Organic community debates check-off program
By Audrey Alwell

The 2014 Farm Bill has opened the door for the creation of an Organic Research and Promotion Program, a.k.a. an organic check-off. This check-off would create a pool of money to fund research as well as collective promotion of organic products—think "Organic: It's what's for dinner" or "Got Organic?"

For years, the organic community has been debating the merits and faults of an organic check-off. Both sides of the issue were explored in the Organic Broadcaster in January 2013 when Ed Mallby, Executive Director of the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NOPA), explained farmers’ concerns about an industry-wide program, and Melissa Hughes, General Counsel for Organic Valley, wrote about the need for uniform messaging on the benefits of organic. (Both articles are on the MOSES website at mosesorganic.org/farming/farming-topics/miscellaneous/organic-promotion.)

In her piece, Hughes referred to “technical fixes” that needed to happen before an organic check-off program could be created. The 2014 Farm Bill addressed those, clarifying that certified organic producers can choose to be exempt from non-organic commodity research programs by law; that the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) now is authorized to accept an application from the organic community for a research and promotion program; that the resulting USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Committee (AMS) can only fund research and promotion programs by law have been tied to a specific commodity—another “fix” that needed to happen before the USDA could consider an organic check-off. Each of these achievements, Hughes noted, required years of negotiation and advocacy from farmers and advocates.

Scale up vegetable production by growing better, not bigger
By Chris Blanchard

Scaling up to meet the demand for local food is all the rage these days, especially in the world of fresh produce. Local foods are showing up in places we never imagined 20 years ago, and farmers are getting pressure from all sides—publications like this one, conferences, Extension, and potential customers—to get bigger.

Most of the discussion around scaling up has to do with growing more vegetables by growing more acres of vegetables. But what if you just grew more vegetables by doing better with the acres you've got? Farming fewer acres leaves you room to grow your own soil fertility, and to improve weed control through the judicious use of cover crops and careful tillage—and doing better at growing at your current scale is a prerequisite for increasing the number of acres under production.

Increasing your vegetable yields has an amazing compounding effect. Harvesting produce requires intense labor inputs, so anything you can do to make that process more efficient will increase your productivity—and picking more vegetables in every foot of row makes everything more efficient! When I pick beans, I grab a handful of beans and pull them off the plant; in a low-yield crop, I might get four or six beans to a grab, but when things are really growing right in my fields, I can get 10 or 15 per handful, and every trip between the plant and bucket represents just that much more produce in that much less time.

On-farm conservation needed to boost beneficial pollinators
By Eric Lee-Mäder and Mace Vaughan

2014 has been a banner year for pollinators in the media and public policy. Almost daily, we look around amazed at the flood of news articles about bees: bee declines, bee-killing pesticides, the tenuous economics of commercial beekeeping, and countless other facets of our complex, intertwined relationship with pollinators.

Each of these stories elicits a call to action—including one really big call in June when President Obama directed more than a dozen federal agencies to greatly expand their pollinator conservation efforts.

Sadly, all this attention is justified. More and more research studies are showing pesticides’ devastating toll on bees. At the same time, we’re seeing a tidal wave of pollinator habitat loss in virtually every terrestrial landscape—including the conversion of around 9 million acres of grassland, like CRP fields, to row crop production since 2007. The pollinators themselves are sounding the alarm. We’re witnessing the rapidly accelerating and terrifying loss of some once-common bumblebee species and numerous butterflies, including the federally endangered Karner blue which seems to have disappeared completely last year in both Minnesota and Indiana. Wisconsin might hold the last viable population of this beautiful butterfly.

All of these factors make this a critical time for us to be working with dedicated and smart folks across the world on some remarkable pollinator conservation projects.

This is a moment in history when we really need every person possible to be conserving pollinators in the landscapes they manage.

Scale up vegetable production.
As an additional bonus, totes and buckets fill up more quickly, reducing the number of times they have to be moved down the row—and totes that fill up more quickly get in the shade faster, and trucks that fill up with totes of vegetables more quickly get back to the packing house and into the cooler more quickly. Suddenly, you’ve got not only more vegetables faster, but also a higher quality product as well.

To Organic Check-off on page 10
To Scale Up on page 6
To Organic Check-off on page 10
To Pollinator Conservation on page 14
The buckwheat is in full bloom on my farm, and the sight of it still excites me after first seeing it over 30 years ago on Martin Difflrey’s farm. The hum of many pollinators and the lush growth of the buckwheat reminds me of how important cover crops are, not just for the soil but for the whole farm ecosystem.

The MOSES organic specialists (Hariet, Joe, and Angie) have been busy bees organizing field days, answering questions from farmers, and planning workshops for the 2015 MOSES Organic Farming Conference. Our specialists are here to help you—call or email them with your questions about production or certification issues. If you didn’t get a chance to attend a field day, you can read highlights in this issue of the Organic Broadcaster. Our photo recap on page 12 includes a few “lessons learned” shared by our field day hosts. Many thanks to these farmers who hosted field days—we appreciate your willingness to share your experience and knowledge with other farmers.

We have one last field day of the season taking place Sept. 11 at Keith Wilson’s organic farm near Cuba City, Wis. This is one you’ll want to see if you’re curious about new methods for building soil fertility. Keith has taken cover cropping a step further, growing soybeans in a no-till field following rye that has been rolled to form a mulch. This builds soil while allowing the field to be used to grow another crop, including a variety of vegetable and grain crops. I encourage you to make the drive to see Keith’s fields and learn about his system. Registration information and driving directions are online at mosesorganic.org/events/organic-field-days/no-till. Or, call our office at 715-778-5775 and we’ll take care of registration for you.

Our staff is working hard on logistical improvements for the 2015 MOSES Conference, which will take place Feb. 26-28, 2015 in La Crosse, Wis. Workshop room size and audio/visual needs are at the top of this list. We are also creating a staggered schedule for workshops so they don’t end at once—this should ease congestion in hallways and the dining area. All these improvements should make the 2015 conference an even better educational and networking opportunity for you.

This issue of the Organic Broadcaster covers a range of topics from using tinctures for livestock health to sharing equipment to save money while scaling up. Don’t miss the recommendations from Eric Lee-Mäder and Mace Vaughan of the Xerces Society on creating a pollinator plan—that’s something every landowner should consider as pollinators face an uncertain future.

As summer winds down and the fall harvest picks up, be safe on your farms and remember to pause now and then to enjoy the beauty all around us.

-- Faye Jones, MOSES Executive Director
Organic farmers understand the benefits of building coalitions to nudge along local, state, regional and national policies that support organic agriculture. The organic community as a whole has been able to present a mostly positive picture to the greater public of the human health and environmental benefits of organic food and fiber provide. While the average consumer or legislator could not recite everything organic producers must do to meet the organic regulation and law, many have a basic understanding of what organic means and appreciate it as a choice. This could not have been achieved without organic farmers, processors, retailers, distributors, environmental groups, consumer groups, educational organizations, and policy advocacy groups working toward a common goal to grow the organic sector in the United States.

However, as the sector has grown, the voice of the organic farmer has become somewhat lost. There are regional and commodity-focused organic farmer groups working to educate their members and influence policy to encourage further growth. But there is no specific mechanism or network that lets these organic farmer groups interact or build on their successes. When legislators, regulatory agencies, or the media want to hear what organic farmers think about an issue, they have no source to turn to that could express a unified view.

It was this dilemma that stimulated representatives from a variety of organic-focused groups to meet in June. (See open letter from the meeting.) Although we did not make any specific decisions, we did recognize that there currently is no authentic national organic farmer voice nor any way to share information among all of these geographically diverse organizations. We all agreed that the current coalition of organizations working toward a common goal does not dominate all the rest.

The conversation is just beginning, and there is a desire to know how the rest of the organic farmers in the country feel about this concept. It was not the goal of the exploratory meeting to design a fully developed program, network or organization but it did discuss many ideas and concepts. This group wants to hear from organic farmers, processors, retailers, distributors and other constituencies who care about the future of the organic sector.

To give just a taste of some of the discussion from this first day-long meeting, we can report that there was agreement on the need for a national organic farmer and rancher voice controlled by organic farmers and ranchers; that initially the organization would be open to organizations or caucuses within organizations that represent certified organic farmers and exempted organic farmers; that in order to be successful it must represent a large percentage (hopefully the vast majority) of organic farmers across the country and that there be some type of balanced regional representation at the national level so that one group or region of the country does not dominate all the rest.

Numerous times during our meeting we referred back to the National Organic Action Plan (NOAP), which was published in January 2010. (See www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/ noap) We saw this nationally developed document as a model to bring together organic farmers and ranchers and others from around the U.S. to find common ground from which to build a unified vision. While some of the short- and long-term actions listed in the plan have been implemented, there is still a long way to go.

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To Inside Organics on page 19

Organic farmers need unified ‘voice’ as organic sector grows

By Harriet Behar

Building an effective political voice for organic farmers and ranchers throughout the U.S. was the subject of a multi-organization mid-June 2014 meeting in Washington D.C. Representatives from organic farming and supporting associations from the East, Midwest, Northwest, South, Upper Great Plains and mountain regions representing approximately 1/3 of organic farmers nationwide attended this exploratory meeting.

While many organic farmers belong to organizations and trade associations that already engage in valuable policy—focused coalitions or they do this work on their own, this group came to the conclusion that there is a need for a national organization representing organic farmers and ranchers. They believe it is time for a network or organization or federation that would bring together existing organic farmer organizations and farmer caucuses within existing organic or sustainable agricultural organizations that already exist with a more general mission. This organization would be a forum where organic farmers can debate and formulate national organic farm policy reflecting the needs and concerns of organic farmers plus represent organic farmer’s interests and concerns in broader issues where the voice of the organic farmer was needed or desired.

A national organic farmer forum would build upon the successes of individual farmers and the organizations to which they already belong to influence decision making as well as inform the other sectors of the organic community of the unique issues faced by the organic farmer community. A national organization would assist with educating farmers on the complexities of policy issues that directly affect their operations so they can develop informed opinions, as well creating a forum where they, as their own group, could share how current and proposed agricultural policy and market circumstances are affecting their own operations. This would be the basis for developing their own policy which could be applied to regional and national concerns where appropriate. Having a place where the media, elected officials, and regulatory agencies can find the unilted voice of the organic farming community would provide the clout and influence that organic farmers lack at this time.

Unique areas of farmer and rancher concern were clearly expressed such as farm gate profitability, organically certified seed, crop insurance, transition to organic, farm and crop financing, regulatory burdens and consistent, rigorous and practical implementation of our organic law to protect the value of our organic label. To give just a taste of some of the discussion from this first day-long meeting, we can report that there was agreement on the need for a national organic farmer and rancher voice controlled by organic farmers and ranchers; that initially the organization would be open to organizations or caucuses within organizations that represent certified organic farmers and exempted organic farmers; that in order to be successful it must represent a large percentage (hopefully the vast majority) of organic farmers across the country and that there be some type of balanced regional representation at the national level so that one group or region of the country does not dominate all the rest.

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This conversation is just beginning, and there is a desire to know how the rest of the organic farmers in the country feel about this concept. It was not the goal of the exploratory meeting to design a fully developed program, network or organization but it did discuss many ideas and concepts. This group wants to hear from as many farmers or farmer-based organizations as possible from all over the country and to know if they would be willing to participate in the development of a confederation, network or organization to provide for a strong and effective farmer voice in the U.S. Please contact Harriet Behar, MOSES Organic Specialist, 608-872-2164 or harriet@mosesorganic.org with your comments/ideas/suggestions and to get more information on how to be part of the larger discussion of forming an organization.

