of people, with parents and teachers at my kids’ school, with people I work with on town board and even my vet,” Storm said. “I learned everyone who raises animals, both big farmers and small, want more options. The big producers always process a few animals for themselves or for direct sale to customers even if the majority of their production animals end up at an equity barn for sale. And, small farmers can’t keep in business without local processors.”

Another initial step involved a needs assessment of area farmers. Prusia’s team surveyed producers in the area to learn about their needs the current facilities that were available.

“Our survey confirmed unmet demand from local farmers for meat processing, in particular, a facility that specializes in no-stress kill, custom cut or artisan-cured meats,” Prusia added.

3. Stay open-minded

Taking the time to really study a barrier can bring out new perspectives, providing one keeps an open mind, Prusia said.

“This project motivated me to be much more understanding and sensitive to processors because I learned that they, too, have a heap of regulation pressures and rules they need to adhere to,” Prusia admitted. She feels too often farmers raising animals blame the processor for hurdles, but her team now realizes all players involved have challenges. “I am actually now a vocal advocate for and defend butchers because I better understand their situation and know we are all on the same team.”

April Prusia raises heritage breed hogs. Discouraged by the lack of specialty meat processors in southern Wisconsin near her farm, she formed a team of women farmers and pursued a grant to change the landscape. 

John D. Ivanko Photography

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4. Get creative with solutions

When Prusia, Anderson, and Storm started this project, they saw it from the farmer lens of simply needing more processing facilities. However, in talking to processors and researching things deeper, they realized a core problem rooted in lack of training for butchers.

“Butchering is exceptionally hard work both physically and mentally,” Prusia explained. “It needs proper training and resources which we simply don’t have today, which leads to a constant struggle for processors to find qualified employees.”

“Butchering has also really lost a reputation of importance in our society,” Anderson said. “It used to be every town had a butcher and that was a position of honor.”

These insights led the team to realize a fundamental solution rests in more formal butchering training programs, especially to encourage more women in this field. As the number of women farmers continues to grow as the recent Census of Agriculture proved with an increase of over 26 percent in the number of female farmers, much opportunity exists for parallel growth in female butchers.

5. Share your learnings

“When SARE Farmer Rancher projects like ours reflect that core collaborative spirit of our sustainable and organic agriculture community in our eagerness to share our learnings with each other,” Storm said. “With transparency and a commitment to supporting each other to succeed, we all win.”

A final project report will be published on the North Central SARE website, which provides access to over 6,500 such reports from SARE-funded initiatives throughout the country.

The trio also hosted a “Women in Meat Meet-Up” at the last MOSES Organic Farming Conference, which gathered a packed room of other women sharing similar struggles. Anderson will be at the MOSES In Her Boots workshop Aug. 2, 2019, at Riemer Family Farm in Brodhead, Wisconsin, to answer questions and talk about the project as well.

Interestingly, SARE Farmer Rancher projects like this one often push farmers to take friendships to a business relationship, which can prove challenging but ultimately very rewarding. Prusia, Anderson, and Storm all live near each other in Green County and often cross paths via various community connections and local women in sustainable agriculture potlucks. But this was the first situation where the trio moved from social to professional, a process they say planted seeds for future endeavors.

“Each woman on our team has different insights and talents and a slightly different way of looking at a problem, which helps tremendously,” Prusia summed up. “More opportunities for farmers to collaboratively pool knowledge and passion to solve a shared barrier will be such an asset to our sustainable and organic agriculture community.”

Lisa Kivirist coordinates the In Her Boots program for MOSES. She is also an author. Her latest book is “Soil Sisters: A Toolkit for Women Farmers.”

Grant Resources for Farmers

North Central SARE farmer grants: www.northcentralsare.org/grants

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute grant advising resources: michaelfields.org/grant-advising-resources
MOSES hosts the bi-annual Women in Sustainable Ag Conference this fall for women involved in farming, food system work, and ag policy. The event will take place Oct. 17-19 at the InterContinental St. Paul Riverfront hotel in St. Paul, Minn. Day 1 includes half-day intensives and tours. The Women, Food and Ag Network (WFAN) will coordinate the Leadership and Advocacy Track in place of the organization’s annual conference.

