

ORGANIC BROADCASTER™

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Proposed rule to strengthen organic enforcement contains hits, misses; comments needed

By Alice Runde & Abby Youngblood

The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) released the long-awaited “Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) Proposed Rule” last month. This rule is meant to implement provisions from the 2018 Farm Bill, along with multiple recommendations from the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), with the goal to update and modernize the organic regulations to strengthen oversight and enforcement to reduce fraud in the organic marketplace. **This is by far the most extensive regulatory change in organic standards since the publication of the USDA organic regulations 20 years ago.**

Regulations are much needed as organic sales have risen to more than \$55 billion annually in the U.S., according to the latest survey from the Organic Trade Association. With this rise in demand, supply chains have become more complex, with many uncertified entities handling organic products without direct oversight from the NOP, thus increasing the potential for fraud.

The 13 provisions in this rule and their intention are listed below, along with NOC’s analysis of the significant improvements the rule achieves and an outline of some of the shortfalls and opportunities for this rule. The NOP has encouraged the organic community to submit comments by Oct. 5, 2020, to help design a rule that meets its purpose.

Provisions

1. Reduce the types of uncertified entities in the organic supply chain that operate without USDA oversight—including importers, brokers, and traders of organic products. This will safeguard organic product integrity and improve traceability.
2. Require the use of NOP Import Certificates, or equivalent data, for all organic products entering the United States. This proposed change will expand the use of NOP Import Certificates to all organic products imported into the U.S., improving the oversight and traceability of imported organic products.
3. Clarify the NOP’s authority to oversee certification activities, including the authority to act

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Processors, farmers struggle with pandemic-fueled demand for locally raised meat

By Rachel Henderson

Jake Sailer had never seen anything like what happened this spring. Sailer, who owns an independent meat processing facility near Spring Valley, Wisconsin, was blown away by the sudden demand for local meat when COVID-19 started to force businesses to close and people to stay home. Many people, worried about the future, wanted to fill their freezers with locally raised meat. As with toilet paper and hand sanitizer, the run on meat spiraled into a panic.

Then, “the virus got into bigger packing plants, which shut them down, which put the stress on the farmers,” Sailer explained. “Small processors stepped up to the plate.” He personally worked with a local farmer to help him sell 400 hogs in 11 days. But that resulted in a processing backlog. His facility, and many like it, lacked any extra capacity to take on these new customers and soon had a long waiting list.

That story played out all over the country. In states where small farms make up a large portion of the rural economy—states like Wisconsin, Minnesota, Pennsylvania—meat processors struggled to safely



Consumers worried about food shortages during the pandemic are filling their freezers with meat, creating opportunity as well as issues for small-scale livestock producers.

Photo by Rachel Henderson

meet that demand. When I spoke to Sailer in August, he was just starting to get caught up but said he expects another big run this fall, the season when many small-scale farmers bring in their animals.

While this year has been extreme for meat processors across the country, it could also be seen as a heightened scenario of a growing trend. As the local food movement grows, consumers want to know where their meat comes from. They want to know their farmers and support a style of farming that matches their values. They want animals that have been raised on pasture, basked in sunshine, rooted under trees, had space to run, and ended their lives with just one bad day.

Meat Processing continues on 6

Act offers path toward climate-resilient farming

By Cristel Zoebisch

Farmers and ranchers are already feeling the impacts of the climate crisis, dealing with more erratic and severe weather events that affect their livelihoods. However, they are uniquely positioned to help combat these threats by improving the health of their soils through implementation of climate stewardship practices that enhance their resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.

Collectively, farmers and ranchers working to restore, maintain, and improve soil health can significantly contribute to our nation’s climate mitigation efforts by using soil health practices that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and store atmospheric carbon in the soil. Soil health management practices and systems can create carbon sinks, increase water-holding capacity, and improve recycling of nitrogen by crops.

The Agriculture Resilience Act (ARA), introduced by Representative Pingree (D-ME) earlier this year, recognizes the importance of soil health and encourages farmers and ranchers to pull carbon out of the air and into their soils. The bill includes specific soil health and research goals accompanied by legislative proposals to support widespread adoption of stewardship practices to help agriculture reach its climate-mitigating potential.

Proven soil-health-building practices include diverse, resource-conserving crop rotations, cover crops, conservation tillage, perennialization of highly erodible land, agroforestry, composting, organic agriculture, and advanced grazing management. The ARA would provide financial and technical assistance to help farmers and ranchers implement these soil health practices, thereby increasing profitability and enhancing their operations’ resilience to climate stresses.

This is the second article in the *Organic Broadcaster* summarizing the National Sustainable Agriculture

Coalition’s (NSAC) blog series covering various provisions in the ARA. The three blogs covered in this article highlight proposed changes to the country’s primary working lands conservation programs, enhancements for two U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) research programs, and a provision to support state-level soil health efforts.

Working Lands Conservation Programs

The fourth blog in the series focused on proposed changes to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and was co-authored by Michael Happ, NSAC Conservation Policy Specialist.

A major increase in support for working lands conservation programs is critical for agriculture to reach the goal of net zero by 2040 outlined in the ARA. Federal policy and resources need to support the transition of agriculture to more climate-friendly ways of farming. Without increased investment in conservation agriculture by the federal government, farmers and ranchers will not have the tools and resources to meaningfully participate and contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

EQIP offers farmers and ranchers financial cost-share and technical assistance to implement conservation practices on working agricultural land. Producers participating in EQIP can install or implement structural, vegetative, and management practices like improving irrigation efficiency, restoring pasture, or improving nutrient management.

The ARA would enhance EQIP’s ability to address climate change by adding GHG emissions reduction

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MOSES embraces time of 'necessary creativity'



By Lori Stern, MOSES Executive Director

As I sit down to write, there is already a chill in the air and kids are returning to school in all the variety of ways *that* is now happening. It is hard to believe that summer is coming to an end. This year has been nothing anyone expected.

For the past six years, I have been the chef/operator of Cow & Quince, a wholly, locally sourced restaurant in New Glarus. I opened Cow & Quince for connection with community over great food, locally sourced. At the time, my wife and I were running a farm stay and raising pastured Berkshires, layers and meat birds, and milking goats. The restaurant was another way to educate even more people about food, food systems, and the importance of sourcing responsibly. And, yes, it is possible to eat locally, year-round, even in Wisconsin! You do not run a locally sourced, community-supported restaurant for six years without a huge commitment to the larger mission of organic and sustainable agriculture, food justice, and healthy rural places.

Although my heart is heavy with the loss of my restaurant due to the pandemic, I am excited to take on the leadership of MOSES and continue to contribute to strengthening our food system in ways that are sustainable and equitable. Prior to opening Cow & Quince, I worked on policy issues related to health equity, food access, and social justice at the state and national levels from both the nonprofit and public sectors. Leading MOSES will provide me the opportunity to once again pull up a chair at state and national tables, in place of serving responsibly sourced ingredients on restaurant tables in my rural community.

I began my career as a teacher and am still an educator at my core. I also bring with me a depth of experience in adult education with a focus on participatory, action-based learning and popular education. These approaches require meaningful engagement and conversations with farmers and communities around

what their needs and priorities are, what actions they view as critical next steps. I look forward to learning along with you and working together to find the information and resources needed. I am eager to build on the longevity of MOSES and engage our partners to amplify our efforts and find consensus. As the saying goes, "if everyone pulled in one direction, the world would tip over." Now, it seems as though we need to pull in one direction to prop the world back up.

We are in a time of necessary creativity. I am taking over MOSES as we work toward our first virtual conference. I have experienced the power of gathering as a farmer community in La Crosse. But it has been many years since I have been able to attend. Who else was not in the room that would have contributed/benefitted? This is our opportunity with a virtual conference. We are taking this challenge as a new strength, to reach more participants and share the space with more partners.

