National conference to bring together women working in sustainable ag

By Lisa Kivirist

Women from across the country will gather to exchange ideas, find resources, and network at the National Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference this October in St. Paul, Minnesota. MOSES hosts this year’s event, which serves as the only national conference that brings together farmers, educators, activists and others who are committed to women in sustainable agriculture.

"MOSES is excited for the opportunity to bring together a diverse agenda focused on women connecting, leading, and working together to grow a larger movement of sustainability within the food system," said Lauren Langworthy, Interim Executive Director at MOSES. "We’re looking forward to putting out the welcome mat for women from different regions and backgrounds as we cultivate an event for powerful peer-to-peer learning.”

The event will take place Oct. 17-19, 2019 at the InterContinental Saint Paul Riverfront hotel in downtown St. Paul, Minn. Tickets are $42-60 for the conference and $150 for full-day intensives on Oct. 17. Single-day tickets also are available. Registration opens Aug. 1. A block of rooms at a group rate is available at the InterContinental hotel. See mosesorganic.org/wisa-conference.

WISA History

Over the past decade, different organizations have hosted this national conference, known as the WISA Conference (Women in Sustainable Agriculture). The first WISA conferences on the east coast were hosted by the University of Vermont Women’s Agricultural Network (WAgN) and the Pennsylvania Women’s Agricultural Network (PA WAgN). The most recent WISA conference took place in 2016 when Oregon Agricultural Network (PA WAgN). The most recent WISA conferences on the east coast were hosted by the University of Vermont Women’s Agricultural Network (WAgN) and the Pennsylvania Women’s Agricultural Network (PA WAgN). The most recent WISA conference took place in 2016 when Oregon

MANDATORY LABELING OF GMOs

Mandatory labeling of GM foods was a nightmare scenario for many consumers, there already has been mounting confusion about organic and non-GMO product claims: about how they’re different from one another, and in some cases, how they overlap. Now add to this a new mandatory label that uses radically different terminology and threshold levels to describe which foods contain GMOs, and you may have a major disruptive event for the food industry. And any major disruptive event that impacts food processing and marketing has the potential to have a direct impact on the supply, demand, and pricing for organic and non-GMO crops, foods, and ingredients.

Mandatory labeling of GMOs expected to expand market for non-GMO, organic crops

By Peter Golbitz and Jacob Golbitz

The food landscape in America is being reshaped by shifting consumer preferences driven by a younger demographic that values transparency, sustainable farming practices, and humane treatment of animals. This dynamic is causing millennial and Gen Z consumers, as well as aging baby boomers who helped set the stage for these products—to seek out foods that can be identified as having been produced without toxic synthetic pesticides or grown and processed without the use of GMOs (genetically modified organisms), antibiotics or questionable food ingredients or additives.

First, there was the USDA Organic seal. Consumers who wanted to enjoy foods grown and processed without synthetic fertilizers or pesticides could simply purchase foods that carried the USDA Organic label. Next, came the Non-GMO Project Verified seal. Shoppers looking to avoid foods that contained ingredients derived from genetically engineered crops could look for products that carried the Non-GMO Project Verified label. Now, we have a new USDA labeling program about to roll out, the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard (NBFDs), that instead of identifying products that are not genetically engineered, will actually identify foods that do contain GMO crops or ingredients.

For many consumers, there already has been mounting confusion about organic and non-GMO product claims: about how they’re different from one another, and in some cases, how they overlap. Now add to this a new mandatory label that uses radically different terminology and threshold levels to describe which foods contain GMOs, and you may have a major disruptive event for the food industry. And any major disruptive event that impacts food processing and marketing has the potential to have a direct impact on the supply, demand, and pricing for organic and non-GMO crops, foods, and ingredients.

The development of the new rule came about after years of pressure on the USDA and FDA from consumer and environmental groups that were concerned about the safety of consuming GMO foods and the potential negative impact of their use on the environment. These groups initiated various voter referendums focused on labeling GMOs and also pressured state legislatures to write laws requiring mandatory labeling of GMO foods.

In 2011, for example, the Center for Food Safety, a national nonprofit public interest and environmental advocacy organization, submitted a formal legal petition to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) asking that the FDA require mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods. Other groups, such as Just Label It and the Organic Trade Association, began to get involved in similar initiatives, and by 2013, a number of state legislatures passed the first wave of GMO labeling laws. Eventually, 54 bills were introduced in 26 states. But it was the Vermont law, passed in 2014 and which was set to go into effect July 1, 2016, that finally made a national rule more imperative. The idea of a patchwork of differing state regulations requiring the labeling of GMO foods was a nightmare scenario for the food industry.

With the Vermont law pending, and after additional public input and debate among congressional leaders, the U.S. Congress passed an act, which President Obama signed into law July 29, 2016, requiring the USDA to develop a new rule that would require food manufacturers to disclose the content of genetically engineered ingredients in packaged food products. The law gave authority for the development of the rule to the USDA and required that the agency conduct a study
The Organic Broadcaster is a bimonthly newsletter published by the Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), a nonprofit that provides education, resources and practical advice to farmers.

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From the Executive Director

To say it has been a tough year so far is a severe understatement. It has been really rough for farmers of all stripes across the country. As we came out of a long winter into an unforgiving spring, we found winterkill in our alfalfa, unforgiving markets, and fields too wet to plant. When times get tough, it becomes essential to gather and to share. It’s painful to talk about the problems, but if enough of us can engage, we can find our areas of common cause and work together on solutions.

This spring, I went to D.C. a few times, sharing stories from farmers who talked with me at the MOSES Conference, what I heard at spring meetings, topics of calls into the MOSES Organic Answer Line, and words from fellow farmers in my own network. Even though MOSES is an organization focused on education, not advocacy, we feel it’s important to share the stories we hear from our farmer community so that your voices can be amplified. We talked about the dairy crisis, issues of corporate consolidation and rising costs impacting farmers, and the importance of clarity in the National Organic Program to ensure that everyone is “playing by the same rules.” Sometimes, it feels like you can talk about these issues until you’re blue in the face and nothing changes.

Then something amazing happened. I heard Dr. Jenny Tucker from the National Organic Program say, “As a result of directives on unannounced inspections and residue/GMO testing, 180 operations (60%) in the Black Sea region have lost certification.” After years of work by lots of amazing people throughout the organic community, concrete enforcement steps had begun to address the import fraud issues! This offers a huge opportunity to domestic producers to fill that market demand. It’s also an opportunity to revive our core values, a strong and welcoming community.

That’s why I think it’s important for us all to look around the industry, our neighborhood, and our personal networks to find where there is common ground. As we develop and strengthen partnerships, we also develop and strengthen power. There is a share in the road called “division;” it’s easy to get caught up in it. It’s easy to identify where we disagree and to dwell on differences. However, our power comes when we identify what reality we want and choose to pool our efforts in growing the needed change. I might come to a solution on an entirely different path than someone else, but our underlying reasons do not negate our common goal.

I’ve always felt that we should work together on our common goals first and sort out our differences later. There will be times we don’t align and conversations we’re not ready to have. But, by avoiding the trap of divisiveness, we can earnestly work together and build the capacity we need to shift the trajectory toward our shared vision.

When weather, economics, and division threaten our core values, a strong and welcoming community becomes our most essential tool to advance our cause. MOSES’ strength comes from the huge network of organic and regenerative farmers and partners who leverage our resources and relationships to push forward a vision for the future of agriculture where we can all thrive.

Join me in actively seeking common ground with those who aren’t yet part of our community on topics such as grazing, soil health, farm economics, pollinators, water quality, nutrition and health, food security, climate change, tradition, a desire for thriving communities, and both social and economic justice (to name just a few). These bonds are opportunities and, when you start to look, you can see them everywhere.

~ Good Courage, Lauren Langworthy

MOSES is a bimonthly newspaper published by the Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), a nonprofit that provides education, resources and practical advice to farmers.
Nonprofit supports farmers with resources, access to organic farming research

By Vicki Lowell, Organic Farming Research Foundation

Organic agriculture has been shown to alleviate many of the pressing environmental issues we face today, such as climate change. However, given the small amount of land under organic production, its true impact has yet to be realized. That’s why it’s critical to invest in research, education, and policies that encourage more farmers to transition to organic.

The goal of the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF), a nonprofit organization founded in 1990, is to advance organic agriculture through scientific research. As a champion of organic farmers across the U.S., we work to foster the improvement and widespread adoption of organic farming systems by cultivating organic research, education, and federal policies that bring more farmers and acreage into organic production. Through these efforts, we are working to create a more resilient and sustainable agricultural system that values healthy environments and healthy people.

So much has changed since we began nearly 30 years ago. Back then, organic farming research was not a well-studied field, and the USDA was more than a decade away from certifying organically grown products. Here we are today with a Farm Bill that makes significant investments in organic agriculture—including $395 million for organic research and education over the next 10 years.

This increase in federal funding for organic research makes OFRF’s support of innovative work at the early stages more critical than ever. Our seed grants enable researchers to collect the data they need to leverage much larger federal funding to continue to work at a larger scale. One example is the research project led by Dr. Carol Shuman and Dr. Joji Muramoto at the University of California-Santa Cruz to examine organic management of soilborne diseases in strawberry production. This project, initiated with $28,000 in OFRF grants, eventually received $2.8 million in USDA funding.

OFRF is committed to supporting the research needed to meet the current challenges of organic farming and grow the number of organic acres in the U.S. In 2016, OFRF updated its National Organic Research Agenda (NORA). The report, based on an online survey and listening sessions with over 2,000 organic farmers, provided a comprehensive analysis of the challenges facing today’s organic farmers and the top priorities for future research—soil health emerged on top. The findings of this report not only informed the research projects we selected for funding, it led us to develop a comprehensive educational series of webinars and guides designed to help organic farmers and ranchers enhance soil health and the overall resilience of their operations.

Organic agriculture has long emphasized healthy, living soil as the foundation of sustainable and successful farming. Through research, we now have a better understanding of soil dynamics, soil organic matter (SOM), and soil health. Since 2002, over 100 USDA-funded organic agriculture research projects have addressed soil health and soil management, the findings of which largely validate the four NRCS management principles for soil health:

- Keep the soil covered as much as possible.
- Grow living roots throughout the year.
- Use plant diversity to enhance soil microbial life.
- Avoid disturbing the soil.

OFRF’s Soil Health and Organic Farming series includes nine webinars and guides to help farmers select the best practices for their particular circumstances based on scientific research. Each guide begins with tools and practices set in the context of the challenges and opportunities identified by organic producers in the 2016 NORA report. The guides also include reviews of USDA-funded organic research, future research priorities, and scientific literature references. The series includes the following titles.

Building Organic Matter for Healthy Soils

A soil health 101, if you will, the first topic in the series provides a discussion of the attributes of healthy soil, the central role of organic matter, and how to monitor and enhance soil organic matter and soil health in organic production. The guide summarizes research findings on SOM and soil health in organic farming systems, and outlines some practical applications for organic farmers.

Weed Management: An Ecological Approach

Tillage and weed cultivation can disrupt soil life, degrade organic matter and tilth, and accelerate erosion. While there is no magic formula or recipe to follow, there is this guide, which offers practical tips for taking an ecological approach to weed management, including tools that reduce the need for soil disturbance.

Practical Conservation Tillage

In addition to physically disturbing the soil and exposing it to the elements, excessive tillage accelerates oxidation of soil organic matter and increases carbon dioxide emissions, disrupts the soil food web, and diminishes the soil’s capacity to hold water and nutrients. This guide offers useful ideas for reducing tillage in organic systems.

Cover Crops: Selection and Management

Over the past 30 years, cover cropping has emerged as a key soil health and resource conservation practice for annual crop production. This guide offers a how-to on selecting the best cover crops, and management methods for soil health, including crop rotations and cropping system biodiversity.