There’s still room for a few additional workshop presentations. Submit suggestions or proposals online at mosesorganic.org/wisa-conference by May 27. Registration will open Aug. 1.

Prairie Roots

The MOSES “In Her Boots” podcast currently features interviews with Hannah Breckhill of Humble Hands Harvest near Decorah, Iowa. Breckhill has a mix of livestock (grass-finished sheep and pastured hogs) plus organic vegetables, and fruit and nut trees.

New podcast episodes post every Friday. Subscribe on iTunes or Stitcher, or listen at mosesorganic.org/ in-her-boots-podcast.

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Organic Certification Cost Share

Funding is available through the Organic Certification Cost Share Program to reimburse producers up to 75 percent of the cost of obtaining or maintaining organic certification under the USDA’s National Organic Program. Eligible expenses include fees for the application, inspection, equivalency agreement and arrangements, inspector travel expenses, user fees, sales assessments, and postage. Producers can apply for a maximum of $750 per certification scope. Apply for fiscal 2019 funding by Oct. 31 at USDA Farm Service Agency county offices.

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MOSES 2020 Annual Report

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Organic Livestock Substance Change

USDA has amended the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances to allow elemental sulfur to be used as a topical treatment to repel mites, fleas, and ticks from livestock and their living spaces. It also reclassified potassium acid tartrate from a nonagricultural substance to an agricultural one, requiring handlers to use the organic form when it is commercially available. The amendments take effect May 30, 2019.

Organic Learning Center

The USDA National Organic Program’s new online Organic Integrity Learning Center offers free training for organic professionals. Courses explain the USDA organic system, certification, inspection, compliance and enforcement, and import oversight. See www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/training.

New Hemp Collective

Denver-based Higher Yields Consulting (HYC) has formed a collective, HYC Hemp Co, to support farmers who want to grow industrial hemp under the provisions of the 2018 Farm Bill. HYC provides contracted farmers with permitting assistance, seeds, financing, and training on how to produce high-quality hemp crops. For more information, see higheryields hemp.com or contact Jay Fentress, HYC Hemp Co Director, at 715-563-4828 or jay@higher-yields-consulting.com.

Midwest Organic Center

The Rodale Institute is establishing the Midwest Organic Center on an existing nature center’s 190-acre research and education farm near Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The institute plans to add organic grains and vegetables as well as a systems trial similar to its long-run Farming Systems Trial at its Pennsylvania farm. For more information, see rodaleinstitute.org/midwestorganiccenter.

Court Decision on Livestock Rule Lawsuit

A Federal District Court agreed with a coalition of organic farmers, consumers, and animal welfare advocates that the USDA cannot hide communications and documents that led to the controversial decision to withdraw the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices rule, which would have required animal welfare standards on farms producing organic meat. See May 6 news at www.centerforfoodsafety.org/press-releases.

New USDA Grants for Farmers

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service is accepting proposals through July 15, 2019, for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials, a new sub-program created by the 2018 Farm Bill for the USDA’s Conservation Innovation Grants program. See bit.ly/NewCIG.

Farmer T-Shirts

Gempler’s, an online farm supply store based in Wisconsin, is offering a new line of “buy local, eat local, support local farmers” T-shirts with a portion of sales going to support farmer education through MOSES as well as the Farmer-Veteran Coalition. Gempler’s recently changed hands, and the new owners are committed to helping the communities they serve. See gemplers.com/pages/localgrown.

Guide to On-Farm Food Service

The local food movement is creating opportunities for farmers to add on-farm dining experiences. For more information, see renewingthecountryside.org/on_farm_food_service.

Farmers Union Camp

Kids ages 8-18 from across the country may attend four- to five-day camps at Wisconsin Farmers Union’s Kamp Kenwood near Chippewa Falls. Campers learn about cooperation, leadership, and sustainability and engage in fun outdoor activities. There are also family camp weekends. See www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

MOSES Conference Band Video

If you have video on your phone of the Synister Dane performances at the 2019 MOSES Conference, please email Allen Moody at kanzaguy@gmail.com.
**Farms/Land**

2 Farm Properties For Sale. Southwest Chicago in Yor-kville. 6.57 acres no buildings: $209,000. 6.5 acres, barns, no house: $375,000. Details upon request. Keith Warpinski. 630-602-6153 warp5@icloud.com

Farm/Farm business for sale: Southwest Michigan. 40-acre, organic vegetable farm. Includes house, barns/buildings with pack out/walk in cooler. For more information call Steve Robbins 989-444-1945.