Present at the June meeting in Washington D.C.:

Hamit Behar – MOSES, NOC, OTA – (WI)
John Bobbe – OFARM, OTA – (WI)
Lynn Cooady – OCC, NOC – (RI)
Dave Colson – MOFGA, NOC – (ME)
Steve Gilman – NOFA Interstate, NOC – (Conn/NY)
Elizabeth Henderson – NOFA NY, NOC, DFTA, AJP, OTA – (NY)
Irene Hunt – OEFFA, NOC – (OH)
Liana Hoods – NOC, NOFA NY – (NY)
Ed Matthey – NODPA, MODPA, NOC – (MN)
Camille Miller – NOFA NJ, NOC – (NJ)
Bob Quinn – MOA, NPSAS, OTA – (MT)
Ted Quadaay – MOFGA, NOC – (ME)
Barbara Rose – NOFA NJ, NOC – (NJ)
Michael Sligh – RAFP, OFSA, NOC, DFTA, AJP – (NC)

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“I read a news story recently that said organic produce isn’t pesticide-free. Please explain this so I have information to share with my customers.”

Answer by Joe Pedretti


“The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) establishes the maximum allowed levels of pesticides, or EPA tolerances, which may be present on foods. Although most EPA-registered pesticides are prohibited in organic production, there can be inadvertent or indirect contact from neighboring conventional farms or shared handling facilities. As long as the operator hasn’t directly applied prohibited pesticides and has documented efforts to minimize exposure to them, the USDA organic regulations allow residues of prohibited pesticides up to 5 percent of the EPA tolerance.

In 2010, the National Organic Program worked with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service’s Science and Technology Program to evaluate pesticide residues on USDA organic produce. The study involved 571 domestic and foreign fruit and vegetable samples bearing the USDA organic seal, which were obtained from retail establishments across the United States. Using sensitive equipment, an accredited Government laboratory tested each sample for approximately 200 pesticides typically used in conventional crop production.

Of these 571 samples, 96 percent were compliant with USDA organic regulations. This means that the produce either had no detected residues, 50 percent or less of residues less than 5 percent of the EPA tolerance (39 percent). Four percent of the tested samples contained residues above 5 percent of the EPA tolerance and were in violation of the USDA organic regulations. The findings suggest that some of the samples in violation were mislabeled conventional products, while others were organic products that hadn’t been adequately protected from prohibited pesticides. The National Organic Program is working with certifying agents to provide additional scrutiny in these areas.”

In short, there are three reasons for contamination: pollution, mishandling, or mislabeling.

We live in a polluted world, where water, rain, soil and the air can contain pesticide residues. Organic farmers do everything they can to minimize this contamination, and largely succeed according to the testing, but it is not possible to completely avoid the ubiquitous contamination of our shared environment. This is why organic does not claim to be “pesticide-free.”

Mishandling in the distribution and retail process can lead to pesticide residues on organic produce. Most stores handle both conventional and organic produce. Warehouses, crates, store bins, boxes, displays and human hands can all be contaminated with pesticide residue. If organic food is not handled correctly, it can pick up pesticide residues from conventional produce. This is called commingling, which organic farmers and processors take great care to prevent, but once the product is sold and distributed, the handling is beyond their control.

Mislabeing or violation of the rules, either by accident or on purpose, is very rare—only 4 percent of samples tested exceeded EPA tolerance. As with all human endeavors though, it is possible that some organic produce was either mislabeled (conventional mislabeled as organic), or organic produce that was treated with pesticides against the USDA National Organic Standards.

“I am washing roots, squash and other vegetables for short- and long-term storage. Is there something I should add to my water to help them keep?”

Answer by Harriet Behar

There are common wash water additives used for washing organic vegetables. One is food-grade hydrogen peroxide, 35%. This should be diluted down to 3% in the wash water. That would be one part 35% H2O2 to 11 parts water. This product is corrosive, so handle it at full strength only when wearing long rubber gloves and goggles. If you have a perforated floor in your bin with a fan, you can have the fan running on low as you load the bin to incorporate the DE into the first few feet. It is also a good idea to lift up the floor and clean underneath before loading it with this year’s crop.

If you can, run the grain through a spiral screen air cleaner before storage (pictured below). This will lessen the chaff, screenings, and insect load in your stored grain. It also dries grain better for higher quality long-term storage. Running your grain through the same cleaner before loading to your buyer would also be appreciated, since DE can be abrasive to their cleaning equipment. Shipping clean grain also means there will be less dockage from your payment due to screenings and foreign matter.

Make sure you leave head space at the top of the bin to allow for moisture to escape. If you are concerned about vomitoxin or other issues, test before you put it in the bin. The grain will not improve in quality when in storage, so knowing what you have at the start will help you make decisions on where to sell your crop and how long to store it.

“I am harvesting organic grain and want to make sure it retains quality in storage. What can I do to prevent insect infestations?”

Answer by Harriet Behar

Many organic producers use diatomaceous earth, commonly called DE, to control insect infestations in organic grain storage. This fossilized remains of an ancient hard shell algae is used in many food-grade products, including as a filtration aid for liquids and in toothpaste. The fine powder kills a wide variety of insects or larvae by absorbing lipids from their exoskeletons’ waxy outer layer, causing them to dehydrate. Due to these characteristics, anyone handling this product should use a tight-fitting filter or respirator over their nose and mouth and goggles over their eyes to prevent health problems. Long sleeves, pants and gloves would be a good idea, too.

Typically, DE is scattered on the floor of the grain bin and periodically added to the grain during. Add 1 cup of DE to every 50 bushels or so of grain for good coverage. If you have a perforated floor in your bin with a fan, you can have the fan running on low as you load the bin to incorporate the DE into the first few feet. It is also a good idea to lift up the floor and clean underneath before loading it with this year’s crop.

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Another product is peroxycetic acid, with Tsunami, a brand name for this blended product. Use this at dilution noted in the instructions. It is advisable that a final clean water rinse be done after the use of hydrogen peroxide or peroxycetic acid before putting into long-term storage.

Let the root vegetables mostly dry before putting into storage. Some producers put these in large food-grade plastic bags in open-top totes to retain some moisture. Periodically check to make sure the roots are not too moist and getting moldy. For very long storage, you want some moisture so the roots do not dry out. Packing root vegetables in clean, slightly damp sand also works.

Chlorine also can be used, but only in fairly low concentrations. The organic regulations require that the effluent after washing contain no more than 4 PPM chlorine, which is the level allowed in drinking water. You can have your concentrations higher when washing the produce, but the chlorine must basically all be consumed and volatilized by the action the chlorine has on the bacteria and organic matter in the water. This makes the use of chlorine on a small-scale farm more problematic, since you will need to test the waste water to verify you meet the regulatory requirements.

“Identity Preserved Ingredients”

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Study examines how sharing equipment can help farmers scale up

By Laura Miller, Georgianne Artz, and Linda Naeve

Scenario:
Last year you planted three acres of aronia berry shrubs, which are starting to bear fruit. In five years, each bush could produce 15-20 pounds of berries (about 7 tons an acre), and harvesting the crop by hand will take nearly 35 people working a total of two weeks.

Should you invest in the additional labor or the specialized equipment? And how does this decision impact your bottom line?

Fruit and vegetable growers throughout the Midwest are familiar with the labor vs. machinery trade-off. More interest and demand for local food are causing growers to consider expanding their operations by increasing the number of acres in production, but this requires either more labor or the use of labor-saving equipment. Complicating the issue is the greater diversity of equipment required for fruit and vegetable crops, limited access to the equipment as well as experience in its operation.

Exactly how Midwestern fruit and vegetable producers are scaling up—what works, what doesn't work, and the array of available options—has been the focus of Georgeanne Artz’ research at Iowa State University (ISU) the past several years. An assistant professor in the Department of Economics, Artz has led two projects funded by research grants from the Leopold Department of Economics, Artz has led two projects funded by research grants from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

A 2012 project looked at how six Iowa fruit and vegetable farms expanded their operations. Artz and a graduate student, Nicholas Pates, interviewed growers to understand how size, diversification, marketing strategies, and production methods impact machinery adoption, and how they viewed the inevitable trade-offs that come with these decisions. All growers had at least eight years of experience in fruit and vegetable production and their operations had undergone some expansion.

In 2013, Artz launched a second project, just completed, that looked at machinery-sharing agreements. She worked with Linda Naeve from ISU Value Added Agriculture Extension to interview five groups of farmers who had entered into trial sharing agreements, including aronia berry growers in southwest Iowa. Other groups shared an ECO weeder, a mulch layer, a garlic separator, and a multipurpose toolbar attachment for the back of a tractor.

“There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy when it comes to sharing equipment,” Artz said. “We want to give people the idea that there’s not a ‘right way,’ but a lot of different ways to share equipment. You have to figure out what works for you.”

Example: Berry Harvester
“Anyone who has har vested berry bushes quickly realizes that hand-picking is time-consuming and costly,” said Henry, who had been growing aronia berries since 2005.

With seven acres of aronia berries to harvest, Henry was motivated to find a harvesting alternative to hand-picking on his farm. He approached three growers initially about the possibility of collectively purchasing an aronia berry harvester to machine-harvest their crop. Soon the group grew to eight growers with a total of 40 acres of aronia berry bushes planted. Of the eight, only three had plants of bearing age in 2013.

Artz and Naeve documented their journey as a case study for their 2013 Leopold Center project (individual identities and organizations were changed to protect privacy). They were able to follow them as they formalized their group (as a limited liability corporation) and rules of operation (called an operating agreement), explored equipment options (their $33,000 harvester is from a company in Poland), and completed their first harvest (about 10 acres on three farms).

“I think they resolved a lot of issues during their first year,” Artz said. “It helped that not all growers were in full production, so they could watch the process and learn from it.”

Since some of the farms are certified organic, the group purchased a high-pressure washer to help with cleanout after each use. They also purchased a portable scale that travels with the harvester since members pay a fee based on the number of pounds of harvested berries.

Three people were needed to operate the harvester in the field—a tractor driver and two on the harvest platform working with the picked berries. Each grower provided two laborers and the LLC hired the tractor driver. Each farm was required to have its own farm liability insurance in place at the time of harvest.

Artz and Naeve also were able to collect details on how labor, time and expenditure are influenced by the sharing scheme. Group members logged more than 100 hours of time related to the shared use of their harvester, including nearly 30 hours to transport the
Getting bigger won’t make you a better farmer, so you need to have some key vegetable skills down before you decide to scale up. In my visits to beginning farmers, I have seen again and again that many farms don’t capitalize on the opportun­ities to maximize their vegetable production because they are failing on two key elements of horticulture: weed control and irrigation.

Weeds
Most organic farmers will tell you that weeds are the most difficult challenge in organic farming—especially with vegetable crops. Unlike field corn and soybeans that grow an inch the day they pop out of the ground, vegetables have small seeds and many germinate rather slowly. When they come up, they come up slowly, and many of them aren’t amenable to hill­ing—weed control in vegetables is simply not easy!