Plant Genetics: Plant Breeding & Variety Selection

Crop cultivars can make an important contribution to soil health by making it easier to farm sustainably and by building or protecting the soil directly. However, most cultivars have been bred and selected to perform well in conventional farming systems. This guide provides an exploration of plant breeding and variety selection for performance in sustainable organic systems.

Water Management and Water Quality

Successful farming depends on effective management of water resources when water is both scarce and plentiful. Organic systems have the ability to enhance water use efficiency and reduce the need for irrigation, largely by improving and maintaining soil health. This guide includes best management practices for water management in organic production systems.

Nutrient Management for Crops, Soil, Environment

Organic producers replenish organic matter and nutrients with compost, manure, legume cover crops, and other organic inputs. This guide includes tips for managing nutrients in organic farming systems and the environmental benefits gained from practices that maintain soil organic matter and soil health.

Inside Organics

Viewpoints from members of the organic community

We provide financial, certification, agronomic, and educational resources to help you go organic.

Contact Anders Gurda: 612.868.1208
Many of you have probably spent a lot of this spring waiting on the weather. Cold and wet conditions have made some fields unworkable until it has been too late to plant certain crops. Some areas have experienced flooding. Certifiers often allow changes to your rotation for a year with special circumstances like this one.

This leads to a broader question—how do certifiers decide if a crop rotation is compliant with the rule? You may have called your certifier looking for a clear yes or no answer on your crop rotation plans, and you may have heard “well, it depends” in response. Here are some things to keep in mind about how they go about making a certification decision about your rotation.

Typically they’ll point you to the rule itself. So let’s start with what the crop rotation practice standard (§205.205) actually says:

The producer must implement a crop rotation including but not limited to soil, cover crops, green manure crops, and catch crops that provide the following functions that are applicable to the operation:

(a) Maintain or improve soil organic matter content;
(b) Provide for pest management in annual and perennial crops;
(c) Manage deficient or excess plant nutrients; and
(d) Provide erosion control.

The crop rotation standard has two basic parts. The first is that you have to rotate your crops. The second is that your rotation has to provide the “functions” listed above—maintain or improve soil organic matter, manage pests and nutrients, and control erosion. Certifiers understand that there are special circumstances and local conditions, and sometimes field-specific conditions, that would make a rotation work in one place and not in another. There is a pretty wide range of acceptable crop rotations. So how do certifiers decide if yours is allowed?

Some rotations don’t raise any red flags. A typical dairy rotation is corn, soy, oats/new seeding, and hay for three or more years. You won't struggle to get that rotation approved. But, you may not have animals or a market for hay, so your rotation might be more dependent on row crops. You might want to do two or even three years of corn, or rotate corn and soy year after year. Rotations like that will probably get a closer look.

If you want to do a rotation that leans more heavily on row crops, your certifier will probably ask you to show how your rotation meets the standard. You may be able to do this through your recordkeeping. Your records should include your fertilizer and pesticide use, cultivation, yields, and soil tests. You might be able to show that your rotation is working if you aren’t needing more of these field activities and inputs to maintain yields or soil organic matter levels. If they have concerns, they may ask you to submit annual soil tests to track changes in your soil organic matter or other forms of records.

Your annual inspection is the main way certifiers monitor your crop rotation. If the reviewer has concerns about your crop rotation, he or she may instruct your inspector to take a close look at specific fields for weeds, disease and insect pests, erosion, and the health of the crop, and to talk to you specifically about your goals for your crop rotation. Your inspector should be familiar with the growing conditions in your area, and may have seen other farms like yours over the course of the season. You’ll most likely have the same inspector for more than one year who will get to know what to expect on your farm. Each year, your inspector will gather the information the reviewers need to make a determination on your crop rotation.

Ultimately, it is your responsibility to make sure that your rotation is building your soil, managing pests and nutrients, and controlling erosion. It may also be up to you to prove to your certifier your rotation meets the standard. Keep in mind that certification is more about continuous improvement than rigid enforcement. Certifiers want to see that your practices are improving your land. As always, contact your certifier if you have specific questions about your rotation’s compliance with the National Organic Standards.
Looming forage crisis requires farmers to take action to survive

By Dan Olson

We are in the middle of a developing forage crisis. While it is definitely acute in 2019, it really started a few years ago when the Dairy market started its decline. While dairy has been operating at or below cost of production, dairy farmers have been forced to operate lean to survive. This, in many cases, has meant consciously reducing feed inventories.

Low inventories put more pressure on every growing season to be a success. But, 2018 was below average for hay production in much of the Midwest. A late spring delayed and hampered yields. Excessive rain to severe drought prevented much of the rest of the country from producing dairy-quality feed the rest of the year. 2019 has opened with nearly zero inventory, widespread winter-damaged hay fields, the latest planting dates we’ve seen in decades, and record number of prevent-plant acres.

Organic farmers are not immune to this crisis and, in some ways, could feel even more pressure. Organic dairy farmers rely on pasture for much of their hay needs through the growing season, but many were forced to graze too early and aggressively because they were out of feed this spring. This will have a very negative effect on pasture productivity the remainder of the summer. Forage inventories in the spring of 2020 will likely be even lower than this year; organic forage could be largely unavailable after the first of the year.

On our grass-based livestock farm in Lena, Wis., we’ve been doing everything we can to ensure we can survive this forage crisis. Here are some tips to help your farm survive as well.

Sell unnecessary animals.

Try not to keep more replacements than you are going to need. Look at improving your milk price by aggressively culling for low components, high somatic cell counts, etc. Find out your true cost of production and possibly cull low producers. At 15¢/c per pound for forage, the cost of production really goes up on high forage diets. If you are under a quota, it will be almost impossible to justify shipping more than your base.

Make every acre count.

This is not the summer to fallow ground. What are your least productive fields? Why are they that way? Whether they need fertility, renovation or a different species, this is the year to get something out of them.

Make every day count.

We are on the clock as far as growing forage in 2019. That means that we need something growing on every acre, every day of the year. If you have small grains for grain, you have the opportunity to grow a lot of forage in the fall. Cool season annuals like forage oats, annual rye grass and brassicas will grow well into the fall and help shorten the winter. By planting warm- and cool-season annuals in sequence we can maximize every day we have.

Build fence.

Whether it’s a fourth crop that isn’t quite worth harvesting or a field of corn stalks, it is amazing how many “animal days” we can get off of fields that we normally wouldn’t consider using as pastures. Electric perimeter fence is cheap and can pay for itself very quickly.

Get creative.

Consider planting a cover-crop in cornfields at last cultivation to graze this winter. Maybe plant a bushel of oats with your cereal rye after silage. The oats will give more yield this fall and the rye will be there next spring to give you some early forage.

Plant annuals vs perennials.

Because they don’t need to over-winter, annuals are inherently more productive than perennials. Instead of summer-seeding a new alfalfa crop consider an annual cocktail mix.

Look past corn.

Everyone gets excited about corn silage yields, but in reality, there are forage species that grow many more pounds of forage than corn silage. Corn silage averages about 45% grain by weight. That means that a field that yields 18 ton silage (at 65% moisture) only had a little over 3 tons of dry matter forage. Crops like sorghum, sorghum-Sudan, and oats or triticale can yield 5-8 tons of forage per year when grown in sequence.

Our farm we are using a combination of BMR sorghum-Sudan, Italian rye grass, and red, berseem and crimson clover. This mix gives us 3 cuttings of very high-quality forage. We are growing a photo-sensitive sorghum-Sudan for dry cow and heifer feed.

That is a really low-cost crop to grow and will give us up to 6 tons of forage dry-matter per acre. We either make baleage or chop them.

Consider a lower forage diet.

Historically organic farmers have fed much higher forage diets than their conventional counterparts. This may be a unique year where we should rethink that strategy. There are other sources of digestible fiber like soy-balls and oats that can be used to stretch forage.

Value high-fiber crops.

If you are buying high-dollar forage, it is important to make every pound count. Good grass has on average twice as much digestible fiber as alfalfa. This means that your cows will increase in feed efficiency and make less manure. This same concept applies to BMR sorghum, BMR Sudangrass, millet and pre-head small grains. Don’t value your forage based on RFV, RFQ or Neld. Instead multiply the NDF by the NDFd30. This number will let you know how much of the forage is digestible fiber. Average alfalfa may be 36% fiber [NDF] and the digestibility of that fiber is only 45% [NDFd30]. That means that the average alfalfa has about 16% digestible fiber. An average grass may have 50% NDF and an NDFd30 in excess of 60%. This means that the percentage of digestible fiber would be over 30%. This number is key when we are trying to maintain performance and reduce intakes.

Use your manure now.

If you have storage or are composting, this may be the year to shorten up that process and get that work for you now. Surface-applied manure can really jumpstart grass hay fields or pastures and annual crops like sorghum-Sudan will respond aggressively to it.

In summary, this with be a challenging 12 months. The sooner we put a plan in place for our farms and execute it, the higher our chances of success will be as we head into 2020.

Dan Olson is the seventh generation running Norsk Farm in Lena, Wis., raising grass-fed beef, lamb, poultry, and hogs. He serves on the board of directors for GrassWorks.
MOSES to organize the 2019 WISA Conference. “

WFAN’s annual conference this year will be com-
bined with the WISA Conference in St. Paul. With a
strong commitment to women's leadership develop-
ment, WFAN directs the “Plate to Politics” program,
training women in sustainable agriculture to run for
office and take on larger change-agent roles. WFAN
will add its expertise to the leadership sessions at
WISA, including a Plate to Politics intensive. Plate to
Politics, created in collaboration between WFAN, MOSES,
and Vote Run Lead and today has a permanent home at WFAN.

Workshop Lineup

With an expert lineup of workshop sessions, four
day-long intensives, keynote speakers, exhibitors and more,
WISA offers attendees a deep dive into a variety of top-
ics related to women in sustainable agriculture, from
farming-specific knowledge to business pragmatics to
advocacy and activism. “We are really excited about the workshop
content and the presenters we have lined up,” said Stephanie
Coffman, MOSES presentation coordinator. “The
presenters come from a variety of backgrounds and
offering diverse perspectives and experiences.”

In addition to workshops, the conference will also
offer “meet-up” sessions—smaller breakouts on specific
topics that enable attendees to engage more with each
other and presenters. The conference also will include
demonstrations on equipment maintenance and
soil testing. Participants can browse exhibit booths
featuring local resources and the MOSES bookstore
on Thursday and Friday. And, participants can get to
know each other better through 3-minute presentations
during lunch where women can share who they are and
what they do in the world of sustainable agriculture.

The WISA Conference will kick-off Thursday,
Oct. 17 with four intensives that offer time and space
to focus on topics and encourage deeper learning and
experiences. These include bus tours to related
businesses. The four sessions will be on resilience
and managing the stressors of farming, women rais-
ing meat, urban agriculture, and the WFAN Plate to Politics on women's leadership.

Farmer Forum

North Central SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research
Education) will host a Farmer Forum at the
WISA Conference. The Farmer Forum brings various
SARE grantees together to share and present their
research, demonstration, and education projects that
promote profitable practices that are good for the envi-
ronment and community. The projects highlighted in
the Farmer Forum presentations are funded by grants from
SARE, a USDA-funded program that supports
and promotes sustainable farming and ranching
by offering competitive grants and educational
opportunities. “This National Women in Sustainable Agriculture
Conference is an ideal Farmer Forum venue as it
brings together farmers to share challenging issues
and solutions that can then be helpful to other farm-
ers,” explained Beth Nelson of North Central SARE,
which covers a 12-state region in the Midwest. “The
projects showcased at workshops at this conference
are a great example of how people, in this case women,
come together to creatively and collaboratively solve a problem and share information that add up to a stron-
ger future for sustainable agriculture.”

Sessions highlighting SARE speakers will be identi-
fied as Farmer Forum specific workshops throughout
the WISA program. A meet-up will offer opportunity
to learn more about SARE granting opportunities and
talk to grant recipients.