Farm For Sale: Take our Central WI farm forward: 20 acres, with an experience and an interest in organic agriculture. Details at northwoodmushrooms.com or call Jeremy at production lead, and picker/packer. Benefits include free living quarters) is a small farm near the Twin Cities specializing in log-grown organic mushrooms. We’re hiring for seasonal positions to start in May or June: mushroom worker and production lead, and picker/packer. Benefits include free housing and mushrooms, $12 to $13 per hour. Find more details at northwoodmushrooms.com or call Jeremy at 612-205-8599.

We are currently in search of hard-working individuals with an experience and an interest in organic agriculture to fill the following positions: LEAD MECHANIC, DELIVERY DRIVER & HELPERS, and PACKAGING SHED SUPPORT. Visit www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com/opportunities.php for more detailed job descriptions and send resume with cover letter to bookkeeper@harmonyvalleyfarm.com.

Need Organic Farmer - 20 acres available on the Payette River in Sweet, Idaho. Have water lines and is fenced. Need someone to farm it - email Casey McDonough at csmc-donough@gmail.com

**Jobs**

**Tomato Mountain Farm** is a certified organic farm located 20 miles south of Madison. Responsibilities range from harvesting, washing, planting, weeding, and packing vegetables to assistance with maintenance and upkeep. We’ve got a great maintenance/field manager who needs someone reliable to help keep things in order. For the position of building. Please call or text 317-431-6302.

**Organic rye for sale.** Seed quality. Sono Pac Farms, Caledonia, MN. 507-725-5281.


**Certified Organic Black Angus cow-calf pairs.** Very docile cows; you can walk around them, even with their new-born calves. We have been using Registered Bulls for years. $1,900 for choice picks or $1,700 a piece to take all (25 total available). Contact Elmer @ 320-260-4084.

**Miscellaneous**

**Organic Approved Fertilizer.** 4-4-4 and 4-5-3 coffee chaff, soybean meal, bone meal, sulfate of potash - 50lb bag pelleted. $25/bag for full pallet. F.D.B. St Cloud. james@javacycle.com

**Larch Untreated Posts.** Durable, environmentally friendly posts available in any quantity. Round posts are 6 inches wide x 8 feet long, $150 each. Call Steve 583-419-1231 (no text please).

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

**For Sale:** Tempered, insulated, double-pane glass. Large panes for solariums, sun homes, ag buildings, greenhouses or ???. One hundred fifty thousand sold since 1979: 32” x 4’ x 1” double-pane only $650.00. We will be moving Arctic Glass to Roberts, Wm. If you need glass now would be a good time! Arctic Glass, www.kissourglass.com, Call Sandy at 507-259-6351.

**Nature Safe Fertilizer.** We manufacture our own OMRI listed Amino Acid 15-9-0, a dry powder water soluble fertilizer. Use in your sprayer, drip irrigation or pivot. Sold by the ton in 55 lb. bags, superb sacks. www.naturesafe.com 616-566-0307.
Growing Minnesota Asparagus SFA Workshop
June 4 | 8 – 10 a.m. | Free | violinfarms.com
See Page 5.

Women Caring for the Land: Perennial Farming
July 10 | 8 – 4 p.m. | Bolton, Vt.
Learn about learning and nutritious produce, free
See Page 5.

MOSES Organic Field Day: Promote Soil Health with
Small Grain/Legume Rotations
June 12 | 5:45 p.m. – 8 p.m. | Marine on St. Croix, Minn.
This workshop at Chengwatana Farm will teach how to grow
and market this high-value perennial crop. Call 651.232.5661 or email info@practicalfarmers.org
See Page 5.

MOSES Organic Field Day: Grow Row Crops for Distilling
July 10 | 1 – 4 p.m. | Onalaska, Wis.
See Page 5.