In vegetables, weed control pays dividends in more than just absolute yield from reduced competition. By reducing competition for nutri­ents like nitrogen, top-notch weed control can reduce the time spent working the product to remove yellow cotyledons and dead leaves. And if you’ve ever spent time harvesting beans in a thistled patch, trying to separate mesclun from lambsquarters, or pick broccoli from a field of pigweed gone to seed, you know that not only do the weeds slow you down, they make the work downright unpleasant.

If you have any plans at all to mechanize your vegetable harvest—whether with a hand­held salad harvester from Johnny’s Selected Seeds or a beet combine pulled by your tractor—good weed control is an absolute must so your machine won’t get plugged up with weeds, or you spend all of your time separating out the weeds from your salad leaves.

The return on investment for weed control tools depends on precise spacing of plants and seed­lings. Developing tools and techniques to ensure that rows are straight and precisely x inches apart can be a critical element of using tools efficiently.

Water
Fresh vegetables are made of water—and lots of it. Potatoes come in at about 79% water, while a whopping 96% of a cucumber is made of H2O. If you aren’t getting enough water on your vegetables, you aren’t maximizing your yields. The old rule of thumb of an inch of water a week—that’s 27,154 gallons of water per acre—is just that: a rule of thumb. Watering needs vary according to heat, humidity, and stage of growth. Unlike grain yields may require much more than an inch of water per week. (Some growers I know apply three or more inches of water per week during critical growth phases.)

For irrigation to work right, you need to have the right application methods for your circum­stances, and know how to use them in order to maximize your yields. It doesn’t do any good to apply water unevenly, or to have a system that you can’t operate efficiently because parts don’t match, or you don’t have a pressure gauge to know that the system is operating correctly. And, of course, you have to have an adequate supply of water that’s safe to apply to vegetables.

With the weather getting weirder, it’s not enough just to have access to irrigation. Droughts will always mean extra work, but it’s a matter of degrees. When I talked to farmers around the Midwest during the drought of 2012, some were at wit’s end, while others were simply tired. The one key difference? Adequate irriga­tion infrastructure and access to water. Two growers I interviewed that year actually said it was their best, most profitable year ever because the lack of rain made weed control and timely plantings easy, and they had the water they needed to produce great crops.

Irrigation doesn’t just provide water to keep crops growing. Having adequate water and the equipment you need to apply it can allow you to pre-germinate weed seeds to create a stale seed bed, quickly germinate crops so that they get a jump on the weeds, and even affect harvest timing so that you can manage succession crops better.

Equipment
Whether it’s a wheel hoe or a fancy cultivating tractor, you need the right equipment to get the job done. You also need it to work. Equipment that isn’t stressed doesn’t wear out and break, so you need to have equipment that’s sized right for the work you need it to do.

Equipment maintenance is an important key to farm sanity, because when equipment works, you spend time doing the jobs that need to be done right when they need to be done. Vegetable farming is all about timing—if your flame weeder doesn’t work the day before your carrots come up, you’ll never get the chance to flame weed that crop again. Or, if your wheel hoe has a flat tire so you can’t weed on Friday afternoon after the crops for market are in, you’ll face even bigger weedy when you get home exhausted from market on Saturday afternoon.

Check the oil every day when you start the tractor, and grease the Zerks on your equipment often—they’re there for a reason. And keep your hoes sharp—“dull as a hoe” is an idiom that should cause a shiver to run down the spine of any market farmer.

For weed control especially, you need tools that work under a variety of conditions and at all stages of weed and plant growth. With the drought in 2012, we were able to weed whenever we wanted; but in the miserably wet early summer of 2013, we had to take advantage of whatever opportunities presented themselves. If you use hand tools, that means you need tools to slice the tiny weeds right next to 2-day-old carrots, and you need tools that can slice a tall woody pigweed. On the cultivating tractor, you need tools that can work baked and crusty soils as well as light and loamy soils; you need tools that keep the soil from burying seeds or getting into the leaves of the lettuce; and you need other tools that throw the dirt into the row to bury the weeds that are growing there.

Perhaps most importantly, having two ways to get every job done ensures that when break­downs happen—and they will happen, even with brand new equipment—they don’t turn into crises. The second way may not be as fast or as fun, but it can keep critical tasks on schedule.

Chris Blanchard (www.flyingratubagaworks.com) is an educator and consultant for farms and nonprofits. As owner-operator of Rock Spring Farm, Chris raised 20 acres of vegetables and herbs, marketed through a 200-member CSA, food stores, and farmers’ markets.

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WE SPEAK ORGANIC
Travel through ‘Carbon Country’ to see climate-friendly eco-practices

By Lindsay Rebhan

In 2010, I came across a fascinating map called the Carbon Ranch that detailed every possible activity for sequestering carbon in the landscape. The map had no boundaries and included urban, rural, wild and cultivated lands. The map was made by Courtney White, author and co-founder of the Quivira Coalition, a non-profit dedicated to building bridges between ranchers, conservationists, public land managers, scientists and others around the idea of land health regeneration. This past year, the book Grass, Soil, Hope was released, documenting White’s travels along the Carbon Country map to seek out real-world regenerative agriculture practices.

Regenerative agriculture refers to a diverse set of practices that engages the restorative capacity of the earth. These practices create new soil and revitalize ecosystem services that contribute to the health of the landscape and the creatures living on it. Grass, Soil, Hope investigates the range of carbon sequestering activities that give promise to Earth’s future—stories of a hopeful future during these times of climate uncertainty and economic insecurity.

The seemingly obvious fact that plants pull carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and undisturbed soils hold carbon turn out to be some of the most powerful tools in our toolbox to fight global climate change. This book is a travelogue as the author seeks examples that soak up CO2 in soils, reduce energy use, sustainably intensify food production and increase water quality.

White begins with the premises that carbon is key, we don’t have to invent anything, solutions are mostly low tech and everyone has a role. His journey shows how—through improved ecosystem function, climate friendly livestock practices, conserving land and restoring degraded watershed—humans can facilitate large-scale removal of harmful greenhouse gases.

In Grass, Soil, Hope, White asks, “What can we do about the seemingly intractable challenges confronting all of humanity today, including climate change, global hunger, water scarcity, environmental stress, and economic instability?” His journey into Carbon Country leads us to the rest of the landscape and watershed.

In organic farming, soil health is understood to be a baseline of well-being; the science behind it is complex. In Grass, Soil, Hope, there is an in-depth explanation of the carbon cycle and soil evolution that will leave “soilists” ecstatic. White gives high praise for the “unsung hero” of soil, glomalin, a soil superglue. Its presence is an indicator of deep carbon soils—stable soils that harbor carbon for decades. This book is laden with regenerative farming examples that lead to rapid soil building techniques to a mob grazing operation with a herd (flock of sheep and herd of cattle) and alley cropping between solar panels. Some examples are doubling soil carbon content in less than 10 years.

White invites the reader to consider their “land literacy.” Reading the land is both an art and a skill set worth cultivating for deep health. The sweet spots of the landscape are where a small investment returns large carbon sinks. If we can identify the sweet spots, White writes, it is possible to heal landscapes quickly. He asks readers to see the land’s wounds; eroded areas, lifeless areas, or spots that are losing vitality that could be returned to health to bring life to the rest of the landscape and watershed.

We need more collaborations with agronomists and scientists to amplify carbon farming work. This book has added a carbon lens to my existing restoration paradigm. When I observe and act, I have Courtney White’s words in my head “It’s all carbon. Climate change is carbon, hunger is carbon, money is carbon, politics is carbon. land is carbon, we are carbon.” It supports operating out of a paradigm of abundance rather than scarcity. Abundant ecological systems are a path of prosperity.

Farmers, ranchers, land managers, scientists, ecologists and naturalists will find value in this book and will likely think twice before tilling and be mobilized to new carbon action. Grass and soil are a path to hope. “Carbon is part of our essence,” White writes. “Its story needs to be told—and heard. It is the story of our past, our present, and our future. It is our story. It is the story of grass. The story of green. The color of hope.”

Lindsay Rebhan works with Renewing the Countryside, a key partner on MOSES New Organic Stewards project.
Update on Corn Pollen Incompatibility
Breeding Projects
By Joe Pedretti

It has been known, at least since the 1950s, that popcorn cannot set seed if pollinated by yellow field corn. Another closely related plant called teosinte also shares this Ga1s pollen incompatibility gene.

In corn, the male flower, called the tassel, releases pollen, which is blown by the wind until it lands on a corn silk. The pollen then germinates on the silk and grows a tubule down to the ovary in the ear of corn where fertilization occurs. If the pollen tubule does not grow, no corn kernel is produced.

The Ga1s gene works by recognizing when incompatible pollen is trying to grow a pollen tubule down a corn silk. The corn plant sends out chemicals to inhibit this growth and prevent fertilization. This trait will help organic farmers produce corn with a greatly lowered GMO-contamination risk.

The PumaMaize gene system was first developed in the late 1990s by Tom Hoegemeier of Cerrado Natural Systems Group while exploring ways to preserve color purity in white corn. It was developed using traditional plant breeding techniques. Hoegemeier later created corn hybrids with the ability to resist cross fertilization by pollen from GM corn. In 2012 hybrids became available to the organic community through Blue River Hybrids which have proven an effective and productive alternative for farmers wanting to reduce their GMO-contamination risk.

The next step in breeding is to incorporate pollen incompatibility into open-pollinated varieties of field corn, which can in turn be used by regional plant breeders and farmers to create their own GMO-free varieties.

Frank Kutka, an independent corn breeder from North Dakota, has received funding from the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) to develop “Organic-Ready” open-pollinated corn with the Ga1s gametophytic incompatibility.

Despite some weather setbacks at his nursery, Frank Kutka, Ph.D., manages the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society’s Farm Breeding Club. He can be reached at dakotacornman@yahoo.com or 701-483-2348.

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Young farmers benefit from mentors’ experience

By Harriet Behar

Caleb and Lauren Langworthy have been on their own land for only a couple of years, and know that the ground work they do now will make their job easier in the future. One line they share to keep going on is especially monotonous—like removing old barbed wire—“is: ‘65-year-old me will thank ‘current me’ for doing this!” As participants in the 2014 MOSES Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program as well as the Land Stewardship Project Journeyperson Program, Caleb and Lauren are getting advice about both production and finances to help them build a strong foundation for a successful future in farming.

Kim Cassano and Rich Toebe of Catawba, Wis., are their MOSES mentors. They are helping Caleb and Lauren with a new enterprise on their farm: raising grass-fed, dual-use sheep (meat and wool). Caleb and Lauren have had experience with sheep while custom grazing on other farms in the past, and have always planned to add livestock to their organic vegetable business. They currently sell produce through a CSA, farmer’s market, and wholesale markets in West Central Wisconsin and the Twin Cities. They were accepted into the MOSES mentoring program a couple of months after their first 50 ewes arrived on the farm.

When pairing mentors and mentees for the program, MOSES looks for individuals who are geographically close, doing the same type of farming, and working on the same size farm, when possible. These challenging parameters sometimes mean that not every applicant can be assigned a mentor, or sometimes a mentor is asked to help mentees from more than one farm. Over the program’s seven-year history, we’ve found that having mentors and mentees within a couple hours’ drive of each other contributes greatly to the success of the yearlong mentoring relationship.