One such Farmer Forum workshop will be on
“How to Launch a Value-Added Bakery Business from Your Farm Kitchen,” featuring a NCR SARE Farmer
Rancher project where a team of Wisconsin women
farmers developed a toolkit with recipes and resources
to help farmers add a baking business out of their
donut and breakfast joints and homes. Today, Stone's
cottage food business has a network of supporters.

The WISA Conference will offer numerous ses-
sions for female farmers and their businesses. One
receives specifically on using one’s farm-grown
produce in baked goods such as pumpkin or zucchini
to create value-added products that showcase farm
produce and meet moisture-level guidelines to qualify as “non-hazardous” to be legally sold from home
kitchens.

“I’m looking forward to sharing our project with
other women as selling baked goods can be a natural
diversification fit for women like myself who both love
to farm and bake,” said Dela Ends, who runs a bed &
breakfast as part of her operation, Scotch Hill Farm
and Innisfree Farmstay. “The spirit of our baking
project and the SARE Farmer Forum strongly reflects back the goal of the WISA Conference that
women in sustainable agriculture work so collabora-
tively together and realize we are all stronger by shar-
ing our learnings and insights. After all the challenges
we faced and overcame in court to finally make home
baking legal in Wisconsin, I want to help every single
baker I can have a successful home-baking enterprise.”

WISA Conference is funded in part by a USDA-RMA grant.

New study to recommend improvements to crop insurance for organic growers

By Mike Morris, National Center for Appropriate Technology

Limited crop insurance options have historically
put organic farms at a disadvantage: reducing their
ability to access loans and survive disasters and also
discouraging conventional growers who would other-
wise want to transition to organic production.

The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) is about to release the results of a five-year
research project called “Is Organic Farming Risky?” Funded by the Organic Agriculture Research &
Education Initiative of USDA’s National Institute of Food & Agriculture, the study asked whether and how
a lack of high quality crop insurance is limiting the growth of organic farming in the United States.
Research included national surveys of organic growers and crop insurance agents. The project team included
representatives from MOSES and other experts from around the country.

The project’s main accomplishment was find-
ing actual evidence to correct misconceptions and
answer questions about the insurance needs of organic
centists wanted an Organic 101 training. We also noticed
a tendency to think about organic farming as a single
practice instead of an integrated system of practices
that work together and are adapted to the farm’s
situation. On the flipside, organic farmers and advocates
have their own misconceptions. People don’t understand
how hard it is to create insurance policies that work for
organic producers. It’s not easy to write rules, set pre-
mium levels, and make the numbers work, especially
given the limited data on organic crops. The USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) has made huge
strides in the past few years, and coverage options have
gotten a lot better.

A prime example of this improvement is Whole-
Farm Revenue Protection insurance, which has been available since 2015. MOSES has done a great job
educating farmers about WFRP, so most readers know
that it allows you to insure any crop at its full value,
including high-value organic crops. A single policy
provides revenue protection for an entire farm. And
crop diversification is rewarded with lower premiums.

This has been a great option for lots of organic farmers,
but not all. In the report, we make several suggestions
for improvement.

Ok, so is organic farming risky? My short answer
would be that it’s not as risky as a lot of people think.
But really, it depends on how you look at risk.
Insurance companies tend to look at one farm and
one growing season at a time. But if you take a broader
view, there’s no question that organic farming is inher-
ently risk-reducing. Over the years, organic farms not
only become more resilient, but also improve water
quality, reduce runoff and pesticide usage, sequester
carbon, and so on. All of these benefits reduce health
and climate-related risks for surrounding communi-
ties and the general public.

The report, Is Organic Farming Risky? Improving Crop Insurance for Organic Farms, will be available in
the early fall on NCAT’s ATTRA website (www.attra.
cat).

Mike Morris, Ph.D., is a regional director at the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT). He has been
the project leader for the USDA-RMA-funded research on the risks of organic farming.

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**Growing Organic Grains**

**By Jody Padgham**

"Farming, like lots of things, is a balance of theory and reality. This year is a good lesson in reality," claimed Harold Wilken, north-central Illinois organic farmer, at a recent OGRAIN field day highlighting his diverse organic field crop operation.

Of 2,900 acres usually planted at Janie’s Farm Organics outside of Danforth, Illinois, 900 were too wet to plant in 2019. Farmers can talk about and make plans based on theory, Wilken noted, but must adapt and deal with the reality like throws at them. "We can have grandiose plans, but Mother Nature always has the last word." Wilken, who farms with his son, Ross, and nephew, Tim Vaske, relies on diversity in both the field and marketing to adapt to reality.

While acres of corn and soybeans tend to be the norm in Illinois, coming into Iroquois County about 60 miles south of Chicago, fields start to look a little different. Here the farmers of Janie’s Farm Organics show some influence. Fields of attractive tossing heads of hard or soft red winter wheat alternate with new plantings of specialty Shumee soybeans, open-pollinated flint corn, Ruby Red popcorn for milling, and thick cover crops of red clover. Each field has a planned multi-crop and multi-year rotation, tweaked as needed in response to the year’s weather pattern.

Transitioning his first organic land in 2002, Wilken is now known in the area as the farmer willing to manage conventional land through an organic transition. Farmers come to him, asking to have their conventional acres taken over.

"We start by planting cover crops, which make a huge difference in regenerating conventionally managed soil," Wilken said. Not long into organic management, the roots, worms, manure, and microbes start working together. "With our class 2-3 heavy, wet, clay soils, a plow down of 6-8" red clover will put a lot of good residue into the soil, put a lot of nitrogen back in." Wilken and his neighboring farmers are pleased by the improved soil structure and nutrient- and water-holding capacity organic management will bring. Wilken also stands by rotations. Sticking to a solid corn rotation is essential to keeping weed, insect, and disease problems at bay, he explained.

"We use a grass-legume-grass-legume rotation to avoid conventional ag pitfalls," he explained. "If we stray from our rotation, we might see weed or disease problems." One typical rotation on Janie’s Farm might be one year of cover crop, fall-planted wheat, then corn. Or, soybeans, or another food-grade dry bean followed by wheat, and for the specialty Japanese market, creates troubles as well. They’ll need a lot of cleaning to sort out the discolored beans to reach quality standards.

"Food-grade is not a haphazard crop," Wilken cautioned. "The requirements are very stringent and hard to meet." On-farm storage and drying capacity are needed to be ready to sell "when the opportunity hits." Wilken shared that growing food-grade wheat makes it a challenge to use any rye species for cover crops. "The rye is a good crop before soybeans in a rotation, but the buyers of food-grade don’t want any volunteer rye mixed into the wheat grain. We can’t guarantee that if it’s in the rotation," he cautioned.

### Market Opportunities

While dedicated to the soil-building qualities of the farm’s diverse crops, Wilken was led to many of the specific crops he grows through opportunities in the market. Through one of his many connections, he learned that bakers in Chicago were looking for locally produced wheat and corn. One inspiration has been the Grand Prairie Grain Guild (look for them on Facebook), a coalition of farmers, millers, bakers, and consumers started in 2014 with help from University of Illinois Extension. Comfortable looking outside the typical box, Wilken's philosophy of "We want to grow what consumers, our customers are demanding," moved him forward. The needs of these bakers and chefs helped him to success growing a number of wheat varieties, from hard red winter wheat to soft white winter wheat and hard red spring wheat.

Wilken has developed relationships with researchers and breeders from the Midwest and beyond with interest in creating locally adapted varieties. Olden, heirloom genetics are being crossed with modern wheat varieties to create a new gene pool. Field trials and in-field selection create improved varieties with old flavors and improved vigor and yield that do well under organic management. This year at Janie’s Farm several varieties of wheat are being trialed, as well as five types of rye and open-pollinated corn. Warthog is a high-protein wheat popular with bakers for cookies and sweets, while Glenis wheat makes delightful bread, he shared.

### Food-Grade Production Challenges

Growing food-grade grains takes a specific dedication to management both in and after the field, Wilken said. Fusarium head blight (scab) is a problem in some of the wheat fields this year, causing a reduction in yield. Organic fungicides are an option, but expensive and offering mixed results—"the exact timing needed to succeed is tough to me, I haven’t seen success" in using the products, Wilken said. He plans to manage the situation by harvesting, color sorting (the infected kernels are pink) and using a fanning mill to separate out the discolored beans to reach quality standards. "We might not make it to food grade, at least we’ll get some crop."

Fusarium in food-grade soybeans, especially those grown for the specialty Japanese market, creates troubles as well. They’ll need a lot of cleaning to sort out the discolored beans to reach quality standards. "Food-grade is not a haphazard crop," Wilken cautioned. "The requirements are very stringent and hard to meet." On-farm storage and drying capacity are needed to be ready to sell "when the opportunity hits." Wilken shared that growing food-grade wheat makes it a challenge to use any rye species for cover crops. "The rye is a good crop before soybeans in a rotation, but the buyers of food-grade don’t want any volunteer rye mixed into the wheat grain. We can’t guarantee that if it’s in the rotation," he cautioned.

### Milling Grains

Serving the growing demand for locally produced grains, it was a logical step for Wilken and his farm partners to develop a milling operation. His commitment to discovering grain products the bakers, brewer, and distillers desired led him to explore what it would take to put up a mill. The first plan was to build a mill on the home farm property, but the $1.6 million price tag and limited space soon cooled that idea. Further exploration led to the purchase of a 15,000-square-foot warehouse with a 70x70 ft. heated cement floor in the small town of Ashkum, only 3 miles north of the farm.

Ross Wilken did the research and plant design that led to the opening of the mill in 2017. Housing two, Danish-sourced, custom-built mills with 3-foot horizontal grinding stones, the mill has a capacity of producing 1,000 pounds of flour per hour. The self-contained vacuum-based mills emit very little dust and are supported by sifters with three screens and a bagger. A mixer allows the production of mixed-variety combination flours. Integral grain cleaning equipment was bought from an old mill just 3 miles down the road.

Mill manager Jill Brockman Cummings clearly enjoys creating quality milled grains for her local customers. "Milling is an art as well as a science," she claimed. While conventional, mass-produced flours are extremely uniform in protein and moisture, the grains run through Janie’s Mill are alive and variable. "We produce a different flour than you can generally find in stores. Ours uses a whole grain with living enzymes, with bran and germ. They have nutrients..."
on labeling options, and seek public comments on a proposed rule within two years. In addition, the law prohibits any state from developing their own mandatory GMO labeling law, which had the immediate effect of preventing Vermont’s law from being implemented.

On May 4, 2018, after the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) received and reviewed over 112,000 responses to 30 questions it posted to the public and industry for input, AMS posted a proposed rule for final comment. The final rule was then released and published in the Federal Register Dec. 21, 2018. The implementation date for voluntary compliance of the rule is Jan. 1, 2020, but for small entities, the compliance date has been extended to Jan. 1, 2021. Mandatory compliance for all regulated entities begins Jan. 1, 2022.

One major aspect of the new rule is that it essentially redefines the term that has been commonly used to describe genetically modified organisms, from GMO to “bioengineered” or “BE.” The rule defines bioengineered food as “A food that contains genetic material that has been modified through in vitro recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid (rDNA) techniques and for which the modification could not otherwise be obtained through conventional breeding or found in nature.” In essence, the rule only covers what has been commonly described as transgenic modifications, or when DNA from one organism is introduced into a different organism such as a soybean to give it new attributes like herbicide resistance. This would mean that CRISPR or other new gene editing techniques that do not introduce DNA from one organism to another would not need to disclose that the food is “bioengineered.”

**List of Mandatory Crops**

The rule also created a list of bioengineered foods that require mandatory disclosure as “bioengineered” unless testing of the food confirms the absence of modified genetic material, or, the food has undergone a refinement process that makes the modified genetic material in the food undetectable, or, the food is certified as organic under the National Organic Program. The list of foods requiring disclosure includes alfalfa, apple (Artic® varieties), canola, corn, cotton, eggplant (BARI Br Began varieties), papaya (ring spot virus-resistant varieties), pineapple (pink flesh varieties), salmon (AquaAdvantage®), soybean, squash (summer), and sugar beet.