The pandemic and recent protests have exposed realities of inequity in our society across so many of our systems: education, health, food, justice, and voter access to those whose lives it may never have touched. As I lead MOSES through these unprecedented times, it will be necessary to keep the focus on addressing justice, access, and equity through our programming. MOSES will identify funders, organizations, communities, and welcome new stakeholders from other sectors to work with and make the progress we all want to see across so many of the systems that allow us to produce high quality, organic, sustainable food.

I look forward to hearing from you. I recognize the diversity of experience and roles in organic and sustainable agriculture. And I know there are things we could do as a community and organization to be more welcoming of all who want to farm and be supported in their efforts.

The pandemic closed my restaurant that was my way of being in the world the way I wanted the world to be. But it also enabled me to step into this leadership role in an organization that does the same. And for that, I am both grateful and humbled.

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New regenerative organic certification label launches

By Zoe Schaeffer, Regenerative Organic Alliance

Regenerative Organic Certified (ROC), a new label for food, fiber, and personal care products, is now accepting applications for certification.

The label was first introduced in 2017 when a group of farmers, business leaders, and experts in soil health, animal welfare, and labor rights drafted the first ROC “framework,” the set of standards and criteria for earning certification. The certification is based on three pillars: soil health, animal welfare, and social fairness; and has three levels: bronze, silver, and gold.

In 2019, 19 farms and brands in seven countries participated in the Regenerative Organic Certified Pilot Program, agreeing to be audited to the ROC standard as it was first written and to provide feedback. The operations produced commodities from dairy to mangoes and cereal grains everywhere from Sri Lanka to Nebraska. The following farms and brands earned ROC designation following the pilot program:

- Apricot Lane Farms: Avocado Oil from Moorpark, California
- Dr. Bronner’s: Regenerative Organic Coconut Oil from Serendipol Ltd. in Sri Lanka
- Nature’s Path: Oats from Legend Organic farm in Saskatchewan, Canada
- Grain Place Foods: Popcorn and Cornmeal from Marquette, Nebraska
- Patagonia Provisions: Regenerative Organic Chile Mango from Sol Simple, Masaya, Nicaragua
- Lotus Foods: Brown and White Basmati Rice from Rohini, India
- Sol Simple: Banana from Masaya, Nicaragua

Other farms and businesses that received certification with products forthcoming:

- Tablas Creek Vineyards: Paso Robles, California
- Herb Pharm: Williams, Oregon
- Guayaki Yerba Mate: Misiones, Argentina

Armed with feedback from these farms and others, the Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA), which oversees Regenerative Organic Certified, brought on task forces specific to each pillar. Recognizing that grand ideals and on-farm realities don’t always align, the ROA brought on farmers from around the world in addition to soil scientists, fair trade experts, and animal welfare experts to deliberate the finer points of tillage, contract labor, calf hutches, and more. The goal was to create a standard that holds a high bar for regenerative and organic practices while respecting the realities of farming and ensuring that a standard like ROC can work on the ground.

“Farming has a unique fingerprint in every corner of the world, and writing a standard that could accommodate the dizzying diversity of operations took much conversation and debate, explained Elizabeth Whitlow, Executive Director of the Regenerative Organic Alliance. “In the end,



we think we’ve struck a balance between aspirational and attainable.”

The revised framework was released in June 2020 and is available at RegenOrganic.org.



ROC Explained

ROC is built on USDA Organic, and only farms that have already earned USDA Organic certification or a NOP-recognized international equivalent are eligible for ROC. ROC then adds additional criteria, like stricter requirements for raising livestock on pasture, more robust requirements for cover cropping/ground cover, and requirements around worker rights and fair trade, among others.

The social fairness pillar is the greatest differentiator between ROC and other certification programs on the market. ROC is the first of its kind to marry all three pillars: soil health and land management, animal welfare, plus farmer and farmworker fairness. The Regenerative Organic Alliance intends to reduce confusion for consumers by providing this single label that accounts for an entire suite of values, guaranteeing that the land, animals, and people involved in creating a product were all treated with respect. ROC is a promise to consumers that their purchase makes a positive impact at every level: environmentally, socially, and ethically.

The Regenerative Organic Alliance intends to reduce confusion for consumers by providing this single label that accounts for an entire suite of values, guaranteeing that the land, animals, and people involved in creating a product were all treated with respect.

ROC was created because regenerative organic agriculture has the potential to address many of today’s pressing problems, including climate change, the ills of factory farming, and fractured rural economies. Industrial agriculture and the factory farming of animals are top contributors to climate change. In turn, climate change is making it harder to farm. Our conventional farming system has degraded our soil to dangerous levels around the world. Farmers and farmworkers are some of our most essential workers, and yet they face low pay, risky working conditions, and lack of access to health insurance. Rates of suicide in the farming population are some of the highest in the nation. Rural economies in the U.S. and around the world are suffering.

It’s time to make clear, calculated changes to our food and fiber systems. If we adopt regenerative organic practices on more farms, we’ll see improvements to soil health, the well-being of animals, farmers, workers, and the climate itself.

Feedback from Pilot Participants

“As farmers around the world embrace this movement back to biodiversity, the ROC standard serves to not only set the goals but to unite the culture and conversation around regenerative agriculture,” said John Chester, Founder of Apricot Lane Farms.

Jordan Lonborg, viticulturist at Tablas Creek Vineyard, said, “In all honesty, when the info for ROC first crossed my desk, I did not pay much attention. As a certified organic and biodynamic property, juggling a third certification seemed a bit daunting. As I began to dig through what ROC was, its standards, and its overall mission, it became quite clear that this was something that Tablas Creek Vineyard had to get behind. What really drew us in was ROC’s commitment to the importance of the Social Responsibility pillar/standard. In the world of agriculture, all too often are the workers overlooked.”

“Grain Place Foods is committed to the long term goals established by the Regenerative Organic Certified program. It aligns with the vision of organic agriculture my father and I had when I returned to the family farm 45 years ago. Healthy soil is the key to a healthy life for everything,” said David Vetter, Grain Place founder.

“The Regenerative Organic Alliance’s certification program is allowing brands to come together as one cohesive voice in alignment towards the regenerative organic standards to really empower companies, farmers, and consumers with one voice,” said Manuel Gorriñ, Brand Engagement Manager for Nature’s Path Foods.

The ROA recognizes that farmers already face time and financial burdens managing certification programs. We aim to reduce that burden to growers and producers as much as possible while encouraging the growth of the regenerative organic market. Farmers and producers can leverage their existing

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"As a white farmer, I feel like MOSES is calling me racist with all this talk about anti-racism. I am not racist just because I'm white. Why is MOSES pushing this social agenda?"

Answer by Organic Specialist Chuck Anderas

To help answer this question, let's look at an email I recently received and have permission to share. It shows the lived experience of a Black woman in the Midwest:

*"At this rate, I don't think [I will] ever get land... It's been my dream to live on a farm since I can remember and I have no idea why. I love to grow in life and love and plants. I love outside. I love the hard work and rewards. I am making farmer friends and get invited to visit, yet have to have a white woman ride with me as I'm scared to drive alone to rural areas... I want an urban house with enough land to grow and share food and life and love because I don't want to not be around people who look like me even though the people who look like me are hurting and suffering... I don't want a farm in the rural area where I am disconnected from my community and my kids and grandkids have to be called n****r or something. So, here in Minnesota, how do you dream when you know the white world don't want nothing but death for you... Where is the hope for me? A farm. To live and die on. To teach my grandkids about planting and growing and harvesting and food and seeds and land and life..."*

One striking aspect of that email that I've heard repeatedly from farmers of color is the fear of rural areas. That fear is based in a long and violent history, and is real to this day. We shouldn't dismiss that fear. It's time for our rural communities to reckon with our history and current systems that benefit white people. I am not sure how else to respond to people of color when they share that deep pain with me except to say I'm committed to doing whatever I can to change that. So, MOSES will keep trying to get our community of farmers to reckon with this, to amplify the voices of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), to listen and learn, to try to overcome land access barriers for BIPOC, and to hold ourselves accountable for how we benefit from and uphold systemic racism.