Caleb and Lauren farm outside Wheeler, Wis., about an hour and 45 minutes from Rich and Kim’s farm. They’ve already visited their mentor’s farm once, and had Rich and Kim to their place a handful of times. They also keep in touch through email and phone calls.

During one of the mentor visits, Caleb and Lauren discussed their plan to reconfigure the interior of their dairy barn to prepare it for the coming spring’s lambing season. Kim and Rich encouraged them to wait, stating that in their experience, it helped to have a few years of working with moveable systems. Then, they can put in something permanent once they have refined their system. The mentees took this to heart, and instead of building permanent wooden lambing pens, they purchased and modified metal hog panels. The lower cost of this option, in both dollars and labor, has proved to be a great solution. In fact, after this year’s experience, Caleb and Lauren are planning to try a different configuration next year, which would have been difficult and expensive if they had installed a more permanent setup.

Rich, who is the University of Wisconsin Rusk County Extension agent, is helping Lauren and Caleb establish a strong nutrition program for their small ruminants. He has been encouraging Caleb and Lauren to pursue detailed information concerning the nutritional needs of their flock at various stages of life—for example, nursing ewes have different needs than gestating ewes. Rich could see that the hay they had harvested might not meet the needs of their pregnant yearling flock. They had hay samples tested and plugged the results into a nutrition worksheet supplied by Rich. After he explained how to use the spreadsheet, Caleb and Lauren were able to use it themselves to balance the diet for their sheep throughout the different stages of gestation and lactation.

This first lambing season—a time of stress on any sheep farm—went quite well. Caleb and Lauren attribute much of this success to the good nutrition program they developed with Rich and Kim’s guidance. The program helped both ewes and lambs get through the birthing process with minimal problems. They plan to continue testing forage and tweaking the nutrition program accordingly in the hopes of repeating this year’s positive outcomes in future years.

Over the course of their mentorship, Caleb and Lauren have reached out to their mentors by email and phone calls to share numerous challenges. For example, they took photos of animals whose health was in question and emailed them to Kim and Rich. The mentors would call back with for advice on how to narrow the diagnosis, offer various options for treatment, and comforting reassurance when it was not a serious issue. As they’ve gone through the year together, Kim and Rich would offer insight into what to watch for in the weeks ahead. This helped Lauren and Caleb focus their awareness and gave them the opportunity to “brush up” as much as possible before encountering the major struggles of the season.

A prolapsed uterus led to a somewhat panicked early morning call that Kim handled graciously. She had previously talked Lauren through the steps that needed to be done to save a ewe in this situation. Kim encouraged Lauren to have confidence in her ability to manage the situation, and checked back several times over the next few days on the status of the ewe and her lamb. It was just one of the many stories that ended well thanks to the collaboration of mentee and mentor. Kim said she felt gratified to pass on knowledge gained over many years of lambing. She is also sharing her knowledge of preventive healthcare, as well as cultural management and recognizing the early signs of illness so that organically approved remedies can be used successfully.

From the start of their interactions, Kim and Rich have provided information to allow Caleb...
funded research and promotion programs that “allow farmers and businesses to pool resources, set common goals, and make collective decisions about how to best develop new markets, strengthen current markets, and conduct important research and promotion activities,” explained Sam Jones-Ellard, AMS Public Affairs Specialist. He pointed out that AMS oversight ensures that the boards operate with “fairness, transparency and in compliance with the law,” adding that the agency is not involved in the development or selection of projects promoted by the check-off programs. Those decisions are made by each check-off program’s board, which is appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture—a fact that has raised concerns in the organic community. “Having served on the NOSB, I am very uncomfortable with the creation of a new government-appointed board to oversee how check-off dollars would be spent,” said organic farmer Jim Riddle, who co-owns Blue Fruit Farm in Minnesota. “Such boards become very political, and they quickly lose touch with the needs of producers,” NODPA’s Maltby shares Riddle’s concerns. “Quite simply, farmers and ranchers have a vision of how to use their check-off dollars that have a history of bad management,” Maltby wrote recently on NODPA’s O-Dairy comment board.

Bad management is one reason journalist Alan Batcha isn’t a fan of check-offs. In his keynote speech at the 2014 MOSES Organic Farming Conference he cautioned farmers, “If you’re going to do a check-off – do it right. Study the ones that are out there and don’t do that!” He restated his concerns about check-off programs in his July 10 Farm and Food File column, noting that there is “little independent evidence to suggest any of billions spent on check-offs in the last 25 years has had any material impact on the percentage and number of organic farmers.”

The OTA website (ota.com) outlines its view on the need for an organic research and promotion program, answers frequently asked questions, and points to www.unitedformoreorganic.org, a website that promotes an organic check-off as a collective way to fund both research and promotions.

Batcha said OTA has been reaching out to organic producers and handlers through town hall meetings, mailings, and phone calls in order to give the entire sector the chance to weigh in on the potential check-off program. Comments from those town hall meetings also are posted on the OTA website.

“We are hearing that many certificate holders are interested in the benefits of a check-off and are looking for more information about what it means to become a check-off holder,” Batcha explained. “We do not have all the details, most support the idea of a check-off, and think it would provide significant benefits to the organic sector.”

**Funding a Check-Off**

One factor that isn’t sitting well with farmers, though, is how a check-off would be funded. OTA recommends assessments that are “broad and shallow.” The vision is that if everyone pays a little, then everyone gets a big benefit.” That means every certificate holder along the supply chain—producers, handlers, brand manufacturers, co-packers, and importers—with gross annual sales in excess of $250,000 would pay into the check-off. The assessment would be based on one-tenth of 1 percent of net organic sales over $250,000.

Organic farmers like Riddle think mandatory assessments to fund an organic check-off will discourage farmers from getting certified or making the switch to organic production.

“Imposing a tax, additional to certification costs, on organic producers will add one more barrier to the adoption of organic farming,” Riddle said. “Clearly, we need much more money for organic research, but taxing organic producers and processors is not the best way to raise those funds.”

Rather than a check-off program, Riddle recommends that the government focus on a “full-blown organic transition strategy, with incentive payments and technical assistance to facilitate the shift from conventional to organic systems,” he explained. “Such programs have been implemented successfully throughout Europe, where the percentage and number of organic farmers are much higher than in the U.S.”

Riddle outlined other alternatives to an industry-wide organic check-off when he posted on the O-Dairy comment board in July. His suggestions include funding a check-off through consumers at the retail end, and a voluntary check-off system, not controlled by USDA.

On that same comment board, Chuck Benbrook of Washington State University’s Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources, wrote, “I have always hoped that a model could be developed to collect the check-off funds further along the value chain, since the healthiest and most consistent profit margins are in the food companies and retail. Plus, those are

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**Organic Check-off** — from page 1

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the business entities that stand to benefit most directly if check-off funded research and promo-
tion builds organic demand, as it surely should.”

Greene of the USDA-ERS pointed out that not all commodity check-offs are funded by everyone
involved in production, distribution and retail sales. “Some aren’t financed by all producers or
by any producers,” she explained, adding that the check-off for raspberries is funded by producers
of raspberries for processing and importers, the honey program by packers and importers, and
the softwood lumber and paper programs by domestic manufacturers and importers.

Collective Approach

“In reading through all the websites, petitions, and comments about an organic check-off, it’s
clear that many people see a need for some kind of collective fund to encourage organic research
and promote organic as a healthy choice for con-
sumers and the environment. “The industry-wide organic check-off system is a crucial development for the organic move-
mant,” said David Bronner, President of Dr.
Bronner’s Magic Soaps. “We are at a crossroads.
”

“Dollars raised by a successful check-off
are possible options. Stakeholders are still seeking opinions about
begin to be implemented. Before the USDA will consider a proposal, stake-
holders need to show “substantial” industry sup-
port. If that support exists, then representatives
of the industry can submit a proposal to the
USDA, showing justification for a check-off, its
objectives, and the impact on small business. If the
USDA approves the proposal, it will publish it in
the Federal Register for public comment. It might also hold public meetings. Once the
comment period closes, the USDA must decide
if the program has merit and meets legislative intent. If that hurdle is cleared, the USDA will
issue a referendum to allow the industry to vote
on the proposal. If that referendum passes (the
proposal would specify the majority needed),
then the USDA will seek nominations for board
members, and the organic check-off program can
begin to be implemented.
The check-off proposal has yet to be written. Stakeholders are still seeking opinions about
possible options.
“Nothing is cast in stone at this point—we do not know what the check-off may look like,” said
Harriet Behar, MOSES Organic Specialist and
policy expert. “Some ideas have been floated that
might make it more palatable to farmers. These
include having the funds overseen by regional
boards, similar to SARE, so the funds could be
directed more specifically to the needs of the
producers and handlers in that region.”

It also hasn’t been decided how much fund-
ing would go to research and how much to
promotion. These decisions need to be made
before submitting a proposal to the USDA—if
the community decides that’s the best place to
“house” a collective fund for organic research
and promotion.
“We have not had enough time to think cre-
atively on how to build a program that would
work for us, either within the USDA or outside
of it,” Behar added. “I am hoping that per-
haps a better idea could be stimulated—that’s
what Alan (Guebert) challenged us to do at the
MOSES Conference.”

The Organic Trade Association has created
a survey with options for a framework based on
initial feedback from certified organic operators. The survey, online at www.uniforme-moreor-
ganic.com/orpp-framework, provides a way to
examine proposed options and put forth new
ones. It is also available in print from OTA by
calling 202-400-8012.

Audrey Alwell is the Communications Director for MOSES
and the Managing Editor of the Organic Broadcaster.
Field days give farmers chance to share ‘lessons learned’

By Joe Pedretti

Dairy farmer shows how he transitioned CRP land to corn, soybeans, grains

Marvin Lynch, an organic dairy farmer from Cascade, Iowa, hosted a field day July 15, to share how he transitioned CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) land into organic production. Marvin, who milks 116 cows and needed more land to reduce his feed purchases, found 94 acres of former CRP ground for rent in 2013. The landowners specifically reached out to Marvin, because they wanted the land to be kept organic. The land had been in CRP for 30 years, and like all fallow land, required extra planning and work to bring back into production. MidwestBio-Ag consultants Al Steger and Bob Yanda, who helped Marvin through the process, also shared information at the field day.

Although CRP land is an attractive option because it can be immediately certified, Marvin and Al stressed that CRP land takes careful planning to bring back into production. Most of the carbon and organic matter are tied up in brown plant matter (roots, thatch, stems) that must be incorporated and broken down before it can become available as plant nutrients. Breaking down this plant matter requires nitrogen which is the most expensive nutrient for organic farmers to apply. Marvin was fortunate to have a ready supply of liquid manure, which he applied just after working the soil in the spring of 2013. Ideally he would have liked to have plowed, tilled and applied manure in the fall of 2012 to allow extra time for the carbon breakdown. Soil tests are critical for CRP land, which often lacks other nutrients besides nitrogen. Al Steger used Marvin’s soil test to carefully design a fertility plan that included addition of calcium, phosphorus and micro-nutrients. Every field and farm will be different, so soil tests are a necessary first stop, Al said.