**Refined Ingredients**

One of the more controversial aspects of this new law is that it will not require the labeling of highly-refined ingredients produced from GMO crops, such as oils or sugars, as long as no modified genetic material is detectable in the final food. This is quite different than the current understanding of what would be considered a GMO food or ingredient based upon the rules of the Non-GMO Project or other third-party certifiers. The Non-GMO Project requires that for a food or ingredient to be considered non-GMO, the original crop that the ingredient is derived from must also be non-GMO and verified as such to be 99.1 percent free of genetically modified organisms, and meet or beat the 0.9 percent tolerance threshold. Under the Non-GMO Project’s rules, soybean crushers and oil refiners needed to use non-GMO soybeans to produce a non-GMO soybean oil. Under the new USDA regulation, soybean oil from a GMO soybean will not need to be labeled as “BE” or “Bioengineered” (GMO) because there is no presence of modified DNA in the oil.

**Higher Thresholds for Inadvertent Contamination**

Another aspect of the new rule that is not aligned with current U.S. food industry practices is the higher allowable threshold of up to 5.0 percent inadvertent or technically unavoidable BE presence. Currently, the Non-GMO Project and other third-party certifiers require that inadvertent contamination of a non-GMO product be no higher than 0.9 percent. This wide variance in tolerance levels is certain to create some issues for buyers, but at the same time, according to the USDA, the 5.0 percent threshold aligns the new U.S. rule with a number of the U.S.’s major trading partners such as Canada, Indonesia, and Japan.

**Organic Exemption**

Products certified by the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) as organic are exempted from the rule as organic production does not allow the use of any genetically modified seeds, inputs, or ingredients in products labeled organic. As such, the organic label is sufficient for a marketer to make claims about the absence of bioengineering in the food without the need for additional testing or certification.

**Reactions, Expectations**

Upon release of the final rule, many industry and consumer watchdog groups came out strongly against the regulation.

“Specifically, we are deeply disappointed that the final rule does not clearly require the disclosure of all genetically engineered ingredients including highly refined sugars and oils, and new GMO techniques like CRISPR and RNAi,” said Gary Hirshberg, Chairman of Stonyfield Farms and who chaired the Just Label campaign that brought together companies and groups that were asking for mandatory labeling of foods that contain GMOs. In addition, Hirshberg noted that the rule fails to require that foods be disclosed using terms that consumers understand, like ‘genetically engineered’ or ‘GMO.’

With the new rule requiring mandatory disclosure of bioengineered ingredients, many food companies will now be facing critical decisions regarding whether or not to see this as an opportunity to educate the consuming public about their use and support of genetic engineering of food, or remove all GMO ingredients from their products in order to avoid using the new “Bioengineered” or “Derived from Bioengineering” labels. The other, but more costly option, is to source organic ingredients or products. And while the implementation of this new law is less than half a year away, it appears that many food processors have yet to begin taking action to understand how consumers are likely to react to the new food label or decide if they should consider changing some of their ingredient sources.

“The companies that are waging off the need to do anything about this rule at this time are to be shorted for the future,” said Todd Napolitano with Mérieux NutriSciences, one of the leading global food testing and certification companies. “Food products that companies produce are signs of their greater corporate culture,” Napolitano explained. “Companies can endeavor themselves to consumers by rolling out products that reflect their consciousness about health, or not. From our vantage point, we see that the race is on for organic certification.”

**Impact on Farmers**

For farmers, this new regulation is likely to produce both opportunities and challenges. Will the regulation push more companies to move to non-GMO and organic crops and ingredients, or will the “Bioengineered” label work to make consumers more comfortable with, and eventually embrace, bio-engineering as a technology? Will companies currently sourcing non-GMO ingredients upgrade to organic in order to avoid the costs and hassle of testing inbound ingredients? Will companies that are already using higher thresholds for inadvertent contamination of GMOs reduce the costs and increase the supply of non-GMO ingredients? What will consumers prefer to see on their food labels, and how will they weigh this against the cost and value of the product?

“We may continue to see a market split between organic and non-GMO as many CPGs (consumer packaged goods) have been successful in creating demand for both products,” said Erin Heitkamp, Senior VP of Agriculture and Public Affairs at Pipeline Foods, a Minnesota-based supplier and processor of non-GMO and organic grains and ingredients. “But the new rule will now make it a bit more complicated, as will the regenerative initiatives and other issues that are coming to organic.”

Regardless of one’s opinion of the new regulation, it is quite likely to create an increase in demand for both non-GMO and organic crops and ingredients. The necessary three-year transition required to convert conventional farmland to organic, there should be two years where some of the crops, particularly canola, soybeans, corn, and alfalfa can gain a non-GMO premium on the way to organic certification.

Peter Golbitz is president of Agromeris, an advisory firm with a focus on organic, non-GMO and sustainable supply chains. His brother, Jacob, works in research and consulting spanning the global food and agribusiness supply chain.
Thriving farmer looks to mentorship to increase production, efficiency

By Tony Ends

It’s an incredibly soggy, late season for many growers across a broad region, but Lovefood Farm’s spring greens and herbs laid out in their farmers market stand look beautiful. It’s growers David and Abby Bachhuber’s 5th year in business in the Madison area of Wisconsin. Their Lovefood Farm’s herbs and vegetables are in four stores, three weekly markets, more than 100 subscribers’ shares and a dozen restaurants.

So why would David pay now to be mentored by another grower through MOSES?

“I’m 41, so I know I can learn a lot by experience,” said David, answering questions between conversations with customers at Madison’s Eastside farmers market. “But if I mentor with someone, I can cut years off the learning process. A single tip that increases production by one percent or increases efficiencies by 5 minutes on a task, over the course of my farming career, the $350 fee is negligible. Truth of it is, I’ve probably already made it back.” Since the $350 cost of the MOSES Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program also covers admission to the annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference at both the start and end of the mentorship—a $600 value—the mentor program is a wise investment, he added.

David’s mentor through the MOSES program is Steve Pincus, who, with his wife, Beth Kazmar, operates Tipi Produce just south of Evansville, Wis. MOSES honored Steve and Beth as Organic Farmers of the Year in 2016—the 40th anniversary of their own growing operation.

“This is Steve’s third time to mentor a grower through the program, which aims to help build strong organic communities throughout the Midwest. MOSES makes mentorships available in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Learn more at mosesorganic.org/mentor-program.”

“Mentors help guide new organic farmers as they modify their operations to meet organic standards. Mentors share practical information about organic farming methods and USDA regulations. They offer insights that come from years of experience. “I’ve got to pass this on, and not just to folks doing it. I’ve got to pass this on, and not just to folks doing it,” Steve advised. “Arrange life so you can do that. Take advantage of the information that’s available now. Go to workshops and conferences.

“The current state of organics available to a person with a fresh start and ability to absorb information quickly in an area like Madison is that you can make it work. Interest is there; markets are there for support quickly in an area like Madison is that you can make it work. Interest is there; markets are there for support.”

Steve’s new mentees, the Bachhubers, worked very hard at professional jobs in Madison and transitioned from the work into farming. These incomes helped them capitalize their initial operation. They also shrewdly took advantage of an incubator project at the Farley Center, which shepherds young growers in the Dane County area of Madison into farming.

Through the farm incubator, aspiring farmers get support with land, tools, education, and marketing assistance in the county’s only farm incubator. All Steve, Beth, and their staff grow organic vegetables on 45 acres. To accomplish that work, Tipi Produce keeps a payroll of 25 people busy tending and harvesting fresh produce enough to pack more than 500 CSA subscription boxes. Equipment and storage techniques focusing on 15 crops, especially root crops and cabbage, keep Steve and Beth busy almost year-round with wholesale accounts, too.

“The best thing somebody who wants to do this can do is go to work on a successful farm, ask lots of questions, spend time there,” Steve advised. “Arrange life so you can do that. Take advantage of the information that’s available now. Go to workshops and conferences.

“The current state of organics available to a person with a fresh start and ability to absorb information quickly in an area like Madison is that you can make it work. Interest is there; markets are there for support local, high-quality food.”

Experiencing the scale and infrastructure necessary to meet such a market self-sufficiently can help a young grower more than visualize a personal vocational future. It can help him or her experience important survival skills in a changing climate.

“We have nine active tractors, three for cultivating, but mostly general purpose,” Steve said. “We’ve added skilled employees and trained them up. At one point this past week we had five tractors running at the same time.”

Heavy rain well into June delayed planting and transplanting all around the Midwest. Yet Steve’s farm equipment and a capable staff to use it helped Tipi Produce catch up the instant the weather broke.

“We filled up 8 acres with the transplanter, and did a lot of cultivating,” Steve said. “We started on a Thursday afternoon, worked Friday, Saturday and then the rest of the week. It only took part of the crew to do it. With the right equipment and the right people to operate it, you can get a lot done.”

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David Bachhuber (left) of Lovefood Farm near Stoughton, Wis., persuades shoppers to buy his organic greens at the Madison Eastside Farmers Market. Steve Pincus (right) prepares a field for carrots at Tipi Produce near Evansville, Wis. Bachhuber has signed up for the MOSES Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship to gain insights from Pincus.

Photos by Tony Ends

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TRANSITIONING TO ORGANIC?

To Farmer Mentorship on page 16
Green New Deal presents opportunity for farmers to help steer ag policy

By Katherine Paul

“No figure is more endearing and enduring in agriculture than the lonely plowman out there on the horizon who raises himself by his own bootstraps to financial success. Only problem is, there is no occupation more dependent on the cooperation of society and nature to achieve success than farming.”


Judging by the state of the U.S. farming industry, neither society nor nature is behaving kindly right now toward farmers. Terrestrial rains have ravaged millions of acres of Midwest farmland, hitting farmers at a time when farm bankruptcies are already at a 10-year high.

As for society, U.S. farmers operate in an industry dominated by a shrinking number of increasingly powerful agribusiness corporations that call the shots on everything from how much farmers have to pay for seeds, to what kinds of herbicides they have to use, to the contract terms they must agree to in order to conduct business.

How did big corporations come to have so much power over the lives of independent farmers? They did so by using their profits to employ high-paid lobbyists who make sure that ag policy laws are tipped in favor of agribusiness corporations, not family farmers.

Until recently, farmers hoping for better policy support have had to beg for scraps once every five years when Congress revisits the Farm Bill. With the Green New Deal, farmers have a unique opportunity to transform the U.S. industrial agriculture system by lobbying for policies that support farming practices that build soil health, produce healthier food, and regenerate natural systems—without the same time positioning farmers as climate-solution leaders while also improving their own chances for economic success.

To turn that opportunity into reality, farmers need to get involved. One way to do this is to join Farmers & Ranchers for a Green New Deal, a national bipartisan coalition that aims to ensure that agriculture policy is front and center in the climate conversation.

“The Farmers and Ranchers for a Green New Deal coalition offers food producers a chance to tell their stories, to speak their truths, to guide and influence legislation, and to work—collectively—toward a future where safe, fresh, and healthy food will be available for all,” said Sherri Dugger, one of the coalition’s co-chairs.

“Climate change impacts us all—whether we’re food producers or food consumers—and we must find ways to work together, to each take a seat at the table, and to find a solution to the many climate-related challenges we face,” said Dugger, who is also co-owner of Dugger Family Farms in Morristown, Indiana, executive director of Women in Food & Ag Network and a member of the Indiana Farmers Union. “The Farmers and Ranchers for a Green New Deal coalition offers our nation’s food producers the opportunity to lead this charge.”

Francis Thicke, who runs Radiance Dairy, a 236-acre grass-fed dairy farm in Iowa, seconds that sentiment. “The Green New Deal is a great vision for the future, but we as organic farmers need to become involved in championing the role that agriculture can play, so we can get regenerative organic farming incorporated into Green New Deal policies,” Thicke said. “Since we started farming in the upper Midwest, we have lost about half of the organic carbon content of our soils. We can reverse that through regenerative farming practices that mimic the ecological systems that created our soils.”