When I responded to the question above that I received from a white farmer, I explained that MOSES is involved in the process of becoming anti-racist and doing this work because it's the right thing to do. The system as it exists is unjust. We strive for a world that is just—not only for those *who currently farm*. We



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have to examine who gets to farm, who has access to land, who has true agency in the food system, who is welcome and safe in rural places, who benefits from structural racism, and how we choose to either uphold or dismantle structural racism in our communities and organizations.

The definitions of the words we use are important. I use "racism" to refer to systemic and policy issues and not the way individual people feel about Black people. I am white, and acknowledging that racism is a problem in our society that we should work to fix isn't about me as an individual. What it does mean is that I acknowledge I've benefited from being white.

As an example, my mom's side of the family emigrated here from Sweden in the early 1900s. They moved to Chicago and my grandpa got a job at a young age in a machine shop. He eventually owned his own shop, and my family moved from the city out to a suburb in the 1950s. At that time (and still to this day but in less overt ways), Black people were systematically denied home loans. When Black people started fleeing the violence of the Jim Crow south between 1900 and 1970 in the Great Migration, they came to cities like Chicago and

Minneapolis. When they arrived, federal and local policy only allowed them to rent in certain neighborhoods. Black people who moved into white neighborhoods were met by mobs, and the police would not protect them. At the same time, my family was building generational wealth through homeownership.

Family wealth disparities by race persist to this day because of that legacy. It doesn't mean that my family didn't have to work hard; it just means that it was never *harder* for me and my family because we were white. It doesn't mean that white family farmers aren't facing unfair competition from unregulated agribusiness, for example, and that your life and work aren't hard. But being white does mean that you get to do that work. You might be "land rich, and cash poor," but BIPOC have been systemically denied the right to even be "land rich."

There is a huge racial divide in who has access to land. First of all, I have to acknowledge that this entire continent was stolen from Native nations. There has been a systematic removal of Black people from agricultural land since emancipation. Emancipated slaves never received their 40 acres and a mule. Despite that, by 1900, Black farmers owned around 15% of U.S. farmland. Today, that stands at less than 2%. The reason that number has fallen so drastically is because of violence and discrimination. In U.S. law, racial discrimination can only be prosecuted if you can prove the offender had discriminatory intent. This is intentionally an almost-impossible legal standard to meet.

The 1996 case of *Pigford v. Glickman* makes clear just how blatantly the Farm Service Agency was discriminating against African-American farmers. However, the settlement for each farmer was too little to undo the damage that had been done by decades of discrimination and most of those farmers never got back their land.

If you look into the facts of the history of agriculture and landowners in the U.S., you'll find the reasons why 98% of farmland here is owned by white people. It's not a personal attack on white farmers. It just means we have a lot of work to do because it matters who farms and it matters who is safe in our communities.

MOSES is organizing interested farmers around the issue. We recently put out a survey to take small first steps to see who wants to do the work, and to get folks organized. We are looking to partner with other organizations as much as possible.

If you'd like to be part of the farmer-led anti-racism work we're organizing, please take this survey: bit.ly/FarmerAnti-RacismGroupSurvey.



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Research on organic no-till makes strides with focus now on increasing yields

By Kathleen Delate

Reduced tillage or no-till can provide multiple environmental benefits, particularly in the area of soil conservation, as well as reducing costs for machinery, labor, and fuel. Organic no-till has unique challenges in that herbicides cannot be used to terminate cover crops as in conventional no-till. Researchers have been looking into best practices for organic no-till since 2005. We have learned an incredible amount from these organic no-till studies, but the challenge remains to balance improving soil quality with maintaining optimal yields. That is the focus of our current research.

At Iowa State University, we are working with Erin Silva and Brian Luck at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, along with farmer-cooperators in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania (Rodale Institute) on a USDA-NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant examining different equipment and settings to increase yields in organic no-till systems. The methods include planting a cover crop (rye for soybeans; hairy vetch for corn; and a mixture for vegetables) in the fall, and, in the spring when grass cover crops have reached anthesis (pollen shed), using a tractor to push or pull the roller crimper to crush cover crops in place of herbicide termination to fit within organic rules. The roller crimper is filled with water to weigh 2,000 pounds.

Several companies now manufacture roller crimpers. In addition, one can be fabricated using plans published on the Rodale website (rodaleinstitute.org/education/resources/roller-crimper-blueprints).

We have researched two types of rollers: Rodale's and the ZRX zone roller from Dawn Manufacturing (Sycamore, Illinois). The roller crimper Rodale has promoted works well on flat ground, pushed in front of the tractor, with a no-till planter pulled behind the tractor in a one-pass operation. Dawn uses individual rollers set up on planter rows, so 6 rollers are needed for a six-row planter. It has more down pressure due to hydraulics, unlike the Rodale roller, whose extra weight comes from filling it with water. It is also more flexible for rolling rye on hillier ground, due to their articulated design.

Planter design/set-up is also critical. Having extra down pressure on the planter helps get good seed-to-soil contact through the rolled mulch. Having a good planter also includes good pressing wheels and steel, furrow-closing wheels with adjustable down pressure to get the soil firmed after planting and pull the

rye mulch over the row. Because of the restriction on herbicides, all your weed management will be based on the mulch cover within and between crop rows, so any gaps can quickly fill with weeds. Planting at a high rate—at least 170,000 seeds per acre—will also help with weed management.

If weeds become too extensive, be prepared to cultivate with a high-residue cultivator (e.g., Hiniker, Mankato, Minnesota). As one farmer told me, it's better to "only cultivate once and get that carbon-rich rye crop in your ground, than doing four normal organic tilled weed management tillage operations."

Yield is the elusive element and requires these three factors: good seed emergence, good mulch-supported weed management, and enough rain to fill pods—and no hail, which hit some fields in Iowa during the derecho of August 10. Over the years, organic no-till soybeans have ranged from 20 bu/acre in drier years to 50 bu/acre when rains hit just right.

Weather still seems to be the most critical factor for success. If you plant and there's no rain, the thick mulch can hurt and slow emergence. Early wet weather can be damaging, too; it leads to slow cover crop decomposition, which invites moisture-loving insects like seed corn maggot and armyworms—several growers had issues with those pests this year. In typical organic tilled conditions, the ground is exposed, dries out somewhat, and is less prone to insect problems. Consistent, non-excessive rains lead to the best results, allowing the soybeans to canopy quickly and preventing weeds from emerging in any gaps in the cover crop mulch.

After 15 years of research on organic no-till in the Midwest, we are still looking at organic soybeans into rolled rye, which shows the most promise, although it still not a perfect system. Cindy Cambardella, soil scientist at USDA-Agricultural Research Service in Ames, Iowa, has consistently found higher soil quality in organic no-till systems, as the cover crop adds significant carbon and microbial biomass. Soil in plots with cover crops and no-till supported the greatest



Seven weeks after roller crimping with the Dawn ZRX roller, the rye mulch is suppressing most weeds in the soybeans at Iowa State University's research farm.

Photo by Kathleen Delate

levels of carbon, microbial populations, and nutrients.

While conventional no-tillers cite many of these same soil conservation benefits, organic no-till should never be compared to conventional no-till, which has consistent results in cover crop termination because of the use of a herbicide (glyphosate). Glyphosate is listed as a probable carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Association. In addition, glyphosate use is associated with herbicide-resistance across the countryside.

Summer 2020 Studies

At the Levi Lyle Farm in Keota, Iowa, soybeans were planted into mature rye on June 2, comparing the Rodale and Dawn rollers; 15- vs. 30-inch rows; and an electric WeedZapper™ (Old School Manufacturing, Sedalia, Missouri). Soybeans have been productive in both systems, spared by the derecho, with harvest in October. There appears to be a trend towards greater weed management in the Rodale-roller side of the demonstration plots. The WeedZapper™ killed most weeds above the soybean canopy; we are anxious to see if this will translate into a yield bump.