Marvin chose to grow his fields, since that was the tool he had available, but a rototiller is a better choice, since it incorporates the organic matter rather than burying much of it. Either method will work to prepare the fields. The fields that Marvin rented had been hayed while in CRP so a previous farmer had cleared the brush and trees. Most CRP fields will require trees and brush removal before tillage begins. Corn is a heavy feeder, so it may not be a good choice for a first crop after renovation. Soybeans tend to do better since they can fix nitrogen. In Marvin’s case, he decided to start with corn and soybeans his first year since he had the manure and had added the soil amendments. Marvin was happy with his yields in 2013, and weeds were not a major problem due to timely cultivation and a low wood mulch band. For 2014, Marvin began rotating some of the fields into hay, by planting oats as a nurse crop for his new seeding of alfalfa. The remaining fields were split between soybeans and corn. While the corn and new seeding looked excellent, weeds were more of a challenge due to the wet spring, which prevented good cultivation.

When asked if he would do it all again, Marvin told the group that it had been worth the extra effort, since he was able to reduce his reliance on purchased feed, but stressed that, to do it right, required careful planning, a lot of work and the help of a good soil consultant.

To help landowners and farmers learn more about converting CRP land to organic production, MOSES has teamed with MidwestBio-Ag to create a new “Converting CRP Land to Organic Production” fact sheet. It is available free on the MOSES website on the “Organic Fact Sheets” page under the “Publications” tab. You may request a printed copy via mail by calling the MOSES office at 715-778-5775.
Pollinator Conservation — from page 1

Get a Plan

For the past couple of years, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has offered funding for custom pollinator and beneficial insect conservation plans. Called a “Pollinator CAP” (Conservation Activity Plan), the plan includes an on-farm consultation with a private (non-NRCS) pollinator biologist, and the development of a comprehensive farm blueprint that identifies baseline habitat conditions for pollinators, and recommendations for conservation strategies that can increase their abundance.

Although not required by the NRCS, Pollinator CAPs can also include additional information such as step-by-step habitat installation guidelines for your farm, and a pesticide risk assessment, along with strategies for mitigating pesticide impacts. (For example, CAPs developed by Xerces ecologists include an assessment of any conventional and organic pesticides used on the farm, as well as an assessment of risks posed by neighboring farms).

One of the best things about the CAP process is that NRCS provides financial assistance to offset the cost of bringing this specialized consulting to your farm, resulting in minimal to no out-of-pocket expenses. Moreover, once the CAP is completed, you can use it to help apply for additional NRCS support for any recommendations made in the plan. For example, if the CAP recommends a native shrub hedgerow to increase pollinator habitat on the farm, you can take that recommendation back to your NRCS office and apply for additional assistance. To find out more about Pollinator CAPs, contact your local NRCS office.

Cool Season Cover Cropping

It’s no substitute for permanent areas of native wildflower habitat, but flowering cover crops can make a significant contribution to supporting pollinator populations on the farm. In a lot of areas, right now is the time to establish cool-season, overwintering cover crops. In cold climates, fall-seeded cover crop options are more limited than spring-seeded options. However, even a simple cold-hardy mix of winter rye, hairy vetch, and red clover can offer a boost of pollen and nectar on the farm next spring. These plants provide egg-laying locations for pollinators, and host alternate prey for other beneficial insects such as lacewings, syrphid flies, and pirate bugs.

When you need to terminate the cover crop next year, consider the following strategies to reduce unintended harm to pollinators:

• Wait as long as you can to terminate the cover crop so that bees can use more of the pollen and nectar.
• Terminate with as little physical disturbance as possible. (For example, roller-crimping may be less disruptive to bee nests in the soil than cultivation.)
• Leave as much cover crop residue as possible to protect nests and any dormant adult bees (such as bumble bee queens).
• Minimize insecticide use (even organic insecticides) in cash crops where cover crops were previously planted to avoid harming beneficial insect eggs or pupae that may be in the cover crop residue.

Consider leaving a few small strips of the cover crop around the farm to remain flowering throughout the growing season.

Before planting cover crops, you should also know that current federal crop insurance programs have region-specific requirements for cover crop termination. Those intents (intended to balance the water needs of cash crops with cover crops) typically require cover crop termination within a certain timeframe. For current guidance on cover cropping and crop insurance rules, consult your local USDA service center or crop insurance agent.

New Opportunities through CRP

In June of this year, the USDA announced $8 million in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) incentives for Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin farmers and ranchers who establish pollinator habitat. At the time of this writing specific details about the incentives are still forthcoming, however initial indications are that most funding will be directed toward further improving current CRP land with payments for inter-seeding additional bee forage plants into grass cover. Additional details should be available from local USDA Farm Service Agency offices.

In whatever form they take, these new incentives will further complement existing opportunities to create pollinator habitat through CRP, such as the “CP-42 conservation practice,” which offers enhanced payments and competitive application-ranking for landowners who plant high quality native wildflower seed mixes on new CRP land.

If you aren’t familiar with the CRP application process, you should know that there are two separate options for enrollment. The first is through a competitive process known as “CRP general sign-up.” Applications under the general sign-up are ranked against each other within regions to ensure that the new enrollments offering the greatest environmental benefits are the first to be accepted into the program. General sign-ups are announced on a periodic basis and do not occur on any fixed schedule.

The second application process is through “continuous CRP sign-up,” which is available to landowners with extremely environmentally sensitive land such as land bordering stream banks. As the name suggests, continuous CRP sign-up is available on an ongoing basis and applications are not ranked on a competitive basis.

There are a host of other CRP rules and eligibility guidelines, as well as opportunities to implement some really good conservation practices through CRP. Check with your local USDA service center for the latest information.

Resources for Grazing

Finally, we are thrilled to announce new staff and resources to help folks wanting to incorporate pollinator conservation into grazing systems. We’ve added a new ecologist to our team—Anne Stine. She recently joined Xerces after completing a fellowship with the Nature Conservancy in Nebraska where she worked on managed grazing of native prairie. Anne is based out of the NRCS National Technology Support Center in Fort Worth, Texas. She is available to field nationwide inquiries and provide advice on using conservation practices that balance the needs of livestock with pollinators. She travels nationally working with NRCS staff and individual farmers/ranchers, and can be reached at: anne@xerces.org.

Among the projects that Anne is spearheading is a soon-to-be released Xerces/NRCS technical guide for incorporating pollinators into pasture and rangeland management. The guide, Using Grazing to Increase Pollinator Habitat in the Central U.S., is scheduled for release in late 2014. Readers can anticipate sections on the management of grass-fleld diversity with grazing, the use of variables like timing, intensity, fire, and stocking rate to maximize wildflower abundance and livestock health. The manual will include considerations for specialty livestock beyond just cattle, such as sheep, horses, and goats. To access a free PDF version of the guide when it becomes available, please contact Anne at her email address listed above.

Eric Lee-Mäder and Mace Vaughan co-direct the Pollinator Program at the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Their newest book, Farming with Native Beneficial Insects, was just released this summer. It is available in the MOSES Store at mosesorganic.org/store. They welcome feedback from Broadcaster readers: eric@xerces.org or mace@xerces.org.

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Tincture remedies help farmers treat livestock organically

By Jody Padgham

Many drugs found in modern medicine cabinets have been based on derivatives from natural plant or animal sources. An alternative to utilizing derived medicines is the use of tinctures, solutions made of extractions of the essences of plant or animal ingredients. Tinctures are generally allowed in organic production when conventional treatments, such as antibiotics, are not, making tinctures a great tool in the organic livestock producer’s barnyard toolbox.

Organic animal health should focus on prevention and immune system strengthening more than on treatment. Nutrient-rich, diverse feed, appropriate and comfortable housing, and stress-reducing handling procedures all lead to strengthened immune systems and resistance to illness. However, even with the best preventive care, certain life stages, events or accidents can create a need for intervention to solve a problem, cure an illness or remedy a condition. Tinctures are a great alternative to consider in these cases.

“I myself was a doubter that this kind of thing would work—organic healing takes a change in mind-set,” Dr. Paul Dettloff, DVM, said as he began his tincture workshop at the 2014 MOSES Organic Farming Conference.

“The use of tinctures goes back all the way to the Egyptians and Greeks. You may not believe what I have to say, but just listen with an open mind, and try things on your own. You may be surprised by what you find.”

Dr. Paul has been working with organic producers since the late 1980s. Trained as a conventional veterinarian, Dr. Paul taught himself organic ways so he could offer solutions for an increasing number of organic farmers who called him for help. Now working as a staff veterinarian for Organic Valley, Dr. Paul has gathered a deep knowledge about the use of tinctures for animal health in the past 30+ years.

Dr. Paul is one of three suppliers of ready-made veterinary tinctures available in the area (see sidebar). During his MOSES Conference workshop, he explained how tinctures are made.

Tinctures start with high-quality plant material. “The higher the brix level in the plant material, the higher the potency of the tincture,” he explained. Brix is the measure of the total dissolved solid content (sugars) in tissues, and can be measured using a refractometer. “High-brix plants are grown on well-balanced, mineralized soils, creating stronger and more effective tinctures,” Dr. Paul stated. He grows some of the plant materials that go into his own tinctures, so he can maximize brix levels and ensure strong, effective tinctures. Technically, organic ingredients are not required if a tincture is used for treatment, but must be used if it is used as a preventive. Dr. Paul’s lab uses all organic ingredients.

The base of a tincture can be several things: alcohol is the most common (Dr. Paul uses 190 proof organic alcohol), but water, glycerine, apple cider vinegar, ammonia or a combination can also be used. Dr. Paul finds raw organic apple cider vinegar is especially effective for alkaloidal essences of plant or animal ingredients. Tinc is

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By Jody Padgham
Farmer shares how he uses tinctures to keep herd in production

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Mark follows CEG with rose hip tincture. The tincture Mark uses most consistently
before calving, Mark starts applying arnica

It is good for any infection, specifically any
problems with the respiratory system. Nettles
also encourages milk production.

Mark also has specific treatments if he sees
any problems in the herd. He finds tinctures
particularly helpful with calves. If he notices a slight congestion or hears a rasp in a calf’s
breathing, he will dose with rose hips (vitamin C) and nettles, adding in CEG if the situation seems severe. He’ll dose with these three for a few days to a week, depending on how deep the problem is, until the animal seems back to normal. He offers the reminder that isolation is really important with calf respiratory problems, as they “can really pass problems around.”

Before calving, Mark starts applying arnica to help bring about contractions and calm the cow pre-birth. Once calving is imminent, he uses Dr. Paul’s “Nature’s Cycle” blend (Organic Grain Alcohol, Blue Cohosh, Wild Yam Root, Viburnum (Black Haw), Red Clover, Saw Palmetto, Dong Quai, Apple Cider Vinegar and Cloves). Once calving starts, Caulophyllum is helpful all the way through until after the calf is born. “Caulophyllum will help stimulate

To Farmer uses Tinctures on page 20

Farmer uses Tinctures on page 20

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TO Tinctures for Livestock Health on page 20

Farmer shares how he uses tinctures to keep herd in production

Mark Wickenhauser of Wicmar Dairy in Cologne, Minn. claims that without the use of tinctures, he’d have to sell almost every cow in the barn.

“I rely on tinctures to keep my cows healthy,” he said. “I wouldn’t farm without them.”

“In order to get the quality of milk the co-op requires (Mark sells to Organic Val

Mark uses tinctures on a daily basis for his herd of 43 registered Holsteins. He carries 2-ounce dropper bottles in his pocket each time he goes out to milk, and will apply any
where from 4 drops to a half-dropper-full of a needed tincture as he works his way through the barn. Rather than apply tinctures inter-

Mark follows CEG with rose hip tincture. High in vitamin C, this is a “natural cleanser” and helps to clear the toxins released by the
system. Most of Mark’s cows get 2 drops of CEG on each side of the tail every day.