Green New Deal Explained

Let’s first talk about what the Green New Deal isn’t. It’s not a law. It’s not a bill. It’s not a policy.

So when critics say, “I don’t see how it helps farmers—the language pertaining to food and ag is too vague,” they miss the point. And when someone who identifies as a Republican or Libertarian or Independent automatically rejects the resolution simply because it was introduced in the House and Senate by Democrats, they miss the potential of the Green New Deal to jump-start transformational change in the food and farming sector.

The Green New Deal has already succeeded in forcing politicians, including 2020 presidential candidates, to address several intertwining and critical issues, including climate change, the economic deterioration of rural economies and the growing number of farms being forced out of business. To reject it because of partisan politics or “farting cows” is akin to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. (See www.organic-consumers.org/blog/farting-cows-factory-farms-and-climate-crisis-we-need-green-new-deal.)

What the Green New Deal is is a non-binding resolution, introduced in both the House and Senate on Feb. 7, 2019, by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), respectively. Non-binding resolutions are voted on, but not signed into law by the president. Many non-binding resolutions, such as the one passed in 2008 that apologized for America’s history of slavery, are merely symbolic.

In general, a non-binding resolution passed by Congress is viewed as a commitment by Congress to a general goal or set of goals. So far, the Green New Deal has been endorsed by 104 members of Congress, including most candidates vying for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination. The twin resolutions introduced by Ocasio-Cortez and Markey have not yet been voted on by the House or Senate. In March, the U.S. Senate did vote on and reject an identical but separate resolution, introduced by Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.). That vote, seen largely as a public relations stunt aimed at quelling the media attention and the building momentum behind the Green New Deal, had no real impact on the resolutions previously introduced, which are still subject to a vote in the future.

The Green New Deal resolution outlines an ambitious set of goals, including achieving net-zero emissions by 2030 and ending poverty and income inequality in the U.S. It’s described by its authors as a “10-year national mobilization” plan. Others describe it as an “umbrella term for a set of policies and programs that will rapidly decarbonize our economy, get all of us off of fossil fuels and work to stop the climate crisis in the next 10 to 12 years.” Modeled in part after Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal—a series of programs, public works projects, financial reforms and regulations enacted by then-President Roosevelt between 1933 and 1941 and credited with restoring prosperity in the U.S. following the Great Depression of the 1930s—the Green New Deal has also been called a “massive policy package” (though the policies have yet to be written) and a “framework.”

Farmers & Green New Deal

The Green New Deal specifically calls for “eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from the manufacturing, agricultural and other industries, including by investing in local-scale agriculture in communities

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GreenNewDeal next page
across the country.” It also calls for funding “massive investment in the drewdown of greenhouse gases.” And it calls for access to healthy food, and clean air and water for all Americans.

The Green New Deal also addresses one of the most critical issues facing independent family farms—corporate monopolies—calling for “ensuring a commercial environment where every business person is free from unfair competition and domination by domestic or international monopolies.” As Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-Vt.) and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), both competing for the Democratic Party’s nomination for president and both strong supporters of the Green New Deal, have recently pointed out, current agriculture policies give an unfair advantage to agribusiness corporations. And the failure to regulate mergers and acquisitions has only exacerbated that problem.

“Today a farmer can work hard, do everything right—even get great weather—and still not make it,” Sen. Warren said recently. “It’s not because farmers today are any less resilient, enterprising, or committed than their parents and grandparents were. It’s because bad decisions in Washington have consistently favored the interests of multinational corporations and big business lobbyists over the interests of family farmers.”

The coalition for Revitalizing Rural America (berniesanders.com/issues/revitalizing-rural-america) from Sen. Sanders echoes Warren’s call for leveling the playing field. “With the right support and policies, we can have rural communities that are thriving economically and ecologically,” he said. “The following policies will drive a transition in our agricultural system away from a consolidated, profit-driven industrial model to one that rebuilds and restores rural communities.”

The combination of the popularity of the Green New Deal (a recent poll suggests majorities of both communities, plus the increasingly dire warnings about the plight of America’s farms and rural communities, plus the increasingly dire warnings about the climate, and on how better agriculture policies can help solve multiple and intensifying crises. As independent family farmers, that’s something we can all sink our teeth into.”

To that end, Regeneration International, in collaboration with the Sunrise Movement, Organic Consumers Association and other organizations, recently launched the Farmers & Ranchers for a Green New Deal coalition to empower farmers and ranchers to take an active role in transforming U.S. food and ag policy.

Farmers & Ranchers for a Green New Deal is a bipartisan national coalition of rural and urban farmers and ranchers, and organizations that represent farmers and ranchers. Coalition members share a commitment to work together to address current agriculture policies that support organic, regenerative, agroecological, and biodiverse food production and land management practices.

The coalition was formed for the purpose of ensuring that farmers and ranchers—not just corporate agribusiness lobbyists—have a voice in future agriculture-related policy reforms that could be part of the Green New Deal. It aims to include and represent the interests of rural and urban farmers and ranchers working across all food production sectors—including vegetable and grain production, meat and dairy, and fiber—from all regions of the U.S. Coalition members will be invited to participate in any or all of these activities:

• Collaborate on and build support for legislation (including fair pricing, supply management and the end of corporate agribusiness’ stranglehold of U.S. farm policy) that supports farmers and ranchers engaged in or transitioning to regenerative practices.

• Participate in farm tours, Congressional hearings and/or Capitol Hill briefings aimed at educating members of Congress about the potential of regenerative agriculture to draw down and sequester carbon, and revitalize rural economies.

• Help educate consumers about the difference between good food and cheap food, and how regenerative farmers and ranchers can play a role in improving the quality of air, water, and soil.

• Identify and build support for a new USDA secretary of agriculture who will represent the interests of the coalition, not multinational agribusiness corporations.

To get involved, farmers, ranchers, and organizations should sign the letter to Congress online at us.netdonor.net/page/9832/petition/1. All letter signers will be consulted on policy questions and USDA secretary nominations, and will be invited to help in education and lobbying efforts.

The Green New Deal’s overarching goal is to solve the climate crisis via a just transition to a new economy, a transition that includes moving away from fossil fuels to renewable energy, and away from manufacturing and agriculture practices that spew climate-warming emissions and degrade soil, air, and water quality to those that reduce emissions, heal the environment and provide fair wages to workers, not just massive profits to corporations. These goals present farmers who are willing to roll up their sleeves and get involved with an unprecedented opportunity to rewrite farm policy in ways that will drastically improve their chances of economic success.

“The Green New Deal and the regenerative food, farming, land use, economic, social and energy policy calls that it calls for are the key elements in solving our life-or-death Climate Emergency, public health crisis, environmental crisis, economic crisis and the overall crisis of Democracy,” said Roni Cummins, co-founder of Regeneration International and Organic Consumers Association. “Building up the Farmers and Ranchers network for a Green New Deal is absolutely necessary if we are to gain mass public support and political power and implement a Green New Deal, not just for urban America, but for rural America as well.”

Farmers and ranchers have nothing to lose—and everything to gain—by pulling up their chairs and claiming their rightful place at the table where policies to meet the Green New Deal goals will be written.

Katherine Paul is the U.S. national director of the Organic Consumers Association.
Inside Organics — from page 3

and natural mineral fertilizers, relying on soil life to release crop-available nutrients. This guide explores the role of soil health and the soil food web, including practical guidelines for adapting soil-test-based nutrient recommendations (especially nitrogen) for organic systems.

Organic Practices for Climate Mitigation, Adaptation, and Carbon Sequestration

Farmers and ranchers have a major stake in curbing further climate change and enhancing the resilience of their operations to climate disruptions already underway. This particularly timely guide explores research related to the capacity of sustainable organic systems and practices to sequester soil carbon and minimize nitrous oxide and methane emissions, with advice on reducing an organic farm's carbon footprint.

Understanding and Managing Soil Biology for Soil Health & Crop Production

This guide examines the functions of the soil food web and provides research-based guidance on organic practices and NOP-approved inputs for improved soil food web function.

The response to these resources makes it clear that accessible science-backed information on best organic practices is in high demand. To date, the guidebooks have been downloaded over 16,000 times and the webinars have been viewed more than 6,000 times. The guidebooks are available to download free from ofrff.org, the webinars are on YouTube (search by title).

New Tools to Manage On-Farm Risk

Crop insurance programs can provide an important safety net. This year, OFRF also introduced two guidebooks and webinars created in cooperation with the USDA-Risk Management Agency to help organic and transitioning growers manage on-farm risk through crop insurance programs and sound soil health management.

Introduction to Crop Insurance for Organic and Transitioning Producers provides an overview of coverage types and record-keeping best practices, as well as what to know when working with crop insurance agents. Sample forms for record-keeping are also included.

Reducing Risk through Best Soil Health Management Practices in Organic Crop Production offers practical tools and research on best practices to build soil health and resilience to extreme weather conditions, such as drought and flooding.

Both of the guidebooks are available to download free from ofrff.org and the webinars can be viewed on YouTube (search by title).

OFRF puts farmers first—we do not charge an annual membership fee and all of our resources are available for free. Sign up for our newsletter at ofrff.org to get the latest news.

Vicki Lowell manages communications for the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF).

Ask a Specialist — from page 4

“How can I control weeds in my fields this wet year?”

Answer by Organic Specialist Carmen Fernholz

This spring and early summer of 2019 will no doubt be long remembered for the extreme wet and subsequent weed pressure challenges for organic grain and row crop farmers. Because we operate with limited options for fertility and weed management, our decisions need to be quite fluid from week to week.

The first tool to really pay close attention to is weather forecasting. Download one of the many apps available and watch it closely. There are many out there so investigate and then decide on one for its accuracy.

Another consideration: Plan ahead for manual labor to walk the crops especially the soybeans as weed pressure will be heavier in wet years.

Be prepared, if possible, to cut and harvest small grains as early as possible, especially if you have a full floor aeration bin for air-drying the grain. Harvesting small grains at 15% moisture is a good idea but will need the aeration capability.

If it happens that you were unable to get a field planted because of wet conditions, or you missed out on timely timely weeding (rotary hoeing is not very effective in wet soils) or cultivating, and weeds won out, don’t plan to manage weeds with multiple tillage passes. Use cover crops, especially large leafed, fast growing species like purple top turnips or tillage radish after August 1. Peas are always an excellent choice because they are a legume. Weeds do make a good cover crop so consider mowing them a time or two to keep them from setting seed ahead of a late summer tillage followed by a planted cover crop. And check with your local FSA office about crops that can be harvested or grazed on prevented planting acres maybe even as early as September 1.

The bottom line on managing weeds in less-than-ideal conditions is twofold. Instead of a fallow seeded you want something growing in the field. It is important to remember that soil microbes need to be fed with plant roots not to mention the risk of severe soil erosion if a field isn’t planted.

Finally, be in touch with your crop insurance agent early on. Unfavorable weather conditions causing crop loss due to weed pressure from prevented timely practices is a very legitimate reason for filing a claim. Try to make the decision early so if you need to destroy the crop you can do so before the weeds set seed. Crop adjusters should understand the logic especially in an organic system. I have experienced this scenario several times myself.

I have purposely not talked about specific pieces of equipment and how to use them as this can get quite challenging and space would not allow a good explanation. So if you have specific questions about specific equipment or anything else that I may not have talked about here, please feel free to be in touch with me through email or through the Organic Answer Line (888-90-MOSES).

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414-386-3795
Organic farmers access conservation programs to steward their land

By Caleb Langworthy

With over 1,300 certified farms in Wisconsin, the state is second in the nation for the number of organic operations. The state’s organic farms are as diverse as Wisconsin agriculture; each farm has unique factors that influence management of the operation. To address natural resource concerns on their land, some of these farmers seek help from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS provides on-the-ground technical and financial support for diverse practices that can benefit the farm operation, address environmental concerns, and support continued stewardship.

Doran and Mariann Holm of Holm Boys Dairy in Elk Mound, Wis., have worked with NRCS since they purchased their farm 20 years ago.