Organic No-Till continues on 16

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Meat Processing— from page 1

For their part, many direct market farmers—myself included—are happy to meet that demand and those expectations. The values that consumers hold dear are consistent with our values. We want to see animals on the landscape living their best lives. We want to improve animal health and keep feed costs low by providing access to pasture and forage. And, we want to be able to sell the meat at the end of the season to someone who appreciates the work we and the animals have put in. Something has to happen first, though, and that's where meat processors like Sailer's come in.

Farmers who are selling directly to consumers have a couple of paths open to them. Some choose to sell whole, half, or quarter animals to a customer. That customer can then place a specific order for processing. After paying the farmer for the animal, they then pay the meat processor for the cutting, curing, and packaging. Other farmers opt to have all of the processing done, and sell cuts of packaged meat. Depending on the sales venue, that may require a retail food license, additional packaging and labeling requirements, and/or freezer and refrigeration inspections.

Wisconsin actually has a very high number of meat processors per capita compared to other states with large agriculture sectors. However, many of them are custom processors, exempt from inspections, that cater directly to hunters bringing in game. There are, additionally, many licensed meat processors who specialize in butchery, charcuterie, and retail sales, and many of those forgo their own slaughtering facilities. Farmers who want to work with those operations still need to find a place to have their animals slaughtered. Most of that happens at state-inspected or USDA-inspected facilities like Sailer's. Those businesses have become more and more overwhelmed as small farms increase their production and sales of meat.

As consumers stockpile meat, calling farms in search of a meat supply and adding their names to producers' waiting lists, many farmers are wondering if they should ramp up production. But for farmers to increase production to meet that demand, they need to be assured of having access to processing.

Legislation

There have been a few attempts to create legislation that would help ease the burden of processing regulations. The Cooperative Interstate Shipment program (CIS), authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill and launched by USDA-Food Safety and Inspection Service in 2012, allows state-inspected meats from qualifying plants to be shipped across state lines. In this pandemic year, the program added three facilities in Indiana, six in Iowa, and seven in Ohio; Wisconsin already had 18 processing facilities in the program. (See a list of all CIS processors at bit.ly/CISprocessors.)

In addition to that program, a couple of proposed legislative acts, the PRIME Act and the DIRECT act, would help producers reach a larger market with their meat. The PRIME Act would allow farmers to take

their animals to custom slaughterhouses and then sell the meat within their state, either direct to consumer or to restaurants and retailers who in turn sell direct to consumer.

For many small farmers, the closest urban area or the best farmers market may be in another state. It may seem like a lucrative market is at their fingertips, but they first need to drive several hours to access a USDA-inspected facility, then make another round trip to pick up the meat, all to be able to sell it at a market that may be relatively close by. The regulation being proposed by the PRIME Act would help solve this problem.

The DIRECT Act would amend retail exemptions under current law to allow meat processed under state-inspected establishments to be sold online to buyers across state lines.

What neither of these acts do is create additional infrastructure. In fact, some producers worry that they could create more of a backlog on our state-inspected processors.

Mobile slaughter units seem to many to be part of the solution. A self-contained slaughter facility can travel from site to site and are subject to the same inspections as a "fixed" slaughter facility; there are currently only nine of these that are USDA-inspected. Many more operate within states, though state departments of agriculture in some cases impose more strict limitations on mobile units than on fixed facilities. In Wisconsin, for example, meat processed at mobile units can't be sold as cuts or packages, but must be sold as whole animals. This limits flexibility in sales. Still, producers are hopeful about the future of mobile slaughter. The investment to start a new processing facility is enormous, and while mobile facilities involve many of the same costs, they avoid the obvious overhead of a permanent building.

Issues for Processors

Jake Sailer is the fifth generation of his family to run Sailer's Meats, helping to grow the from a meat market and grocery store into a full-service meat locker. In 2006, Sailer oversaw the construction and opening of the current facility, complete with a retail storefront.

"When we built our facility in 2006, I knew that we could make this go," Sailer said. He was confident in the viability of the business, and that he could see a quick return on investment of that expanded space and additional coolers. Seeing the increased demand, and with that facility running constantly at its maximum capacity, Sailer purchased a building to embark on another expansion earlier this year. "And, everything has gone off track since then," he added, referring to the pandemic and continued uncertainty several months in. In contrast to 2006, when he was completely sure his business could sustain the needed growth, in this case there is more risk.

"Plant manager, retail manager, hiring all these people—I can't do it all myself anymore, at that scale,"

he explained. "We will literally have to double our capacity to make the payroll. Good wages for management, good wages for workers, there's a lot of things to factor in." As they progress toward that new facility, he continues to scratch his head over whether they can guarantee doubling their workload.

Sailer sees his colleagues and competition around him, and worries about the future. He sees small, family-operated meat processors and wonders if they have an "escape plan," as he calls it. They may not have a family member or next generation ready to step in, and selling this type of business can be hard, even in good times. He says he doesn't want to see them shut down, but he knows the demand is still strong, and growing, and hopes his new facility can help fuel that.

"Labor and training will always be a meat processors nightmare," Sailer said. Like many others who have worked their whole careers in the meat cutting business, he worries about a shortage in the workforce. He sees it as a promising career; starting wages are high for a rural area, and there's always work for people who want it. He hopes that educational programs that introduce students to butchery, among other trades, can help young people see the opportunity that's here.

Issues for Farmers

Every year on our farm, we raise a small number of animals—hogs, lambs, and poultry. They provide a number of biological benefits, and also a much-needed diversification in our income stream. Every year we have more people interested than we're able to provide for, and every year we think about what it would look like to expand. There are, of course, a lot of factors that go into considering more livestock on a farm, but as for many of our farmer colleagues, the question of access to processing is one of the biggest. Like all of those farmers back in March who panicked when processors shut down, we fear being left with animals with no place to go.

Rachel Henderson and her husband, Anton Ptak, own Mary Dirty Face Farm near Menomonie, Wisconsin. She is also an on-farm organic specialist for MOSES. You can reach her through the Organic Answer Line: 888-90-MOSES.





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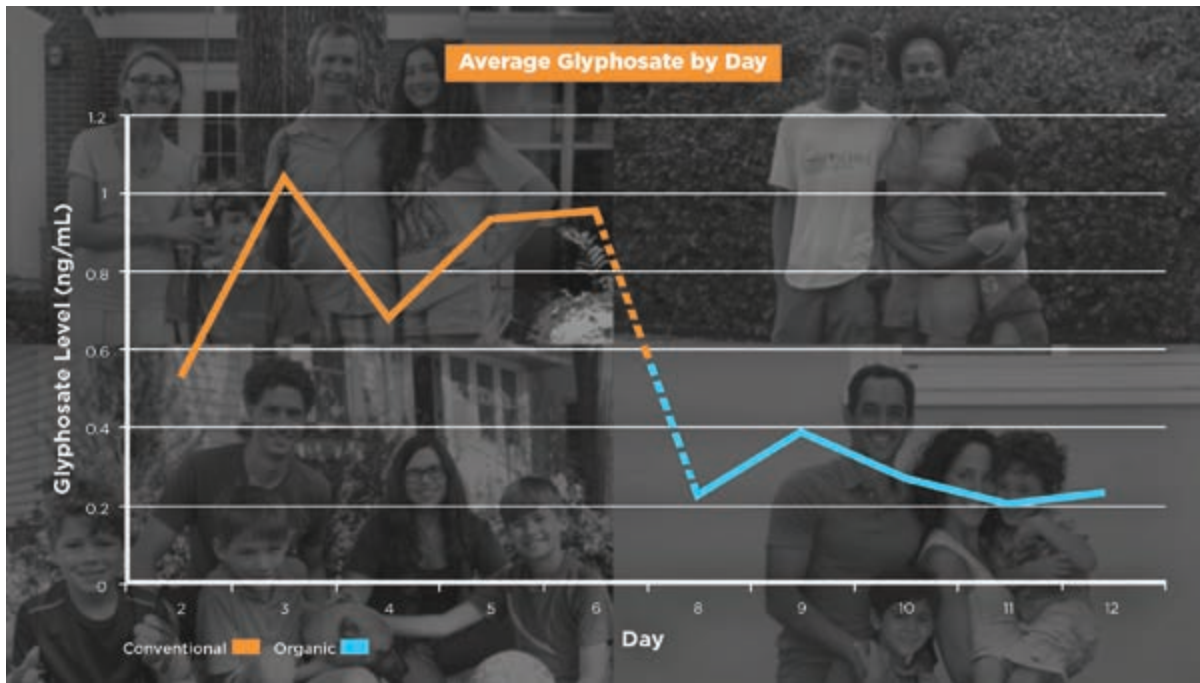
By Kendra Klein