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To Farmer uses Tinctures on page 20

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Shared Equipment — from page 5

machine between farms. Nearly 40 hours involved training, set-up, adjustment and cleaning of the machine, while only about 20 hours were spent actually operating the harvester during the first year.

The group’s dynamics helped in the decision-making process. Three growers work off-farm, bringing individual skills that were complementary to others in the group. Adding to the success was participation from all members. “We are fortunate that everyone is willing to get their hands dirty and are able to bring their variety of different individual skills and interests to the table,” Henry said.

In the future, the group may buy supplies together, such as harvest totes, and possibly use the machine for custom-harvesting.

Lessons learned

Artz offered this advice about successful equipment-sharing arrangements, based on her five case studies:

• Trust and communication are important. Transparency about what type of equipment is being purchased to share, who will store it, and who the costs are to operate and maintain the equipment are critical to build trust and a good business relationship. Plant and row-spacing to allow room for the equipment may need to be communicated early in the process.
• Compatibility matters when it comes to both the farms and the people involved. One partnership worked because all were beginning growers with skills and interests that complemented another. Another partnership never materialized because farmed and off-farm job schedules prevented adequate communication.
• Consider the complexity of the equipment, especially as it relates to adjustments for different field and farm conditions.
• Distance matters. Long-distance sharing could work if there is enough variation in the growing seasons of participating farms and the equipment is used only once each season.
• Not everything is worth sharing. Mileage and time spent in transport could exceed the labor required to do the task by hand.
• Sharing equipment could lead to greater partnerships, such as buying inputs together or marketing produce together in cooperatives.

In addition to lessons learned from her 2013 study, Artz saw several themes emerge from the 2012 case studies of six Iowa growers who had recently scaled up their operations:

• Farms producing large quantities of similar crops tended to use more and larger pieces of equipment.
• Farms that grew a more diverse set of crops tended to use more labor.
• Mechanization can help to offset labor costs, but it does not eliminate the need for labor entirely. In general, harvesting remains a particularly labor-intensive task.

• How farmers choose to sell and market their crops has an impact on the purchase of machinery.
• Before planning expansions, farmers should talk with other growers to understand what their expansion entails, consider their goals and account for their own farm’s unique features.

Laura Miller works for the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Georgeanne Artz is an assistant professor in the Department of Economics at Iowa State University. Linda Naeve works for Iowa State University Value Added Extension.

Machinery-Sharing Resources

Machinery-Sharing Manual for Fruit and Vegetable Growers
50 pages, June 2014, written by Georgeanne Artz, Linda Naeve and William Edwards

Operational and organizational issues related to sharing specialized farm machinery for fruit and vegetable production. Sample sharing agreements and worksheets for allocating costs fairly, based on case studies of five different sharing arrangements among Iowa growers.

store.extension.iastate.edu (look for PM 3064) www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/alpha (by title)

Potential for Machinery: A Case Study of Fruit and Vegetable Growers in Iowa
28 pages, January 2014, written by Nicholas Pates and Georgeanne Artz

Discusses how size, diversification, marketing strategies and production methods impacted decisions regarding machinery. It is based on case studies of six Iowa fruit and vegetable operations conducted in 2012.

See www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/alpha
Genetically engineered corn creates tipping point for family to go organic

By Demetria Stephens

Farmers, like professional gamblers, are used to taking risks. The weather typically is the biggest risk factor in farming. When genetically engineered crops entered the game, though, some farmers found the risks too great.

Genetically engineered corn is what convinced Elliott Driscoll, 67, to go organic on his family farm in Williamsburg, Iowa. In the spring of 1996, the year that Monsanto took over the DEKALB seed company, a seed seller offered to give him this “new thing” (Roundup Ready corn seed) if he would plant it. The seller explained that he could spray Roundup on the field and it would kill the weeds but not the crop.

Elliott said he remembered thinking, “Man, this is a good way to get rid of Canadian thistle and quack grass.” So he planted a 50-acre field that had been used for pasture. When the weeds popped up, he knocked them back with Roundup, and the corn was unaffected.

Elliott and his four sons chopped about 400 acres of corn silage for their cattle that year. They started with the Roundup Ready corn, which meant it was put in the bunker silo first. That winter, they fed their herd corn silage mixed with hay. It was business as usual until Elliott went out to feed his purebred Black Angus cattle one mid-February morning and saw six aborted calves.

“I took notice really quick,” he said. His feed mix had some outlage, so his first thought was nitrates were the cause. But, then he realized they had fed just straight corn silage that day. They found 14 more aborted calves the next morning. They called a veterinarian. While the team left, Elliott thought about his family farm in Williamsburg, Iowa. In the spring of 1996, the year that Monsanto took over the DEKALB seed company, a seed seller offered to give him this “new thing” (Roundup Ready corn seed) if he would plant it. The seller explained that he could spray Roundup on the field and it would kill the weeds but not the crop.

“After all these years,” Elliott said, “Don Huber is the one who’s come across pretty much proof of what I’ve suspected all along.”

He joined the Iowa Chapter #3 of the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) that year—1997—and applied to have 40 acres certified to the OCIA International Certification Standards. Over the course of 10 years, Elliott and his family transitioned 1,500 acres on their 104-year-old farm. They transitioned fields as they went through the farm’s crop rotation, which includes soy, corn, soybeans, a small grain like oats or some rye, clover, alfalfa and pasture.

OCIA is both a certification agency and a membership organization. The membership meets periodically in chapters as well as at an annual general meeting. Don Huber, professor emeritus of plant pathology at Purdue University, spoke at OCIA’s 2013 annual meeting, which Elliot attended. Don’s topic was the environmental and health impacts of glyphosate (Roundup’s active ingredient) and genetically engineered crops. Elliott said Don’s talk supported his own theory on what caused all those abortions years before.

“After all these years,” Elliott said, “Don Huber is the one who’s come across pretty much proof of what I’ve suspected all along.”

These days, Elliott and his family finish 30 to 40 head of cattle organically each year, but they can’t market them as organic because they can’t find a certified meat processor. Their farm is also home to the oldest pure-bred Hampshire hogs still in existence in the United States. They haven’t had an issue with abortions since they stopped growing Roundup Ready corn.

Besides better health for their livestock, the Driscolls have found other reasons to appreciate organic certification.

“I’ll never forget the first year I did have a certified crop,” he said. He remembered pulling out of the field with his tractor and cultivator, shutting it off and closing the gate. It was the first time he had contacted acres—40 acres of corn for $3.65 a bushel, while the non-organic price was $1.80 a bushel. He recalled thinking he should look over his shoulder for a sheriff because the price difference was almost like stealing. Now he sells 100 percent of his corn and about 60 or 70 percent of his soybeans to several large Amish settlements that have a lot of livestock.

He has been fortunate with yields, he said. His best year of corn was 186 bushels an acre. In 2013, that weather factor came into play and his corn made 110 bushels an acre. It was wet in the spring and then the water “just got shut off,” he said.

They also are fortunate to have neighbors who won’t plant genetically engineered crops next to their fields. This helps protect their crops from cross-pollination, he said.

Elliott and his wife, Rita, 67, have eight grown children. Their second oldest son, Joe, works on the farm full time. Their oldest son, John, runs a hardware store. Jim and Jerry are the younger sons. Jim runs a welding business and Jerry teaches high school and community college vocational agriculture. Jerry promotes organic to his students and several are in the process of convincing their parents to try organic production. Of their four daughters (Veronica, Theresa, Mary Ann, and Eileen), only Veronica still lives on a farm—just four miles from home. She married a non-organic farmer who farms with his brothers.

Demetria Stephens is on the board of OCIA International. She lives in Kansas. This is an edited version of her story from the OCIA Family Spotlight series on OCIA members in celebration of the International Year of Family Farming.
Mentoring New Farmers — from page 9

and Lauren to make their own decisions rather than telling them what to do. This approach is typical for MOSES mentors. Mentors visit their mentee’s farm within a few months of being paired, walking the fields and homestead to discuss the mentee’s vision for the farm and current issues. The mentor also is invited to see how the mentor’s farm operates. These shared farm visits help familiarize the participants with each other’s operation. Then, when they communicate by phone or email about an issue, they each can picture where and why a problem may be occurring. Discussions also include building upon successes and tracking the positive occurrences on the farm.

MOSES mentors help their mentees with many aspects of their operation in addition to production. They might discuss infrastructure and capital improvements, marketing, and business planning. The LSP Journeyperson Program provides a financial manager to gradu-ates of the LSP Farm Beginnings program at the same time they are getting advice from a MOSES mentor. Caleb and Lauren look to the financial manager for business decisions, but also take advantage of Kim and Rich’s years of experience with direct marketing meat.

This is Rich and Kim’s second time as mentors in the MOSES Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program. They said they find it very rewarding. “It took us years of study and experimenta- tion to put together a set of tools that allowed us to manage our flock’s health without antibiotics or wormers,” Kim said. “It’s nice to be able to share those tools and to think it might help someone else starting out.”

Over the years, numerous mentees have said that the mentoring program helped their operation mature more quickly than if they had learned all of their lessons on their own. Mentors typically say they also learn from their mentees. Kim and Rich have enjoyed seeing the enthusiasm and focus that Caleb and Lauren bring to their enterprises.

“We’ve appreciated the reminder to keep looking for new solutions and to try to see our own farm from new perspectives—something we did more often when we first started farming ourselves,” Kim added.

In addition to the one-to-one benefits, the MOSES mentoring program also helps participants connect with the larger organic community. They all recognize the value of a program that has helped hundreds of families become successful farmers. Mentors often say they remember being mentored by others when they started out, but in a much more informal way. They enthusiastically enter the MOSES mentoring program, hoping to give others the benefit of their experience and hard lessons they have learned over the years. By sharing their own stories with their mentees, they hope to breed success on yet another organic farm.

“I’ve been involved in this program from both sides, as a mentor and a mentee,” Kim explained. “Although our farm really benefitted from having a mentor, I think we are gaining just as much from this experience as we try to apply the things we’ve learned over the years to the different set of issues that this farm faces.”

In the future when they have more systems of their own in place, Lauren and Caleb might want to come back as mentors. For now, though, they are grateful to their mentors and the program for boosting their knowledge and skills—things they appreciate now and are likely to still appreciate when their 65-year-old selves look back at today.

Information and applications to participate as a mentee or mentor in the 2015 MOSES Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program are on the MOSES website under Projects. To request application materials by mail, contact Harriet Behar, MOSES Organic Specialist, at 715-778-5775.

The application deadline for the 2015 program is Sept. 30, 2014.

Harriet Behar is an Organic Specialist at MOSES. She manages the Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program. She is also a certified organic farmer.
need a farmer at least three times a day. Collectively, we need to do more to achieve these objectives.

There have been some increases in research dollars focused on organic production. However, we still receive proportionately much less for research than the percentage of trade organic generates. The need for more unpatented and publically available seed and livestock breeding support also is critical. Who better to express this need for regionally adapted cultivars and breeds than the organic farmers who can speak to the extremes caused by climate change and the need for more resilience in our agricultural systems?