“They helped us utilize all of the farm,” Doran said. “We have a great working relationship.” Their local NRCS office partnered with the Holms soon after they purchased their farm to improve soil health and pasture productivity by providing financial assistance when the farm installed a perimeter fence on the farm, interspersed pastures, and added on an erosion-control project behind their barn. The Holms have been very happy to work with their local conservationists.

“They are hard-working people who are proactive working with producers,” Doran added. “When they were working behind the barn to control erosion, Tammy was out here every day to make sure the project was done correctly.”

The Holms also worked with NRCS on a Grazing Management Conservation Activity Plan (CAP 110). The system designed for them helped improve forage across the farm and their ability to rotationally graze with just one person. “They have been great to work with,” Mariann explained. “Being organic, we have a common goal of improving the soil health on our farm.”

Tim Servais of Hamburg Hills Dairy also worked with NRCS to install fencing on his farm near Stoddard, in addition to installing cattle lanes and access roads.

“We’re so glad we went organic,” said Servais, who ships milk to Organic Valley. “The cattle are less stressed and are able to graze. My dad worked with NRCS, and I kept on following through on those conservation efforts.” He explained. Servais grows corn, corn silage, and hay on farm and worked with his local conservationist to install contour strips to prevent erosion in his fields.

“We recently marked out a couple hundred acres of contour strips at Hamburg Hills,” Servais said. “We’ve modified some of the existing contour strip widths and made them a bit wider and more uniform.” Servais also has used the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to finance cover crops.

“I use cover crops, like winter rye, to combat erosion and help with weed suppression, since we farm organically,” he explained.

Mark Doudlah also tapped EQIP for cover crops. Doudlah has transitioned over 1,700 acres to organic production and attributes his success to the use of multi-species cover crops.

“The really cool part is how NRCS has actually helped and allowed us to do conservation practices, like cover crops,” he said. “Had we not made that connection of cover crops and organic practices with the help of NRCS, we wouldn’t be here today. Organic is all about cover crops for me.” Utilizing the EQIP program, Doudlah was able to plant cereal rye on all of his transitional acres.

“We planted cereal rye on all our corn acres. I knew I needed to transition to organic, but am farming one-third highly erodible land,” he explained. “After learning about crimped cereal rye, I thought we could do it.”

To help other farmers who are considering rye in their rotation, Doudlah offered this advice: “Getting cereal rye in timely in the fall right after harvest is key. The cereal rye provides a nice thick mat, which armors the soil from further erosion the rest of the year, conserves the moisture and feeds the biology a slow feed of carbon long-term. The root system of the rye is what typically feeds the soybean that year. The biomass above ground feeds the soil as it decomposes.”

Doudlah said he found NRCS to be a good partner in the switch to organic production. “Transitioning 1,750 acres has been a tremendous undertaking and a steep learning curve,” he said. “In the transition years, you are using organic inputs and getting conventional prices. So financial and technical assistance from NRCS through EQIP and CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) can help. Fundamentally, I believe in organics, so we are all in.”

Conserving water resources was the goal of John Stauner when he bought James Lake Farms and began to transition 65 acres of cranberry marsh and 1,540 support acres to organic. He worked closely with an NRCS Resource Conservationist under a contribution agreement with the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, which completed an assessment of the operation’s current irrigation system and developed an irrigation management plan. That plan included recommendations for run times to provide adequate moisture for the crop. Stauner also worked with NRCS to upgrade the irrigation system on the farm.

“This marsh was the first in Wisconsin to have a solid set irrigation system in the 1950s—the same irrigation system that was here when we first purchased the farm back in 2006,” Stauner explained. “It was in serious need of rehabilitation.” Working with his resource conservationist and utilizing the EQIP program, he was able to update his system to a high-efficiency sprinkler system and replace 6,800 feet of undersized, leaky above-ground irrigation with buried pipeline. “The upgraded systems, with the help of NRCS, saves us a lot of water usage,” he added. “It also enables us to get more uniformity on the cranberry bed when we do irrigate.”

Many organic farmers have found that their farms are good candidates for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), a program that works to incentivize enhancements on farms to enhance their stewardship. Servais of Hamburg Hills found CSP helpful, enrolling both his pasture and cropland into a program that coincides well with national organic standards. The Holms found that CSP enhancements were easy to accomplish, marking fence lines for wildlife and retrofitting their stock tank to provide a wildlife escape.

Doudlah is using the CSP program to install over 60 acres in pollinator habitat on his field borders to act as the buffer required for organic production.

“The yearly CSP payments help protect pollinators and also helped us invest in the right equipment to plant cover crops successfully on our farm,” Doudlah explained. “It allowed us to plan and save for five years to get the tools for this to work.”

NRCS works with a broad spectrum of farming operations and landowners across Wisconsin providing technical and financial assistance to maintain and improve the natural resources of the area. Doran Holm added that the NRCS has “practical programs with hard-working people willing to do conservation work with us.” A quick phone call to your local USDA Service Center can be the best way to see how your farm can benefit from NRCS programs. To find the nearest center, see offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app.

Caleb Langworthy is a MOSES Organic Specialist working with the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service to educate agents on organic production practices.
Growing Organic Grains — from page 7

that our bodies can digest and utilize.” Both the miller and the bakers must adapt to these differences and respond to the living variations in the grains and the flours.

While embracing the differences of their grains, Wilken and Brockman Cummings also respect the need for consistency and high quality in product expectations; they ran practice batches of milled grain for several months before officially starting product sales. They now sell both wholesale and retail packages of dozens of grains in various forms, including cornmeal, polenta, grits, spelt, buckwheat, hard and soft wheat, rye and more. Bakers have told them that they find the flours noticeably different and really enjoy baking with them.

Words of Wisdom

Wilken is clearly an innovative and forward thinker, shown in the wisdom he passes on from his experiences. “There have been lots of good opportunities passed up because there was a risk, and people are not willing to look at it. Be looking for the next opportunity. When it presents itself, study it well. Don’t reject it right off until you really look into it and see where it might take you,” he advised.

Wilken points out that five years ago he wasn’t even thinking of owning a mill, and now here he is, successfully growing a wide diversity of grains, and serving needs of bakers, brewers and distillers, as well as consumers, in his local region. “As things change, as local markets expand, get involved. There are more restaurants, more food stores, more bakers and brewers looking for what we raise. You might as well take advantage of it as anybody.”

Looking from the outside, it is obvious that Harold Wilken and his team have created an important partnership with the local market, playing an integral role in providing high-quality, nutritious, fresh, distinctive-tasting and consistent grain products to discerning consumers, while also creating a stable market and income for his multi-family operation. Janie’s Farm Organics is a great example of a successful intersection of theory and reality in rural Illinois.

Learn more at www.janiesfarm.com or www.themillatjaniesfarm.com.

About OGRAIN

OGRAIN (Organic Grain Resource and Information Network) is a collaborative effort of the UW-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, UW-Madison/UXWE Organic and Sustainable Cropping Systems lab, and MOSES, supported by a grant from the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. For more information on events and organic grain resources, visit ocrain.cals.wisc.edu.

Jody Padgham is an outreach specialist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison working with OGRAIN.

Take time to learn from farming peers at these upcoming field days

Organic Row Crops in South Dakota
Aug. 1, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. | Johnson Farm, Madison, SD
Tour by bus a 2.800-acre organic farm, showing organic methods for growing corn and soybeans. Learn about weed management and soil building strategies. MOSES sponsors this event, organized by Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society. Field day includes lunch.

In Her Boots: Success Strategies from the Soil Sisters
Aug. 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 by bus a 2,800-acre organic farm, showing organic methods for growing corn and soybeans. Learn about weed management and soil building strategies. MOSES sponsors this event, organized by Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society. Field day includes lunch.

Soil Sisters Weekend
August 2 – 4 | Southern Wisconsin
Take classes, save farm-fresh goodies, and tour women-owned farms during this jam-packed, award-winning culinary event celebrating rural life in the farming communities of southern central Wisconsin.

In Her Boots: Diversifying with Flowers, Pizza, and Summer Camps
Aug. 13, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. | Ladyfern 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 expand farm income. This MOSES In Her Boots workshop costs $25 and includes lunch.

Cultivating Resilience for a Changing Climate
Aug. 16, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. | Rossmann Family Farm | Harlan, Iowa
The Rossmanns, 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.

Add Unusual Fruits to Your Farm
Aug. 21, 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. | Blue Fruit Farm | Winona, Minn.
MOSES Organic Farmers of the Year, Jim Riddle and Joyce Ford, show 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.

Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day
Sept. 18 | Gwynen Hill Organic Farm | Waunakee, Wis.
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. MOSES sponsors this event, organized by The Land Connection.

NOTE: Tips from our field day on starting a micro-creamery are posted here: mosesorganic.org/farmstead-micro-creamery.
2020 MOSES Conference Workshop Planning Survey

Help us focus in on the workshop topics you’d like covered at the 2020 MOSES Organic Farming Conference. Voting runs through July 31, 2019. You may select up to 6 workshops per category. Take the survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/2020workshops or vote here and mail your completed survey to: MOSES, PO Box 339, Spring Valley, Wis., 54767.

**Field Crops**
- Industrial hemp
- Re-carbonizing row crop soil
- Row cropping in extreme weather patterns
- Weed indicators and control
- Interseeding, companion, and relay planting
- Food-grade small grains
- Organic no-till including crop termination
- Cover crops
- Emerging implement technology

**Livestock**
- Silvopasture
- Year-round watering systems for livestock
- Pastured broilers
- Pastured pork
- Managed grazing techniques
- Holistic small ruminant or cattle health
- Beef genetics and production
- Egg production
- Multi-species grazing and fencing
- Integrating crops/cover crops and livestock
- Low-stress livestock handling

**Market Gardening**
- Perennial fruit production for a market farm
- Deep winter vegetables
- Fruit tree grafting
- Companion vegetable planting
- Small-scale vegetable farming
- Berries in high tunnels
- Regionally adapted seeds
- Perennial polycultures
- Small farming tools and methods
- High tunnel vegetable production
- No-till organic vegetable production
- Food safety with composting and animal manure
- Weed control in perennial and long-season crops
- Small-scale vegetables
- Incorporating value-added
- Increasing efficiencies and good record keeping
- Pest control in organic apples
- CSA - Customer convenience/Customerization
- CSA - Start-up 101

**Soils**
- Understanding organic amendments and fertilizers
- Biochar production and use
- Compost science and utilization
- Tools to assess your soil
- On-farm composting
- Korean Natural Farming
- Reversing compaction
- Using plastic mulch or biodegradable plastic mulch
- Beginner Soil Science
- Interpreting soil tests
- Working with living soils
- Biologicals for better early crop growth
- Selecting cover crops for specific functions
- Mycoremediation of contaminated soils

**Business, Marketing, and Management**
- Farm financial management 101
- Marketing and selling for specialty wholesale
- Creating cash flow budgets
- Selling farm products online
- Social media marketing
- Creating a brand
- Land access for organic production
- Pricing your farm product
- Writing successful grant proposals
- Developing healthy farm partnerships & estate planning
- Employee management
- Employment law for farmers
- Economics of organic fruit production
- Strategies to protect your farm assets and manage taxes
- Farm business planning for disaster resilience

**Organic Certification & Labeling**
- Transition for commercial-scale farms
- Organic certification for veggies
- Writing an organic systems plan
- Crop rotation during transition
- The debate about hydroponics and aquaponics in organic
- Food safety/GAP/FSMA
- Regenerative organic labels
- Blockchain technology and organic integrity
- Organic international trade update
- Organic Consumer Trends

**Leadership, Justice, and Community Issues**
- A global view of food production
- Diversity and inclusion training (for ag. communities)
- Gleaning
- History of race in farming and farming systems
- Urban farming general
- Farm to School Programs
- Food sovereignty
- Indigenous food systems
- Family Farm Defenders
- Domestic fair trade
- Farming after the first 5 years - how to stay in

**Health & Homesteading**
- On-farm meat processing
- Farming with horses
- Wild foraging
- Mite combating, self-sustaining bee yard
- Sustainable/alternative building methods
- Healthcare solutions for the farmer
- Linking healthy soil, healthy food, and healthy people
- Indoor urban farming with a vertical living wall
- Beekeeping
- Agrotourism
- Re-purposing on the farm

**Specialty Crops**
- Growing mushrooms
- Herbs - medicinal or culinary
- Tree Crops
- Hybrid hazelnuts
- Garlic - production and business
- Hemp production - CBD or Fiber
- Growing hops organically
- Saffron Production

**Farming Systems**
- Small farm infrastructure hacks, how to repurpose, reuse
- Farming outside the industrial model
- Regenerative practices
- High residue cultivation
- Creating pollinator habitat with native plants
- Water management (keylines, field contours)
Farmer Mentorship — from page 9

production is certified organic through Midwest Organic Services Association. An adjacent neighbor contributes an additional 10 acres that came into production and cover crops in 2010.