In the Organic for All study published in 2019 and showcased at the 2019 MOSES Conference, Friends of the Earth compared levels of pesticides present in participants before and after switching to an organic diet. Study results recently have been updated to include glyphosate—the main ingredient in Roundup and the most widely used pesticide in the world. Test results show levels of glyphosate dropped by 71% after just six days on an organic diet, and its main metabolite, AMPA (amino-methyl phosphonic acid) dropped by 76%.

“As a parent, seeing these results is shocking,” said Scott Hersrud, a father of three from Minneapolis, Minnesota. His family was part of the peer-reviewed study (foe.org/the-study) evaluating whether an organic diet could make a difference in the levels of pesticides found in their bodies. “If my kids have this much of a change in their numbers,” Hersrud added, “what would other families have?”

The answer to that question is increasingly clear thanks to this study, which is part of a comprehensive scientific analysis showing that switching to an organic diet rapidly and dramatically reduces exposure to pesticides, including glyphosate, organophosphates, pyrethroids, neonicotinoids, and 2,4-D.

This new analysis is the first to look at how an organic diet affects exposure to glyphosate. We tested four families in Minneapolis, Baltimore, Atlanta, and Oakland. Each family ate their typical non-organic diet for six days followed by a completely organic diet for six days. Every day, we collected urine samples from the families and sent them to an independent lab, Health Research Institute, for analysis. While only 16 people



Source of both charts: Friends of the Earth

average level of glyphosate in children was approximately five times higher than in adults.

Parents have good reason to be concerned about their children’s exposure to glyphosate and other pesticides. While pesticide food residues often fall below levels that regulators consider safe, U.S. regulations have not kept pace with the latest science. They ignore the compounding effects of our daily exposures to a toxic soup of pesticides and other industrial chemicals. Regulators also set one “safe” level for all of us, failing to reflect that we can have higher risk at different times

in our lives, including in utero and as children.

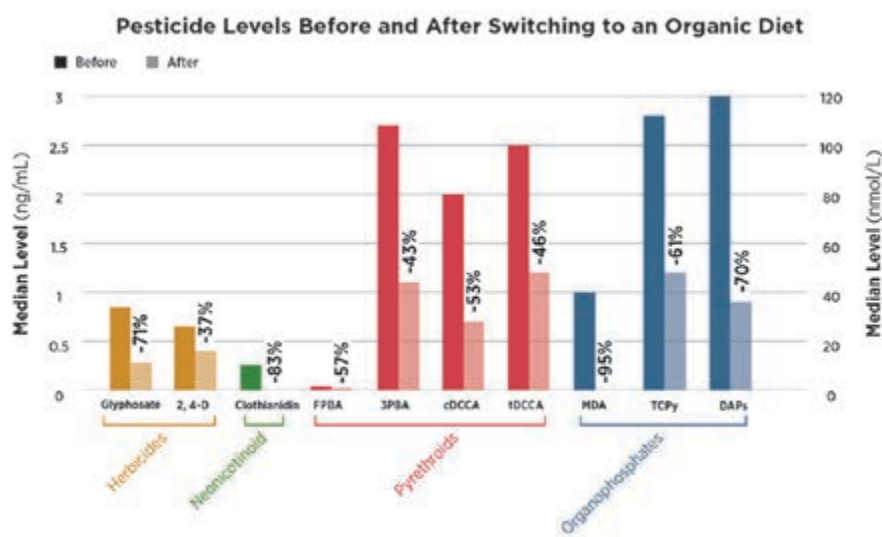
In addition, we now know that incredibly small amounts of certain chemicals can disrupt our hormone systems. These “endocrine disruptors” can scramble, block, or mimic critical cellular mechanisms in our bodies, increasing risk of cancers, learning disabilities, birth defects, obesity, diabetes, and reproductive disorders. Along with glyphosate, over 50 pesticides are associated with endocrine disruption.

It’s time to make organic food the norm rather than the exception. Organic food is often treated as if it’s an individual shopping preference when, in fact, it is a human rights issue. We all have the right to food that is free of toxic pesticides. People living in farm communities should have the right to be free of exposure to toxic pesticides, starting with the children who live and go to school near farm fields where pesticides are sprayed and including farmers and farmworkers who are exposed daily. The way we farm should protect rather than harm the biodiversity, soil, and water that sustain all life.

Creating an organic food system would require shifting taxpayer dollars from propping up a pesticide-intensive farming system to supporting an equitable organic food system for all U.S. farmers and communities. We can look to the European Union for some inspiration of how this can be done. This year, the EU announced plans to halve use of pesticides by 2030 and transition at least 25% of agriculture to organic.

The good news is we already have the solution—we know how to grow abundant organic food. Together, we can continue to work to create a food system where organic is for all. See www.organicforall.org for details and action steps.

Government failure to regulate glyphosate has led to increasing exposure. Glyphosate was flagged as a potential carcinogen as far back as 1983 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), yet use of the chemical has grown exponentially in the market dominated by Monsanto, which was purchased by Bayer in 2018. An extensive set of internal company documents uncovered by a spate of high profile lawsuits reveal how Monsanto’s influence over the EPA succeeded in suppressing health concerns.



Kendra Klein, Ph.D., is Senior Staff Scientist with Friends of the Earth.

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Organic Enforcement — from page 1

- against an agent or office of a certifying agent. Additionally, certifying agents must notify the NOP upon opening a new office, which will allow the NOP to provide more effective and consistent oversight of certifying agents and their activities.
- Clarify the labeling of nonretail containers used to ship or store organic products. Requiring additional information on nonretail containers will clearly identify organic products, reduce the mishandling of organic products, and support traceability. This is needed to maximize the linkage between operation certificates and import certificates and the organic product.
 - Specify the minimum number of unannounced inspections of certified operations that must be conducted annually by accredited certifying agents and require that mass balance and trace-back audits be completed during on-site inspections.
 - Require certifying agents to issue standardized certificates of organic operation generated from the USDA's Organic Integrity Database (INTEGRITY) and to keep accurate and current certified operation data in INTEGRITY. Standardization will simplify the verification of valid organic certificates and import certificates. It will also reduce reporting by eliminating the need to provide notices of approval or denial of certification and annual lists of certified operations to USDA.
 - Clarify that certified operations only need to submit changes to their organic system plan during annual updates and clarify that certifying agents must conduct annual inspections of certified operations. This will reduce paperwork burden for organic operations and ensure that all organic operations are inspected at least once a year.
 - Establish specific qualification and training requirements for certifying agent personnel, including inspectors and certification reviewers. Requiring that personnel meet minimum education and experience qualifications and requiring continuing education will ensure quality and consistency of certification activities performed by certifying agents.
 - Clarify conditions for establishing, evaluating, and terminating equivalence determinations with foreign government organic programs, based on an evaluation of their organic foreign conformity systems. This will ensure the compliance of organic products imported from countries that have organic equivalence determinations with the United States.
 - Clarify requirements to strengthen and streamline enforcement processes, specifically noting that the NOP may initiate enforcement action against any violator of the OFPA, including responsible parties; defining the term "adverse action" to clarify what actions may be appealed

and by whom; and clarifying NOP's appeal procedures and options for alternative dispute resolution.