The educational section has seen some clear gains, with policy makers more knowledgeable and aligned with the organic community’s needs and desires. The media, consumers, farmers, and agricultural professionals, have all responded favorably to outreach done by the organic sector, although we still face challenges from detractors who want to curb our growth through misinformation. Technical assistance for beginning and immigrant farmers is in its beginning stages, but the needs of these groups are being addressed. Where we need improvement is in disseminating information about cutting-edge research to help existing organic farmers to continually improve their operations.

While it seems at times that the National Organic Program (NOP) moves at a glacial pace, numerous items identified in 2010 as critical have been implemented by the NOP. These include the pasture regulation, an NOP policy manual, increased staff with organic expertise within the NOP, increased communication from the NOP to its stakeholders through periodic and quarterly newsletters, consistent and regular organic certifier trainings, and EU and Canadian equivalency agreements. We still wait upon an origin of live stock standard, a fully functional and well-funded system for reviewing incoming and outgoing materials on the National List, and many others. The NOAP list for the NOP is quite extensive, since the integrity of the organic label in the marketplace and its practicality on the farm are close to the heart of most organic farmers.

In the marketplace, we have a small start in aiding the growth of organic seed producers. However, capacity of organic processors, especially in the meat and livestock sector, needs a lot more research than the percentage of trade organic generates. The need for more unpatented and publically available seed and livestock breeding support also is critical. Who better to express this need for regionally adapted cultivars and breeds than the organic farmers who can speak to the extremes caused by climate change?

The spread of organic farming is wide and growing. The need for regionally adapted cultivars and breeds than the organic farmers who can speak to the extremes caused by climate change and the need for more resilience in our agricultural systems?

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Tinctures for Livestock Health — from page 15

components. There are various techniques for extracting the plant essence into the solvent. In Dr. Paul’s lab they stir the plant into the solvent and allow it to rest for four weeks. Every week the batch is stirred vigorously using a wooden stick, either clockwise or counterclockwise, based on the result of a downsizing vivification. If this stirring “flips the electrons,” Dr. Paul explained, increasing the energy of the solution. The resultant liquid is decanted and stored in dark or amber glass. (For more on making your own tinctures, see the book “The Herbal Medicine-Makers Handbook,” by James Green.)

Dr. Paul has discovered that each specific type of plant tincture generates a unique reading on an electrical conductivity meter. If we use an inferior, low nutrient or moldy plant material, the reading—and thus the potency and effectiveness—will be less than we expect. He has been experimenting with several plant combinations to create tincture mixes with particularly high strengths and targeted uses. One of his favorites is comfrey, echinacea, garlic and lavender, which has shown a conductivity reading of 1,900-2,000 ergs. “There is a synergy and lavender, which has shown a conductivity reading—and thus the potency and effectiveness—will be less than we expect.”

Dr. Paul recommends the use of a 5cc pipette, which is inserted into the vulva blood stream. “Your attitude go a long way to helping the animals help and do it good. Our positive thoughts and letting the animal know that you are there to treat and get her chewing her cud,” he said.

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Dr. Paul believes that creating and using tinctures is an art—and must be done with intent. Whenever you need to treat an animal, begin by letting the animal know that you are there to help and do it good. Our positive thoughts and attitude go a long way to helping the animals around us thrive. Tinctures will then help with the next stage of healing, he said.

Jody Padgham is the Finance Director for MOSES and Associate Editor of the Organic Broadcaster.

Places to buy tinctures:

- Dr. Paul’s Lab, Arcadia, Wis. drpaulslab.net
- Agri-Dynamics, Dr. Jerry Brunetti, www.agri-dynamics.com Martins Creek, PA, 877-393-4484
- Crystal Creek Natural, LLC, crystalcreeknatural.com Spooner, Wis. 888-376-6777. (Call for a catalog of tinctures.)

Books:

- Alternative Treatments for Ruminant Animals, Dr. Paul Detloff (available in MOSES Store: massorganics.org/store)
- The Herbal Medicine-Makers Handbook, James Green
- The Book of Herbal Wisdom, Matthew Woods
- Herbal Antibiotics, Stephen Buhner

Farmer uses Tinctures — from page 15

hormones, and helps a cow perk up and start eating after calving,” Mark shared. It will help to bring a cow up on her feet and get her chewing her cud. Comfrey and St. John’s wort are both useful for calving pain. If a calving was particularly hard he will infuse the uterus with aloe vera and St. John’s wort. “You’ll notice when she feels better right away, as she’ll start taking bites of hay and chewing her cud,” he said.

A similar product, though not technically a tincture, is Wound Spray from Crystal Creek, which Mark sprays on a newly fresh cow’s vulva. “The active ingredients will be adsorbed through this especially sensitive area and help to heal the internal organs,” Mark claimed.

Dr. Paul’s “Tonic Tincture” (organic grain alcohol, apple cider vinegar, burdock root, barberry, echinacea, dandelion, celery seed, shitake) is good for cleansing the liver after freshening. Mark noted that cows put on weight for calving, and then need to convert the extra fat into milk. This is stressful on the liver, and so the Tonic Tincture helps.

Tinctures are just one part of the “team of things needed to keep cows healthy and make good milk,” Mark explained. Also on his “team list” are: minerals (from forages, developed through well-balanced soils), high-quality forages, good water quality (he treats water with hydrogen pyroxide and swears by the contraceptive effect, and micronutrients, again needed to make up for limitations of the soil and feed. He stressed that particular attention must be paid if you are buying in feed. “Bought forage—even if they are organic, will often be low in minerals,” he added.

Certified organic for 10 years, Mark started using tinctures at the same time he converted to organic. He is happy to have this set of useful plant-based supports that make all the difference in keeping his cows healthy and allowing him to produce high quality milk.

Books:

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- The Herbal Medicine-Makers Handbook, James Green
- The Book of Herbal Wisdom, Matthew Woods
- Herbal Antibiotics, Stephen Buhner
**Finance Webinars**

MOSIES is offering two free webinars on farm finances. In “Financial Analysis Using Your Schedule F” at 7 p.m. Sept. 9, Paul Dietmann from Badgerland Financial explains how to use a Schedule F (Farm Income) tax form in combination with an annual balance sheet to analyze a farm’s profitability and cash flow. Chris Blanchard from Flying Rutabaga Works explains which finance tools to use to make decisions about equipment purchases, farm expansion, and more in “Evaluating Investments and Operational Changes” at 7 p.m. Sept. 16. To register for these free webinars, call 715-778-5775 or go to mosesorganic.org/events/webinars.

**2015 MOSES Organic Farmer of the Year**

Nominations are open for the annual Farmer of the Year award, which is presented at the MOSES Conference. The award recognizes a farmer or farm family practicing outstanding land stewardship, innovation and outreach. Nominations must be certified organic and farm in the Midwest. Nominations are due by Sept. 15, 2014. Find the nomination form on the MOSES website (mosesorganic.org) under the Projects tab, or call 715-778-5775 to request a form by email or mail.

**New Organic Ag Website**

A new website, www.organicag.umn.edu, features research, education, and outreach programs and projects at the University of Minnesota. The University has organic acreage in Lamberton, Morris, and on the St. Paul Campus. Lamberton is also home to organic status at the Rosemount Research and Outreach Center.

**Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin**

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture is again offering Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grants to strengthen the state’s agricultural and food industries. Proposals will be accepted from individuals and groups involved in Wisconsin agriculture, food processing, food distribution, food warehousing, retail food establishments or agricultural tourism sites. The maximum award for each project is $50,000. Grant applicants must provide a cash or in-kind match of at least 50 percent of the total project budget. Pre-proposals must be received at DATCP of at least 50 percent of the total project budget.

**Organic Seed Survey**

Oct. 3 is the deadline for completing the 2014 organic seed survey prepared by the Organic Seed Alliance. This national survey is conducted every five years to monitor organic seed availability and use, challenges in sourcing organic seed, and organic plant breeding needs, and other important topics. All certified organic crop producers should take the survey, even if they do not currently use organic seed. Go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/FPW6RTD.

**Strawberry Farming E-Book**

Cold Climate Strawberry Farming is a new e-book from the University of Minnesota with comprehensive cultivar recommendations, growing recommendations, insurance requirements and other essential business information, plus details about innovative marketing techniques. The book introduces a new, season-extending method of growing strawberries for cold climates using low tunnels and day-neutral cultivars that was covered in the March/April Organic Broadcaster (online at mosesorganic.org/farming/magazines/topics/markets/strawberry-season-extended). The free e-book is based on years of research at the University of Minnesota with Minnesota Grown, and can be viewed online or downloaded for offline use to any iOS or Android mobile device. The download link is www.inkling.com/store/book/cold-climate-strawberry-farming-1st.

**Online Guide to Blueberry Pests**

An online blueberry pest management resource is now available through the University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program. It includes guidelines on how to manage pests like thrips, light brown apple moth, and spotted wing drosophila, as well as information on the effects of insecticides on honey bees. For more information, see bit.ly/1puOZEN.

**New Research Foundation**

Congress has provided $200 million for the creation of the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research and its 15-member board of directors. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack explained the foundation will operate as a nonprofit corporation, conducting research on the effects of insecticides on honey bees. More information on the foundation and its board members can be found at 1.usa.gov/11IewPN.

**New TV Show on Food, Farming**

Food Forward TV is a new 13-episode series starting in September on PBS that looks at ways farmers, chefs, teachers, fisherman, and scientists in more than 50 communities across the country are addressing current environmental and social issues of our food system. The show is sponsored by Chipotle, Applegate, Cliff Bars, Annie’s, and Lundberg Family Farms, and will be available to stream online at pbs.org/foodforward.

**Mentor Program Deadline**


**Farm Residency Program**

The ISLAND Farmer Residency Program is a three-year farm incubator project in North-west Lower Michigan that gives beginning farmers land, access to equipment, and a supportive environment to get started. This is not an internship opportunity—it is a chance for experienced but landless farmers to manage their own business on the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy’s Maple Bay Farm, just south of Elk Rapids, Mich. Applications for the 2015 growing season are due Oct. 1, 2014. Successful applications received before Sept. 15 will be offered a seed gift bonus. Applications will be accepted from interested new residents to the farm. For more information, or to apply to the program, go to www.artmeetsearth.org/farmerresidency.html or contact Larry Dyer at larry@artmeetsearth.org.

**New Market Reports**

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service is working with State Departments of Agriculture and local and regional food systems to provide prices, volume, and other information on agricultural commodities sold at local and regional markets. Three new reports were added last month to the Local and Regional Food Marketing Information website (www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/MarketNewsLocalRegional): Farmers Markets, Farmers Auctions, and Direct to Consumer.
Online Farm Product Directories
To help consumers and wholesale buyers locate farmers’ markets, on-farm food sales, CSAs, and food hubs, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service is developing three online directories: the National Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Enterprise Directory, National Food Hub Directory, and National On-Farm Market Directory. These will function like the popular National Farmers Market Directory, with listings that include maps, operating hours, products available, and the accepted forms of payment. Farmers and local food business owners can submit a listing at www.usda.localfood-directories.com. The new directories will be available online as soon as there is a sufficient number of listings.

MOSES Store Book Clearance
The MOSES Store has more than 70 books for sale at 25 percent off the list price. The list includes books about sustainable living, real-food cooking, gardening, and organic farming. Shipping is free on orders over $50. MOSES relies on Store purchases to help fund programs that improve farmers’ success in sustainable, organic production. To support MOSES and farmers, click on mosesorganic.org/clearance.