At the Farley Center, aspiring entrepreneurs farm on about 16 acres. The growers cultivate a variety of vegetables, fruits, flowers, and herbs, including many Latino and Asian specialty crops.

“I also hired a [consultant] for help with marketing and labels through a USDA value-added producer grant for planning,” David said. “It helped us study feasibility to grow from tiny to totally self-sufficient with raw vegetables and fresh herbs for grocery stores. We’re searching for that ideal gross that yields enough for a good quality of life, and balance out for risks. The first-year volume was $18,000, the second was $26,000, and it doubled every year after that. We’re in our 5th year now.”

Being able this year to grow crops on a single property, which they now own near Stoughton, the Bachhubers have already received the first visit from their mentor.

“We talked about soil fertility a lot and Steve’s strategies that have and have not worked over the years,” David said. “We talked about a super simple farm layout and workflow. We bought a 4-wheel drive tractor this year, and we talked a lot to Steve about toiling and implements.”

Steve recognizes that it is his growing and soil improvement skills of more than 40 years that can best help David aspire to higher volumes and scales of production. Wholesale crops that are his and Beth’s specialty are very different from those the Bachhubers grow.

“His focus on herbs and more perennials is quite different,” Steve explained. “We focus on a very small percentage of perennials and herbs. He’s packaging herbs with a nice label. We let stores do the merchandising.

“I’ve advised him to start mechanizing—cultivating, transplanting; what’s appropriate to now and to where he wants to be in the future and how long it’s going to take to get there. I’ve talked to him about how to plant cover crops, spread compost from cattle and leaves.”

For carrots, for instance, Steve staggers planting dates. For instance, “I’ve advised him to start mechanizing—cultivating, transplanting; what’s appropriate to now and to where he wants to be in the future and how long it’s going to take to get there. I’ve talked to him about how to plant cover crops, spread compost from cattle and leaves.”

“David’s got an impressive herb packaging and distribution system. I think he’s got a great sense of marketing by storage over the growing season and on into winter. Portions of an 8-acre cover crop of oats are worked up on a precise schedule, timed for the cover to break down, then plant to carrots with firm, reliable harvest dates. An 80-inch Maschio rotavator with a roller/soil firmer provides finishing. It crumbles the clods after Steve works up the ground initially with a chisel plow. The soil firmer sets depth for smooth transplanting or planting. With sections of carrots 50 feet wide and 600 feet long, such mechanization is vitally important. Steve keeps up with the latest in equipment for specialized uses through workshops and the trade show at the annual MOSES Conference. “The new European cultivating tools are amazing; Kult Kress, German-engineered fingerweeder, in particular, are very good,” he added.

On his farm mentoring visit, Steve also went over a soil test for the Bachhubers’ new place. They reflected together on the history of the land. Steve gave them ideas about where to go for soil organic amendments that Steve and Beth have found to be effective, as well as fair in price.

“David’s got an impressive herb packaging and distribution system. I think he’s got a great sense of business,” Steve said. “He’s got to get the farming down now if he wants to grow. He’ll need to spend time here gaining experience with equipment in the coming year.

For his part, David greatly appreciates his mentor’s deep experience.

“You can make money when you are small, direct marketing and doing most of the work yourself,” he said. “But then comes the ‘trough of despair,’ and you want to grow past this in as short a period of time as possible without falling apart.” Also known as the trough of sorrow or trough of disillusionment, it’s the crash most growers feel following that inflated initial enthusiasm or exhilarating expectations when a novice must wade through ineptitude, fatigue, and the mistakes that come with a startup business.

David recommends the MOSES mentoring program to other beginning growers, adding that it helps new farmers through the climb to profitability and productivity by minimizing the pain of punishing mistakes faced alone.

Tony Ends and his wife, Dena, have been growing for CSA and markets for years at Scotch Hill Farm near Madison.
Women in Sustainable Ag Conference

Registration opens Aug. 1 for the bi-annual Women in Sustainable Ag Conference, Oct. 17-19 at the InterContinental St. Paul Riverfront hotel. MOSES is organizing the event this year, which will include a “Plate to Politics” track spearheaded by the Women, Food and Ag Network (WFAN) in lieu of the annual WFAN conference. Workshops, demos, and networking opportunities will support women from all aspects of sustainable agriculture, providing essential information on leadership skills, empowerment and farm business success. See the agenda and more details at mosesorganic.org/wisa-conference.

FREE admission to the full conference will be offered at this year’s conference. Voting ends July 31.

MOSES Organic Farming Conference will be Feb. 27-29, 2020, in La Crosse, Wis. Early Bird registration opens Dec. 3. Don’t forget to vote for the workshop topics you’d like covered at MOSES 2020. Click the button on the main conference page: mosesorganic.org/conference. Or, mail in the form on page 15. Voting ends July 31.

Free Admission to MOSES 2020

It’s your last chance to enter the annual MOSES Conference photo contest with the grand prize of FREE admission to the full conference (a $300 value)! The winning photo will be featured on the cover of the MOSES 2020 Program. Every entrant will receive a free mug at the conference, and the winner also gets a conference T-shirt along with free admission. Submit scenic shots of your farm, crops, livestock, or equipment in action. See details and entry form at mosesorganic.org/photo-contest. Enter by Aug. 30, 2019.

MOSES 2019 Workshop Recordings

Multitask while you’re in the field this season by listening to audio recordings of MOSES Conference workshops. The MP3 downloads are just $5 each. The complete set of workshop recordings (on a USB drive) is only $75. This year, many presenters also shared their PowerPoint presentations, making the audio recordings even more informative. See related presentation slides at mosesorganic.org/conference/workshops. Order audio recordings at mosesorganic.net.

In Her Boots Podcast

The MOSES “In Her Boots” podcast currently features interviews with Alicia Razvi, Wooly Thyme Micro Farm—one of the young farmers featured in the Saturday keynote at the 2019 MOSES Conference. Recent guests include Margaret Krome, policy director for Michael Fields Agricultural Institute and interim coalition director for the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, and Iowa farmer Hannah Beckholl. New podcast episodes post every Friday. Subscribe on iTunes or Stitcher, or listen at mosesorganic.org/in-her-boots-podcast.

Organic Resource Directory

The Midwest Organic Resource Directory is available as a free, 80-page spiral-bound book or online as a PDF. The directory lists buyers, processors, suppliers, certification agencies, consultants, resource organizations, state and federal agencies, and university programs. See mosesorganic.org/organic-resource-directory or call 888-90-MOSES.

Support our Community of Farmers

With the severe impact this spring has had on farmers across the country, we didn’t think it was appropriate to send out our annual spring appeal letter since many of our loyal supporters are farmers themselves. Our focus instead has been on helping the farmers impacted through our Organic Answer Line, providing individualized advice to help them make it through this year. MOSES relies on individual donations to do this good work. If you’re able, please invest in organic farming through a donation today to MOSES at mosesorganic.org/donate or by mail at PO Box 339, Spring Valley, WI, 54767. Together, we can support farmers through these difficult times.

MOSES Specialist Team

Chuck Anderas recently joined the MOSES team as an organic specialist. Chuck has a degree in agricultural education from the University of Minnesota. Before joining MOSES in June, he worked at MOSA as a certification specialist and inspector. He has worked on small-scale organic fruit and vegetable farms in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Florida. He lives in Green Bay, Wis., with his wife and two young children. Their urban homestead includes chickens, a large garden, and a greenhouse.

Chuck leads our team of on-farm organic specialists who can answer your farming questions through the MOSES Organic Answer Line. This team includes Rachel Henderson, whose expertise is organic fruit and livestock; Kevin Mahalko, who is an organic dairyman and grazing expert; and Carmen Fernholtz, an organic grain farmer in western Minnesota who has been certified since 1975. Two additional specialists, Caleb Langworthy and Jennifer Nelson, work on specific projects for MOSES. Caleb is educating agents from the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service on organic production practices. Jennifer is working as a Land Access Navigator for our partnership with Renewing the Countryside.

To access the specialist team’s expertise, call or text the Organic Answer Line (888-90-MOSES) during business hours or submit your question online at mosesorganic.org/ask. You may also email chuck@mosesorganic.org.

Pollinator Habitat Establishment

Farmers may be interested in viewing one of the webinars MOSES has organized for agents from the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). “Establishing Pollinator Habitat on Organic Farms” will explain how to establish pollinator habitat on organic farms using NRCS programs. MOSES Organic Specialist Caleb Langworthy and Karin Jokela from the Xerces Society present this webinar Tuesday, July 30 at 10 a.m. The webinar will be recorded and available online at mosesorganic.org/nrcs. See this webpage for the complete list of webinars and on-farm trainings for NRCS agents.

Training for Ag Service Providers

The Organic Agronomy Training Series (OATS) is a collaboratively managed, science-based train-the-trainer program for agricultural professionals working with organic or transitioning producers in the U.S. Two-day trainings are offered across the country. OATS Central will be Aug. 14-15 at the Radisson Hotel in La Crosse, Wis. Cost is $85, and includes daytime meals and a bus tour to a certified organic farm. See oats.brownpapertickets.com.

Organic & Non-GMO Forum

Registration is open for the fifth annual Organic & Non-GMO Forum. Oct. 29-30, 2019, in Minneapolis. This event is the source for conventional food and ag businesses to learn about opportunities in the organic and non-GMO industry, and for those in the field to discuss its challenges and advantages. This event, which has grown three-fold, promises unique insights from leading experts, and unparalleled networking opportunities. Tickets are $799 but farmers in the MOSES community may use the following discounts: producers with more than 5,000 acres under organic or transitioning production use the code MOSES to reduce registration to $650; those with fewer than 5,000 acres use code ORGFARMER to reduce registration to $499.

Save the Date

The 31st Annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference will be Feb. 27-29, 2020, in La Crosse, Wis. Early Bird registration opens Dec. 3. Don’t forget to vote for the workshop topics you’d like covered at MOSES 2020. Click the button on the main conference page: mosesorganic.org/conference. Or, mail in the form on page 15. Voting ends July 31.

MOSES 2019 Workshop Recordings

Multitask while you’re in the field this season by listening to audio recordings of MOSES Conference workshops. The MP3 downloads are just $5 each. The complete set of workshop recordings (on a USB drive) is only $75. This year, many presenters also shared their PowerPoint presentations, making the audio recordings even more informative. See related presentation slides at mosesorganic.org/conference/workshops. Order audio recordings at mosesorganic.net.

In Her Boots Podcast

The MOSES “In Her Boots” podcast currently features interviews with Alicia Razvi, Wooly Thyme Micro Farm—one of the young farmers featured in the Saturday keynote at the 2019 MOSES Conference. Recent guests include Margaret Krome, policy director for Michael Fields Agricultural Institute and interim coalition director for the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, and Iowa farmer Hannah Beckholl. New podcast episodes post every Friday. Subscribe on iTunes or Stitcher, or listen at mosesorganic.org/in-her-boots-podcast.