- Specify certification requirements for grower group operations, to provide consistent, enforceable standards and ensure compliance with the USDA organic regulations. Grower group certification would be restricted to crop production and handling only, and would require the use of an internal control system to monitor compliance.
- Clarify the method of calculating the percentage of organic ingredients in a multi-ingredient product to promote consistent interpretation and application of the regulation.
- Require certified operations and certifying agents to develop improved recordkeeping, organic fraud prevention, and trace-back audit processes. Information sharing between certifying agents and documented organic fraud prevention procedures are also required.

Implementation period

For this SOE rule, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is proposing that all requirements of the rule be implemented within 10 months of the effective date of the final rule (meaning one year after publication of the final rule). Some believe one year is too long given the urgency of cracking down on organic fraud and the delays we've already experienced, and others have said that the implementation timeframe is too short given the complexity of the rule. A tiered or phased approach for implementation could help address both issues.

Successes of Proposed Rule

From NOC's perspective, the provisions intended to increase supply chain traceability (such as requiring more operations to get certified, requiring mass balance and trace-back audits, and requiring certifiers to share information with each other for enforcement purposes), are significant improvements that will help certifiers and the NOP more effectively identify and crack down on fraud. NOC has pushed hard to get these improvements codified and we are glad to finally see regulatory language that includes these new requirements.

Another big success of the proposed rule is that it codifies many existing best practices and instructions to certifiers. Without formal regulatory language, it is challenging to fully enforce these requirements. Some areas where the new regulation would codify existing best practices are the requirement that certifiers conduct unannounced inspections for at least 5% of the operations they certify annually, and codification of requirements for grower groups.

The 2018 Farm Bill specifically required USDA to do a rulemaking to:

- Reduce the types of uncertified entities in the organic supply chain that operate without USDA oversight—including importers, brokers, and

traders of organic products, to safeguard organic product integrity and improve traceability.

- Require the use of NOP Import Certificates, or equivalent data, for all organic products entering the U.S.
- Clarify NOP's authority to oversee certification activities, including the authority to act against an agent or office of a certifying agent, such as foreign satellite office of certifying agents.

The proposed SOE rule addresses those issues, but it also goes far beyond and includes a whole host of regulatory changes with the goal of improving organic integrity across the supply chain and building consistent certification practices to deter and detect organic fraud.

Shortfalls of Proposed Rule

NOC has also identified some significant and glaring gaps in the proposed rule that must be addressed in the rule itself or in other ways.

- Import certificates: It is not clear that the requirements for import certificates will have the intended impact for two reasons: 1) NOP Import Certificates must be uploaded into the ACE system within 10 calendar days of the shipment entering the U.S., meaning organic products can come into ports of entry and enter the marketplace without this accompanying documentation; and 2) If the information in the import certificate is insufficiently verified or up to date, the certificate gives a false confidence.
- Gaps in regulatory language: In some parts of the proposed rule, there is no specific regulatory language that clearly accomplishes the intent expressed by NOP in explanatory text. Without adding specific regulatory language, certain provisions cannot be consistently enforced by certifiers.

For example:

- NOC believes AMS should implement a new requirement that certifiers report acreage data into the Organic Integrity Database, but the regulatory language in the proposed rule does not fully address this issue;
- NOC suggests clear regulatory explanation of what the term "risk-based" means in the regulatory text. Certifiers are required by the new rule to use a "risk-based" approach when determining when to conduct supply chain audits and unannounced inspections. Without indicating what this means, there may be wide variations across certifiers in how they implement these requirements.
- The regulatory language and explanatory text needs to more clearly express the intent for the exemption from certification at § 205.101 (e): An operation that only stores, receives, and/or loads agricultural products,

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Coalition forms amid pandemic to advocate for structural change in rural U.S.

By Laura Thomas, Graham Christensen, Rob Wallace, & John Gulick

The writing has been on the wall for years. The industrial agricultural system has been on the brink of collapse for some time, being only one major disruption or a series of disruptions away from catastrophe. COVID-19 was, in fact, that catastrophic disruption.

After a culmination of historic weather events and political mishaps already sinking the agricultural economy, the virus was all that was needed to unleash the unfathomable into the day-to-day fabric of our lives, exacerbating the severity of the ongoing farm crisis and accelerating the decay of the modern food production system.

One of many groups already conversing about a structural re-direction of agriculture prior to the COVID-19 outbreak was GC Resolve. GC Resolve, an initial founding group of the RegeNErate Nebraska network, had been advocating loudly to move to the more solution-oriented and community-based regenerative agriculture model. As believers in a more unified front to connect all the varying sectors of the food production system together, GC Resolve was already participating in national conversations around reconstructing the future direction for the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Unintentionally, COVID-19 expedited the public's understanding of the many shortcomings, both direct and indirect, of a food production model that has become a great risk to us all. This historic event educated and energized the public's understanding of the fragility of the current food system structure.

Most profound was the increased exposure to the virus of the "essential" workers packed into a handful of over-centralized processing plants controlled by only a few companies, many foreign-owned. To make matters worse, these companies and a handful of elected officials suppressed information about safety issues arising from worker exposure to the virus, withheld the infection data from the general public, and neglected health care benefits and in many cases clean personal protective equipment (PPE) for the workers. In the case of Brazilian-owned JBS Swift in Grand Island, Nebraska, resources that could have gone to protect workers have instead been allocated towards the host city's recreational goals. (See www.newschannelnebraska.com/story/42433181/jbs-donates-to-multiple-grand-island-projects.)

As the GC Resolve team began to devise local strategies in Nebraska to support and uplift their regenerative

network, which consists of about 90 regenerative farmers, tribes, supporting businesses and partnering organizations, they were approached by Rob Wallace, evolutionary biologist and author of *Big Farms Make Big Flu*, to further build up a national coalition aimed at devising solutions to the problems rural communities are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. GC Resolve jumped at the opportunity to build on their work taking place in the heartland. This coalition is now known as PReP Rural. PReP stands for Pandemic Research for the People. It is a crowdfunded program the Agroecology and Rural Economics Research Corps set up to rapidly devise and disseminate practical solutions that will aid communities around the world struggling with the pandemic.

PReP is sponsoring a series of working groups to address different facets of the pandemic. While PReP Rural is focused on supporting rural communities, PReP Neighborhoods, for instance, is addressing how mutual aid groups can help in inner-city neighborhood responses. Another PReP group, PReP Agroecologies, is addressing what alternate agricultures that keep pathogens from emerging in the first place might look like.

A lot of great research is being conducted right now on COVID-19 from its biomolecular characteristics to potential antivirals to epidemiologies at the broadest geographic scales. Still much research remains handcuffed by an increasingly tense political climate.

Meanwhile, the needs of everyday people most immediately affected by the pandemic are being left unaddressed. PReP Rural focuses on answering questions around people's pandemic needs first, and then delivering key structural action steps identified to be the most impactful ways to redirect our food systems away from the industrial model and towards regeneration.

After the first PReP Rural meeting the coalition drafted a values statement:

"The impact of vertically integrated agriculture has had a devastating impact on rural communities including on Native American, African American, Latino/Latina, Immigrant and Refugee, and Family Farm and Ranch families. COVID-19 has highlighted national security risks which point to long-overdue updates or reforms to the current agricultural and food production system. In response, a new coalition, PReP Rural, has formed for the purpose of carving out a regenerative pathway forward to ensure good health, fairness and

equality, ecological purity, and economic prosperity for all those living in rural communities."

PReP Rural's research is focused on addressing solutions for the issues rural communities are facing during the pandemic through a series of urgent dispatches composed for a more intersectional community within the general public. The coalition meets regularly through Zoom with a speakers series and dialogue focusing on key questions and a wide array of interconnected issues including the national security implications of centralized food production, the interdependence of urban and rural agrofood ecologies, the evolution of the modern-day conventional food system from the inception of slavery and indentured servitude, good nutrition and wellness, pathways of ownership of land for young and diverse people, and the reorganization of federal farm subsidies.