MOSES Organic Resource Directory
Most up-to-date listings: mosesorganic.org/publications/organic-resource-directory
Request print copy at 715-778-5775.

Organic Commodities Pricing Resources
Organic Milk Prices
NODPA
30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342
www.nodpa.com/payprice.shtml
413-772-0444
Organic Livestock Prices
CROPP Cooperative Organic Trader
farmers.coop/feed-program/organic-trader
1-888-809-9297
Find Buyers and Sellers of Organic Products
MOSES Organic Resource Directory

Study on Organic Crops
A study published in the July British Journal of Nutrition revealed that organic crops have higher levels of antioxidants than conventional crops. British researchers conducted meta-analyses based on 343 peer-reviewed publications. They also found that organic crops have lower levels of toxic metals and pesticide residues. Learn more about this study and others that show the benefits of an organic diet at organic-center.org/news/nutritional-benefits-of-organic-2.

Local Food Feast
Feast Festival and Tradeshow takes place Nov. 2-3, 2014 at the Rochester Civic Center in Rochester, Minn. The two-day event offers opportunities for the public and food buyers to engage with local food producers. See www.local-feast.org for details about exhibitors and activities.

Specialty Crops
A new one-minute radio series features Minnesota farmers who are growing specialty crops. “Spotlight on Specialty Crops” is produced by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and distributed to radio stations through the Minnesota Farm Network. The first show in the series spotlights Finke’s Berry Farm, a pick-your-own strawberry grower. Other topics to air in the 12-show lineup include hops, mushrooms, dry beans, ginger and season extension strategies. Audio files and transcripts of each show are posted at the MDAs new spotlight page, www.mda.state.mn.us/spotlight, which includes links to resources and information on each topic.

To find the Minnesota Farm Network station in your area, visit www.minnesotafarmnetwork.com. To suggest stories for this series call Meg Meynihan at 651-201-6616.

Study on Organic Crops
A study published in the July British Journal of Nutrition revealed that organic crops have higher levels of antioxidants than conventional crops. British researchers conducted meta-analyses based on 343 peer-reviewed publications. They also found that organic crops have lower levels of toxic metals and pesticide residues. Learn more about this study and others that show the benefits of an organic diet at organic-center.org/news/nutritional-benefits-of-organic-2.

To request a free catalog visit www.highmowingseeds.com or call 802.472.6174.
LIVESTOCK

Organic springing Holstein Heifers. Elmer Job, 26734 West Road 30, Freeport, MN, 56331 or 260-320-4084.


Farms/Land

For Sale: 54.5 acres, 40 tillable, no pesticides or herbicides, 3 bedroom house, good barn, swimming pool, adjoins former Boy Scout camp, near Buchanan, MI. E. Crane, 312-641-6777.


For Sale: 80 acre Certified Organic Farm near Peoria, IL. Diversified: Great Hunting, beautiful open timber and pasture land for beef production, 4000 planted hardwood trees and, tillable acreage, streams, hills, natural pond, new machine shed and 32 ft. motor home. $495,000. Contact dchowell@comcast.net.


115 acre certified organic farm for rent on a share crop basis. Northern Illinois. Ralph 815-865-5288.

MISCELLANEOUS

For Sale: OREGAN FISH FERTILIZER 15:1-1, 100% dry water soluble, 5-7 times more nutritious than liquid fish. Will not clog drip irrigation. 1 lb or 5 lb bag, can be shipped UPS. Frommittl Ag Service, Gleyee, IA, 563-920-3674.

For Sale: Certified organic seed garlic: Amish Rosemabe $10.00/lb., German Extra Hardy $12.00/lb. Send phone number and I’ll call you. Israel Swarey. N83 Hall Drive, Stetsonville, WI 54480.

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For Sale: Garlic table stock and seed certified organic German White, Red Russian and French Red (softneck). For more info call Kempf Acres 330-674-3999 ext. 3.

Seed Garlic: German Extra Hardy and Persian Star (Red). Organically grown for 4 years, nice size. Great in heavy soil. References available. Call Sam Tilton - 414-213-5337 or rccfarm@gmail.com.

FORAGES

ORGANIC Big Rounds Net Wrapped - Alfalfa/Grass, Alfalfa/Clover, Grass, Oat Hay. 100+ Tons Dubuque, IA. 563 581-1072, lamberc@yahoo.com.

150 Large Round Bales, Crested, Brome, Alfalfa mix, OCA certified. Put up right. 1500 lb. bales, 1st cutting. Martin, SD. 605-488-0447.


Got organic hay? 1st crop 4 x 5 round net wrapped/cleaned) suitable for all livestock, $125/ton. Call Debbie or Larry for prices. Medford, WI 715-743-2154. medow@medowfarmsorganic.com.

Certified organic winter rye available in bags, bulk or bales, $14.50/50lbs. Also available certified organic rye straw and certified organic hay. 920-427-6663.

150 Large Round Bales.


Grass, Alfalfa/Clover, Grass, Oat Hay. 100+ Tons Dubuque, IA. 563 581-1072, lamberc@yahoo.com.

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Certified organic winter rye available in bags, bulk or bales, $14.50/50lbs. Also available certified organic rye straw and certified organic hay. 920-427-6663.

4 Lots that saw no rain throughout curing are ready for delivery. 1st crop, all 4X5 net -wrapped rounds) available end of August. Medow Farms Organic LLC. 715-473-2154 medow@medowfarmsorganic.com.

Certified organic winter rye available in bags, bulk or bales, $14.50/50lbs. Also available certified organic rye straw and certified organic hay. 920-427-6663.

150 Large Round Bales


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Certified organic winter rye available in bags, bulk or bales, $14.50/50lbs. Also available certified organic rye straw and certified organic hay. 920-427-6663.

Get organic hay? 1st crop 4 x 5 round net wrapped for sale, MOSA certified, stored inside, 400 + bales. Call Debbie or Larry for prices. Medford, WI 715-748-6863.

Cowsmo Premium Organic Compost and Potting Soil

Our nutrient-based Compost and Compost-based Potting Mixes meet the NOP Organic Standards!

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Use Cowsmo Compost for:

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• Mulch
• Red Mix - General Purpose
• Source of organic matter
• Blue Mix - Transplants

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Non-GMO oats, wheat, barley, rye feed mix (un-treated/cleaned) suitable for all livestock, $125/ton semi loads available. 507-373-3161 or 800-352-5247.

Cleaned organic rye seed, $20/50lb bag, bulk pricing available. Round rye straw bales, $60/each. Contact 608-632-0472.

OPPORTUNITIES

The Cage Free Company. We are looking for a few producers that are detail oriented and have an interest in producing Free Range Eggs. We offer an income opportunity of up to 130,000.00 per flock. Call or email John Brunquell, 414-704-1344 or jbrunquell@egginnovations.com.

Reach more farmers looking for land:

Land Link-Up

MOSES offers FREE online listings to help farmers find land. Supplement your classified ad with a free listing at: mosesorganic.org/farming/land-link-up

This form good through 12-2014.

Classified Ad Placement

Reach 11,000+ organic-minded readers with a classified ad in this newspaper.

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

Submit ads online at organicbroadcaster.org.
Or, complete this form and mail with your ad to:
MOSES, PO Box 339, Spring Valley, WI 54770

Ads must be submitted by the 10th of the month prior to Organic Broadcast publication date.

Name: ______________________________
Address: ____________________________
City: ________________________________
State: ______ Zip: __________
Phone: ______________________________
Email: ______________________________

$15 up to 30 words; $5/each additional 10 words.

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[ ] Nov. - Dec.

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This form good through 12-2014.

mosesorganic.org | 715-778-5775 | 23
Webinar: Financial Analysis Using Your Schedule F
Sept. 9 | 7 p.m. | Free
Paul Dietmann from Badgeford Financial explains how to use your Schedule F (Farm Income) tax form in combination with an annual balance sheet to analyze your farm’s profitability and cash flow. Learn more and register at mosesorganic.org/events/webinars.

Legal Issues Workshop
Sept. 9 | Free | Grayslake, Ill.
Hosted by The Land Connections, a “train the trainers” event designed to help farmers with legal issues. Lead by Rachel Armstrong of Farm Commons, this event will cover how to create a business entity, writing by-laws and operating agreements, negotiating land leases, hiring employees and interns and much more. Learn more at thelandconnection.org/legalissues.

Community-Based Farm Start-Up
Sept. 9 | 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. | Tama, Iowa
Hosted by Practical Farmers of Iowa, learn what it means to integrate a farm business with community-based goals and input from the beginning. Started in 2013, Red Earth Gardens is a fruit and vegetable farm entering its second year transitioning former corn and soybean ground to certified organic in 2015. bit.ly/1ByPLFD

Improving Soil Health
Sept. 11 | 4 p.m. | Cuba City, Wis.
This MOSES field day will illustrate an organic method of growing no-till soybeans, using a rolled eye mulch under a field of drilled soybeans. This method, which builds soil at the same time a crop is being grown, is gaining popularity for a variety of vegetable and agronomic crops. mosesorganic.org/events/organifield-days

Cider Apple Production Workshop
Sept. 11 | Stockholm, Wis.
 UW-Extension and Maiden Rock Apples, Cider & Winery invite you to attend an educational tour and orchard walk focused on commercial production and processing of cider apples. Discussions will include a brief history of cider production, commercial cider apple production and crop management from planting to harvest, grafting, budding and pruning. bit.ly/2xsoMn

Farm Aid 2014
Sept. 13 | Walnut Creek Amphitheater | Raleigh, N.C.
Farmer Grant Writing Workshop
Oct. 1 | 6-9 p.m. | Springfield, Ill.
Existing and prospective farmers are invited to participate in a free writing workshop to learn about the basics of grant writing as well as specifics on grants available through the North Central Region SARE Farmer Rancher Grant Program and the Ill. Dept. of Agriculture. bit.ly/1s5idflf

Webinar: Organic Livestock Inputs
Oct. 1 | 7 p.m. | Free
Organized by OEFFA, this webinar will cover commonly used organic inputs, what organic inspectors look for, and how livestock inputs are evaluated. It includes a pre-course self-study; in-class discussion and questions, examples and exercises; and a post-course evaluation. Participants who meet minimum requirements will receive a Certificate of Completion. Limited space is available. bit.ly/1rlk5sv

Webinar: Organic Farming and Soil Health
Oct. 7 | 4 p.m. | Free
Oregon Tilth and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service present this webinar about organic farming and soil health. This free webinar is available to the public. bit.ly/1oaEVeF

The “Dairy” Beginning:
Basics of Goat Dairy Management
Oct. 13 | 12-2 p.m. | Knoxville, Iowa
Farmer Grant Writing Workshop
Sept. 27-28 | Women’s Environmental Institute | North Branch, Minn.

5th Annual WEI / Growing Power Regional Training Weekend
Sept. 27-28 | Women’s Environmental Institute | North Branch, Minn.
This weekend offers urban and rural-based participants the opportunity to learn, plan, develop, operate, and sustain community food and farming projects. Project participants will acquire skilled techniques and knowledge they can take back to their communities and pass on to others. Workshops include: Build a Hoop House, Build soil with works amd compost, grow microgreens for health and income, grow mushrooms indoors, raise fish and greens together (aquaponics) and a bonfire chat with Will Allen. bit.ly/1veC6dv