Organic Resource Directory

The Midwest Organic Resource Directory is available as a free, 80-page spiral-bound book or online as a PDF. The directory lists buyers, processors, suppliers, certification agencies, consultants, resource organizations, state and federal agencies, and university programs. See mosesorganic.org/organic-resource-directory or call 888-90-MOSES.

Support our Community of Farmers

With the severe impact this spring has had on farmers across the country, we didn’t think it was appropriate to send out our annual spring appeal letter since many of our loyal supporters are farmers themselves. Our focus instead has been on helping the farmers impacted through our Organic Answer Line, providing individualized advice to help them make it through this year. MOSES relies on individual donations to do this good work. If you’re able, please invest in organic farming through a donation today to MOSES at mosesorganic.org/donate or by mail at PO Box 339, Spring Valley, WI, 54767. Together, we can support farmers through these difficult times.

MOSES Specialist Team

Chuck Anderas recently joined the MOSES team as an organic specialist. Chuck has a degree in agricultural education from the University of Minnesota. Before joining MOSES in June, he worked at MOSA as a certification specialist and inspector. He has worked on small-scale organic fruit and vegetable farms in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Florida. He lives in Green Bay, Wis., with his wife and two young children. Their urban homestead includes chickens, a large garden, and a greenhouse.

Chuck leads our team of on-farm organic specialists who can answer your farming questions through the MOSES Organic Answer Line. This team includes Rachel Henderson, whose expertise is organic fruit and livestock; Kevin Mahalko, who is an organic dairyman and grazing expert; and Carmen Fernholtz, an organic grain farmer in western Minnesota who has been certified since 1975. Two additional specialists, Caleb Langworthy and Jennifer Nelson, work on specific projects for MOSES. Caleb is educating agents from the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service on organic production practices. Jennifer is working as a Land Access Navigator for our partnership with Renewing the Countryside.

To access the specialist team’s expertise, call or text the Organic Answer Line (888-90-MOSES) during business hours or submit your question online at mosesorganic.org/ask. You may also email chuck@mosesorganic.org.

Pollinator Habitat Establishment

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Fall NOSB Meeting
The fall meeting of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) will take place Oct. 23-25, 2019, in Pittsburgh, Penn. This is the semiannual meeting for the board to hear comments from the public about substances used in organic production. Written comments and requests for a speaking time at the meeting must be received by Oct. 3. See www.ams.usda.gov/event/national-organic-standards-board-nosb-meeting-pittsburgh-pa.

Regenerative Farming Fellowship
The Regenerative Farming Fellowship is designed to support medium-scale farmers in the Northern Plains or Great Plains who are committed to adopting regenerative agricultural practices. Training and meetings will take place in winter/spring of 2019-2020 in N.Y., D.C., and Minn. Travel support and stipends are available. The fellowship is a partnership between the Stone Barns Center, National Young Farmers Coalition, and Arizona State University, with support from the General Mills Foundation. For more information, see www.stonebarnscen.org/rff.

Guide to Disaster Assistance
Farmers’ Legal Action Group (FLAG) recently published the first two volumes in its series of guides on the rules for federal disaster-assistance programs. Volume 1: Emergency Conservation Program and Volume 2: Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) are available free online as PDFs. See www.flaginc.org/hurricane.

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.

FEAST Local Foods Network
Aug. 31 is the Early Bird deadline to apply for a booth at the 6th Annual FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace, which takes place Dec. 6 and 7 in Rochester, Minn. The event presents the 2019 FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace is an opportunity to meet with buyers, network with peers, and introduce products to the general public. Organizers are looking for food businesses that utilize locally grown ingredients in their products and include features like gluten-free, grass-fed, and organic. See www.local-feast.org.

Illinois FarmLink
The new Northeast Illinois FarmLink helps farmers looking for land in 10 northeastern Illinois counties find land to rent. See www.illinoisfarmlink.org. The website also features information on topics related to finding farmland, leasing, negotiating, and more.

MOSES Land Link-Up also connects farmers with available farmland. See mosess.org/land-link-up for current listings from around the Midwest.

Grazing Field Map for South Dakota
South Dakota Soil Health Coalition has created a new online portal that connects livestock producers with people in the state who have cropland or forage available to graze. The website is a free, publicly accessible map, developed through a grant agreement with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. See sdgrazingexchange.com.

Organic vs. Conventional Farming Costs
A cost/return analysis published in Agronomy Journal compares production costs, yield and net returns for conventional versus organic crop rotations. The study revealed that the longest, most diversified organic crop rotation was the most financially secure cropping system, noting that lower yields for organic crops were offset by higher premiums. Five cropping systems were measured: three organic rotations, all tilled with a moldboard plow (2-year corn-soy, 3-year corn-soy-wheat, 6-year corn-soy-wheat-alfalfa), and two conventional rotations either chisel tilled, or no-till (3-year corn-soy-wheat). Overall production costs were about the same across the systems, but where the money was spent differed for conventional versus organic systems. Across the nine-year study, the six-year organic rotation accumulated the highest returns.

Perennial Farming Map
PerennialMap.org is an interactive, online map that features farms raising perennial crops (including pasture for livestock), supply and service providers, food markets, and research and education resources. Farmers and service providers can post their locations and services on the map to connect with others involved in perennial agriculture. Partners include the Savanna Institute, University of Wisconsin, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry, The Greenhorns, Agrarian Trust, and University of Illinois.

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For Sale: 10K solar system, walk-in cooler and fenced for organic egg facility. Randy Scutler@tznet.com 715-305-5670.

For Sale: USDA 5 row band-sprayer or 54ft high pressure. John 218-779-6737.

For Sale: Tomatoes-Farmer Selling 20 miles south of Madison. Responsibilities range from harvesting, washing, packing, weighing, and packaging vegetables to assistance with maintenance and upkeep. We’re looking for a great maintenance/field manager who needs someone reliable to help keep things in order. Looking for a motivated person, with a good attitude and solid/steady work ethic. Check us out at www.tomatomaunten.com or contact Chris at 608-712-1585 or chrisccovelli@gmail.com.

For Sale: Bulls For TLC Pinzgauer - Hollandale, WI is selling 2 Fullblood Fullpinzpinz Bull for $1,600.00 each. They were born May/June 2018 and will be registered. Pinzgauer are known for their fertility and exceptionally docile nature. They also would be a great addition to your herd for cross-breeding. Call or Text David at 608-574-0622.


For Sale: Certified Organic Roasted Corn. Feed test available on request. $2.00 per ton. 608-560-5066.


Lansing Farm Tours
July 22 | $ | Kids, Mitch
Michigan State University Farmer Field School is hosting a tour of 3 – 4 farms from the Capitol city’s urban core out to its rural surroundings. Call 616-887-7776 or email Katie at brandtk@mst.edu.

Supporting Farm Youth through Understanding and Intervention
July 22 | Free | 9 a.m. – Noon | Willmar, Minn.
Intended for teachers, school counselors, school administrators, 4-H leaders, FFA advisors, youth pastors, social workers, mental health professionals, health care professionals, and others who work with farm youth. Call 651-201-6012.

Safe Wisconsin Produce Field Day
July 22 | $ | Spooner, Wis.
Learn if your vegetable farm is ready to meet nationwide pro- ducers' safety regulatory standards and attend an open house view vegetable variety research plots. Call 608-234-4511.

Agtourism Farm Tour
July 23 & 24 | $ | Minneapolis, Minn.
Learn from operators and innovators in the agtourism industry at 13 different tour stops. www.agtourismfarmtour.com/register.

Supporting Farm Youth through Understanding and Intervention
July 25 | Free | 9 a.m. – Noon | Detroit Lakes, Minn.
Intended for teachers, school counselors, school administrators, 4-H leaders, FFA advisors, youth pastors, social workers, mental health professionals, health care professionals. Call 651-201-6012.

Grazing Management in Northern Climate Workshop
July 27 | $10 | Duluth, Minn.
Join SPA Livestock & Grazing Specialist Kent Solberg for a discussion on soil health in a northern climate. 844-922-5573 or email info@sla.mn.gov.

LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day: Getting Started with Permaculture and Regenerative Agriculture
July 28 | $10 | Spring Grove, Minn.
This field day will focus on permaculture practices and regen- erative agriculture at Nettle Valley Farm. Call 507-523-3366.

Midwest CRAFT: Using Hand Tools
July 31 | 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Roseville, Wis.
Learn how to use various hand tools: featuring paper pot transplanters, in-row hoed weeners, and other hand trans- planting tools. Call 815-389-8455.

Organic Row Crops in South Dakota
August 1 | 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Madison, S.D.
Tour Charlie Johnson’s large-scale organic farm. Call 715-778-5775 or go to mosesorganic.org/organic-field-days.

In Her Boots: Success Strategies from the Soil Sisters
August 2 | $25 | Broadhead, Wis.
Meet the Soil Sisters who run meat operations and take a de- tailed, behind-the-scenes farm tour of Firmer Family Farm. Call 715-778-5775 or go to mosesorganic.org/organic-field-days.

Soil Sisters Weekend
August 2 – 4 | Southern Wisconsin
Network with women farmers from some of the farming com- munities in southern Wisconsin. Call Lisa 608-329-7556.

LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day: Cutting Flower Farming
August 2 | 7 – 8 p.m. | Prairie Farm, Wis.
Learn more about how Maggie and Ben of Green Light Farm started their farming operation, their production, and how they market their product. Call 507-523-3366.

July 22 – 25 | $ | Dodgeville, Wis.
Learn about season extension at Green Earth Harvest. Call 815-389-8455.

Student Organic Seed Symposium
August 22 – 25 | $ | Dodgeville, Wis.
For scholarships, email symposium@organicseedsociety.org.

Dreaming of a Vetter World:
August 27 | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. | $ | Crystal Lake, Ill.
Screening with filmmaker Bonnie Hawthorne. 815-337-9502.

 UW Arlington Extension Organic Agriculture Research Field Day
August 29 | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Arlington, Wis.
Learn about organic research conducted at the University of Wisconsin, focus on organic no-till production. 612-868-1208.

Farm to Flavor
September 12 | 6:30 – 9 p.m. | $ | Madison
Dinner features dishes from several of Madison’s premier chefs using local, organic food. Email seedtokitchen@hort.wisc.edu to register.

Midwest CRAFT: Hemp Production in Illinois
September 13 | 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. | $ | Dixon, Ill.

Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day
September 18 | Free | 8 a.m. | Wadsworth, Ill.
See tools for precise weed control. Call 715-778-5775 or go to mosesorganic.org/organic-field-days.

Women Caring for the Land: Greenleaf Fireman’s Park
September 19 | 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. | Greenfield, 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.

Cottage food producer food safety training
September 25 | 8 – 8 p.m. | Duluth, Minn.
Training requirement of the Minnesota Department of Agri- culture to register as a cottage food producer. 612-624-1222.

Acidified Foods Training for Licensed Food Processors
October 1 & 2 | Free | St. Paul, Minn.
Training which will provide certification to supervisors of thermally processed acidified food facilities. Email Theresa at thlfitg@umn.edu.

Midwest CRAFT: Urban Ag
October 2 | 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. | $ | Chicago, Ill.
A tour and full day of discussion about urban farming, land access, and small-scale farming. Call 815-389-8455.

Midwest CRAFT: Fall Biodynamic Prep
October 5 | 1:30 p.m. – evening | Free | Elkhorn, Wis.
Experience hands-on learning and make biodynamic prepa- rations at Zinner Family Farm. Call 815-389-8455.

Women in Sustainable Ag Conference
October 17 – 19 | $ | St. Paul, Minn.
For women with roles in all aspects of sustainable agriculture, from farming to education to food-system activism. Call 715-778-5775 or go to mosesorganic.org/wia-conference.

Upper Midwest Seed Summit
October 17 & 18 | Free | Madison, Wis.
Regional seed leaders meet to learn, connect and identify opportunities to advance the regional organic seed system in the Upper Midwest. Contact Cat McCluskey at 360-472-0247.