Recently the PReP Rural Coalition released their first Dispatch Action Steps titled, "Fixing COVID-19-related disparities and the national security threat of a fragile food system." (See bit.ly/PRePactiononCOVID). Centered around national security issues stemming from COVID-19, the dispatch includes a case study from Nebraska on how the de-regulation of industrial agro-business has allowed the food system to threaten our regional and therefore national security, brings to light human rights violations impacting meatpacking workers and farmers, and advocates for clear and simple solutions in order to expedite regeneration.

These dispatches are composed to help more people better understand the big picture, and to guide a more unified approach around key regenerative solutions. Intersectional understanding of the national security threats from our fragile food system is foundational to regenerative change.

The coalition has already garnered attention from various media outlets locally, nationally, and globally after the release of the first PReP Rural Dispatch Action Steps. Immediate actions from the first dispatch include both state and federal actions:

1. Increase meatpacking worker protections, pay, and safety standards. Since meatpacking workers are deemed as essential, they should be offered a route to U.S. citizenship. Meatpacking and other food processing workers are equal partners for achieving regional resilience on the foundation of a regenerative food system.

PReP Rural continues on 16



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Farmer, financial advisor share insights on organic grain transition

By Chuck Anderas

Back in January, when we could still gather in close quarters, MOSES hosted a meeting with an advisory committee of agricultural professionals and farmers from Wisconsin and Minnesota to set training priorities for our summer field days. Our discussion centered on the three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social. One of the priorities identified in that meeting was the need to train more farmers on how to transition to organic grain production and to emphasize the benefits from a holistic approach, covering production, financial, and social perspectives. Our original plan was to have a field day in July on Jon and Ruth Jovaag's farm near Austin, Minnesota. Due to COVID-19, we pivoted to doing an episode for the MOSES Organic Farming Podcast and a virtual field day. Paul Deitmann from Compeer Financial and the Jovaags shared their expertise and experience with the "hows" and "whys" of transitioning to organic. Here are some highlights of what they shared.

Why Transition to Organic?

The most obvious financial reason to transition to organic is that the price of organic grains is significantly more. Organic corn can be two to three times the conventional price, and organic soybeans are usually double conventional soybeans. Jon and Ruth started their organic journey with a 12-acre field that had been in hay. Since they hadn't applied any conventional inputs in the past 36 months, they didn't have to transition it. They grew organic corn that first year, and had a steep learning curve with cultivation, in particular, Jon said. "The yield wasn't great but we made a better profit off that little field than in our conventional fields," he added. At that point, Jon was sold on transitioning all their acreage to organic, thinking that "if I can turn a little bit of a profit by making many, many mistakes, imagine if I only made half as many mistakes!"

Both Jon and Paul warned, however, that price alone won't be enough motivation for transition.

"If price is the main reason, they're probably not going to be successful," Paul said. "They have to be interested in all aspects of organic production and willing to learn. Price gets their attention, but they have to really want to do it."

Jon echoed that sentiment. "People who want to transition have to like to solve problems, and really

Jon Jovaag terminates a winter rye cover crop using a loader-mounted roller crimper while pulling a planter to plant soybeans in a one-pass operation. The Jovaags are gradually transitioning their 400-acre crop and livestock farm in Minnesota to organic.

See video of the virtual field day on the Jovaag Farm: bit.ly/FieldDayJovaagFarm.

Listen to episode 12 on the MOSES Organic Farming Podcast: mosesorganic.org/farming/moses-podcast.

Photo by Jovaag Farm



understand and buy into organic. You have to think of it as bigger than 'hey I want to make some more money.' You really have to think about it like that you want to have a whole regenerative organic system to produce food in a really sound way, and have a whole system." Understanding the systems approach to organic production and believing in its value will help "when you run into little glitches and hurdles so you can solve those problems rather than saying 'we'll just spray it,'" he explained.

Paul said that sometimes farmers are initially attracted to organic because of the price, but the process of transitioning "opens a farmer's eyes to some things they didn't really like about conventional farming" like not being able to hug your kids until you change and shower after spraying. Often, people will see the benefits of organic production after starting the transition, and the transition time helps them to look at farming as managing a system.

Economics of Transition

When thinking through the economics of transitioning to organic, you should start with a balance sheet and get a good understanding of your working capital, or your current assets minus current liabilities, Paul advised. You want to have a "2:1 or 3:1 ratio of current assets to current liabilities," he added. That

will give you the idea of how much cash you have to work with as a starting point.

Next, you should build enterprise budgets for both the transition years and once you are certified, and build that into a multiyear cash flow projection, Paul explained. That will help you think through "what months will we have cash coming into the operation, what months going out, how will we cover family living costs during the transition, how are we going to make loan payments during the transition, where will there be deficits during that time and what are your plans to make it through those times when cash is short?"

Paul recommended using the OGRAIN Compass tool to help you develop your balance sheet, enterprise budgets, and multiyear cash flow projection. OGRAIN Compass is a free Excel-based tool to help you run out your financial plan for 10 years; it can also build in capital purchases.

Jon recommended looking at finances in the long term. "This 40-acre field might not cash flow that well, but you're looking at it in a five- to seven-year time-frame. The reason you're doing that is to get to everything being certified so you have that value added." Rather than focusing on how each field in transition will cash flow, Jon thinks in terms of the whole farm.

Organic Grain Transition continues on next page



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Organic Grain Transition — from previous page

So, for your whole operation, how should you think through cash flow and profitability during the transition years? First of all, Paul said that “profit is a return on assets and a return on equity” that includes non-cash expenses like depreciation while “cash flow is cash that goes in and cash that goes out and excludes things like depreciation that isn’t a cash expense.”

If you look at profitability during the transition years, you might get scared off, he cautioned. However, you might find the cash flow isn’t as bad as profitability during the three-year transition time. Overall, it is important to think long-term as you transition to organic production both in terms of production and economics, he said.

Transition Planning

Both Paul and Jon agreed that it takes a lot of knowledge to farm organically.

“If someone is thinking of transitioning, start the plan a year before you stop farming conventionally and start your transition,” Paul said. “Go to the MOSES Conference, go to the OGRAIN Conference, go to field days, talk to other organic farmers, talk to transitioning farmers, talk to suppliers, gather information before you make the first practical effort towards transitioning.”

Jon did exactly that, attending the MOSES Conference and the Minnesota Organic Conference a couple of years before they started their transition. Jon also sought experienced organic farmers to ask questions.

“Find somebody who knows more about it than you do—it’s easy to do that when you don’t know much,” Jon said. “The key to success is to get a good mentor and learn as much as you can.” The MOSES Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program offers one-on-one support for beginning and transitioning farmers from seasoned organic farmers in their region. Applications for the 2021 program are due Oct. 31. See mosesorganic.org/mentor-program.

Another important piece of advice from Paul was that you shouldn’t transition too many acres at one time. “If it’s 1,000 acres, do maybe 200 acres the first year at most,” he advised. “You need to rebuild knowledge of things like cultivation. Do maybe a fifth of your acres, but don’t bite off more than you can chew.”

Jon added, “Sometimes we wished we had transitioned faster, but looking back there’s a lot you have

to learn. You don’t have the band-aids you do in conventional.” While the Jovaags started with a 12-acre hayfield, they haven’t transitioned all of their hayfields. Some of their fields are more difficult to access or can’t be grazed so are less ideal for forage-based transitions. For those fields, they have started the first-year transition with field peas/oats that they grind for feed.

After harvest, Jon plants a winter rye cover crop. In the spring, they roller crimp the rye and no-till non-GMO soybeans for their second year of transition. “The non-GMO beans gets you a little premium,” Jon said. “Yields are comparable to conventional soybeans.” Then they grow organic corn the first year of organic certification.