Women Caring for the Land: Perennial Farms
July 10 | 8 – 4 p.m. | Waits, Wis.
Learn about learning and nutritious produce, free
See Page 5.

Women Caring for the Land: The EB Ranch
July 15 | 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Ridgeland, Wis.
See rotationally grazed goats, geese, ducks, chickens, and
turkeys and goat milk products. Call Deb at 715-590-2130.

MOSES Organic Field Day: SFA Grazing Field Day:
Hendricks Dairy
July 19 | 10:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Sebeka, Minn.
Learn how Mike and Alida Hendrickx have turned CRP land into
profitable grazing land. 320.310.5252 or hannah@sfa-tn.org
See Page 5.

Lansing Farm Tours
July 22 | 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Loyd, Del.
Michigan State University Farmer Field School is hosting a tour of 3 – 4 farms from the Capitol city’s urban core out to
tour surroundings. Call 616-885-7776 or email Kate at katebr@msu.edu
See Page 5.

MOSES Organic Field Day: SFA Grazing Field Day:
Hendricks Dairy
August 1 | 10:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Madison, S.D.
See Page 5.

MOSES In Her Boots: Success Strategies from Soil Sisters
August 2 | $25 | Broadhead, Wis.
See Page 5.

Soil Sisters Weekend
August 2 – 4 | Southern Wisconsin
Tours, classes, and food at women-run farms in southern Wis-
consin—see Page 5. Call Lisa 608-329-7056.

Women Caring for the Land: Fenn’s Folly
August 8 | 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Ferryville, Wis.
Tour Amy Fenn’s farm, developing a savanna/silvopasture and
building an off-grid home. Call Deb at 715-590-2130.

SFA Garlic Fest
August 10 | $5 | Hutchinson, Minn.
Minnesota Garlic Festival is the premier event for lovers of
great local foods and good times 844.922.5573 or email info@sfa-tn.org
See Page 5.

MOSES In Her Boots: Diversifying with Flowers, Pizza,
and Summer Camps
August 13 | $25 | Long Lake, Minn.
See Page 5.

Organic Agronomy Training Series (OATS)
August 14 & 15 | $55 | Los Angeles, Calif.
Organic production systems and USDA-NOP regulatory
compliance training for extension staff, agency personnel,
consultants, educators, technical service providers and farmers
See Page 5.

MOSES Organic Field Day: Cultivating Farm Resilience for
a Changing Climate
August 16 | 1 – 4:30 p.m. | Harlan, Iowa
See Page 5.

Flame Weeding Workshop
August 19 | 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. | 7 | Ithaca, N.Y.
Learn how to do proper flaming to control over ten major
Midwestern weeds in seven agronomic crops
See Page 5.

Grand Rapids Farm Tours
August 19 | $5 | Greenville, Mich.
Learn about organic research conducted at the University of
Michigan including optimizing equipment and production
practices for organic no-till productions. 616-885-7776 or email Kate at katebr@msu.edu
See Page 5.

MOSES Organic Field Day: Unusual Fruits
August 29 | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Waukesha, Wis.
See Page 5.

Student Organic Seed Symposium
August 22 – 25 | $1 | Johnson, Wis.
Limited number of openings available for students and their
mentors in organic plant breeding and seed systems. Scholar-
ships available. Email symposium@organicseedsociety.org
See Page 5.

UM-Warrenton Extension Organic Agriculture Research
Field Day
August 29 | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Warrenton, Or.
Learn about organic research conducted at the University of
Wisconsin including optimizing equipment and production
practices for organic no-till productions. 616-885-7776 or email Kate at katebr@msu.edu
See Page 5.

Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day
September 8 | $50 | Waunakee, Wis.
See Page 5.

Women Caring for the Land: Greenleaf Fireman’s Park
September 9 | 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Greenleaf, Wis.
Tour local farms that use cover crops and no-till practices to
improve soil health and water quality. Call Deb at 715-590-2130.

Women in Sustainable Ag Conference
October 17 – 19 | $15 | St. Paul, Minn.
MOSES hosts this 3-day conference that brings together
women from all aspects of sustainable agriculture—farming,
education, ag business, food-system activism. 715-778-5775 or
mooses.org/wisa-conference

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