“The easiest way [to transition] is hay, but we have other ways, too,” Jon said. He also emphasized a transition plan that helps keep weeds down for the first year when you start organic. Paul added that “if there is a market, hay is a great transition crop. From a cash flow perspective, it provides more cash and takes less cash out than if you’re trying to transition non-GMO soybeans, for example.”

How do you decide which fields to start your transition? Some farmers start with their best fields. “If the acres produce good conventional corn and beans, they’ll produce good organic corn and beans,” Paul said about that strategy.

Others start with their worst fields, thinking that if it doesn’t work out the risk is buffered by strong conventional yields in other fields. Paul has seen people do it either way and it has worked. Jon didn’t think about it in terms of field quality but started the transition “by whichever field happened to be in hay. But then after that, I looked at it in what fit rotations best. It was more of which way could I most quickly convert everything to organic in terms of rotations rather than thinking through best or worst fields.”

It is important to talk with your lender, Paul said, to make sure you are on the same page and that they truly understand organic. A lot of lenders now understand organic transition and will work with you. At Compeer, they have developed a loan program specifically for transitioning to organic called the Organic Transition Loan Program. It is a declining balance operating loan designed around the way cash flow typically works.

“We know that cash will be short by X number of dollars, so we take that cash shortage and set that up as

an operating loan,” Paul explained. During transition, farmers only need to pay interest on the operating loan where typically the principal and interest would be paid to zero each year because it should be paid out of operating income. “It’s basically an 8-year loan; the first three years, it is an interest-only operating loan. The last five years, it’s a term loan with regular principal and interest payments.”

In many cases, farmers don’t need specific loan programs to help them transition to organic, Paul added. “Once farmers get into the transition, they realize cash isn’t going to be as short as they thought it was going to be,” he said.

Social Aspect

Organic farmers often talk about what it’s like being the only organic farmer in the neighborhood and how that can be isolating. There is cultural pressure to have “clean” fields, and your neighbors and family might have assumptions about organic farming based on little experience. Fortunately, there is a growing community of organic farmers and this community is one that freely shares knowledge and experience.

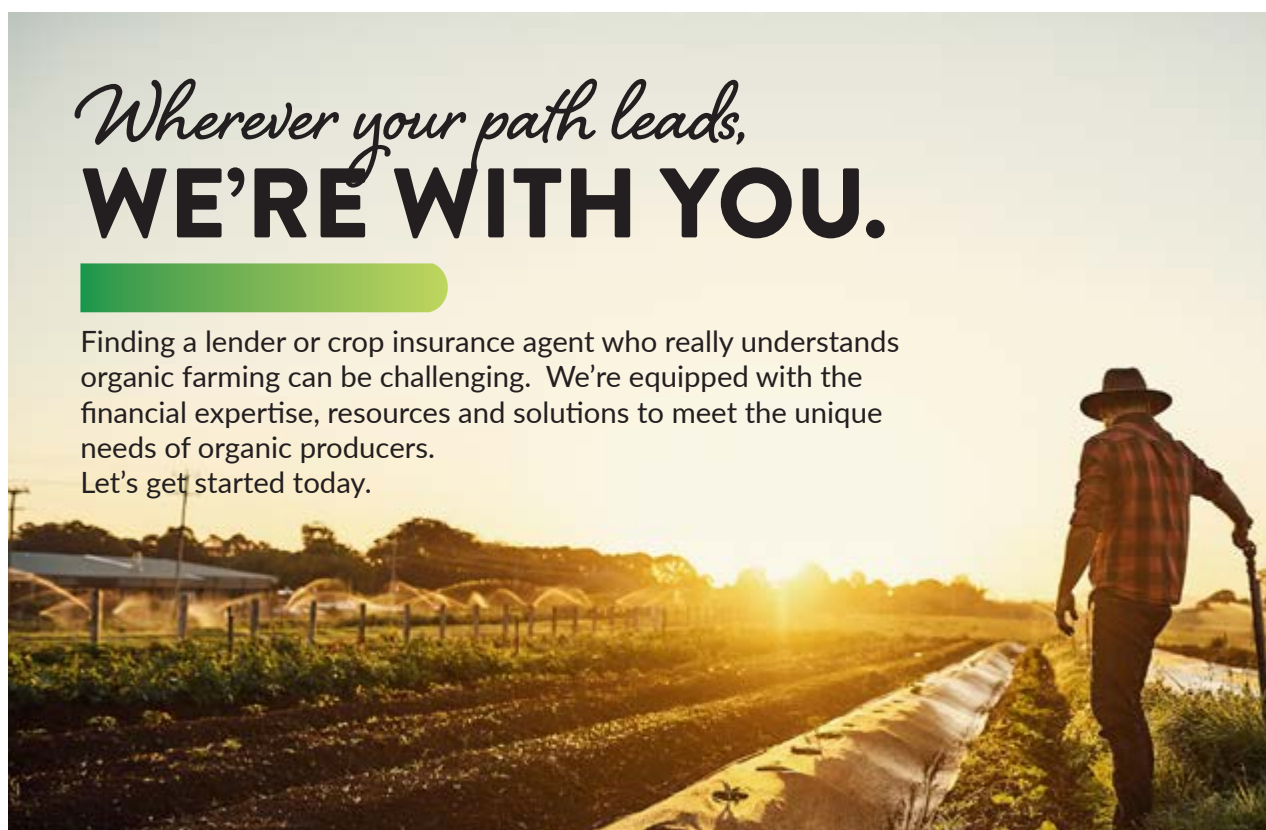
Transitioning to organic is a way to step off the twin treadmills of getting bigger all the time and herbicide resistance. As Paul pointed out, organic farming can allow you to work at a more manageable family scale. “You don’t have to run 3,000 acres this year, and 3,500 acres, and 4,000 the year after, and outcompete all the neighbors for land.”

Jon farms with his dad, who has a lot of experience farming and “has always been in the mindset of doing conservation farming.” After seeing the success of the initial 12 acres they transitioned, Jon said his father was on board with transitioning all their acreage to organic.

For some farmers, navigating the family dynamics of transitioning to organic can be a challenge. Sometimes it helps to point out the environmental benefits of organic production if the family values environmental stewardship and conservation. For others, they might just have to do the numbers to see that organic grain production can financially benefit their farm.

Chuck Anderas, MOSES Organic Specialist, is at chuck@mosesorganic.org or 888-90-MOSES.

The “Do the Numbers” field day and podcast were funded by a grant from NCR-SARE.



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Agriculture Resilience Act — from page 1

and carbon sequestration to the program's purpose and listing them in the top 10 practices eligible to receive higher payment rates. The bill would also eliminate the discriminatory lower organic payment limit currently in place for the EQIP Organic Initiative, taking an important step to improving the program's attention to organic farming and its soil health focus and incentivizing further transition.

Furthermore, the ARA would target at least two-thirds of EQIP's 50% set aside for livestock operations to advanced grazing management, including management-intensive rotational grazing, which has a huge positive benefit for carbon sequestration in agricultural soils. The ARA would also limit EQIP funding available for concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) and mandate that any CAFO receiving EQIP funding must develop and implement a GHG emissions reduction plan.

Finally, the ARA would add GHG emissions reduction to the purposes of the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) focused on air quality and increase funding for air quality grants from \$37.5 million to \$50 million for each fiscal year starting in fiscal year 2021. The bill would also increase funding for CIG On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials from \$25 million to \$50 million per year from fiscal year 2021 to 2023 and bump funding to \$100 million starting in 2024.

If the ARA becomes law, EQIP funding in total would increase from \$2 billion in 2023 to \$3 billion in 2024 and beyond. This increased investment would result in more farmers and ranchers being equipped to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

Conservation Stewardship Program

CSP rewards farmers and ranchers for their critical role as managers of our shared air, water, and soil resources. Through CSP, farmers can earn payments, under 5-year renewable contracts, for maintaining and expanding comprehensive conservation activities on their land. As the largest working lands conservation program in the country, CSP can play a vital role in enhancing agriculture's potential to sequester carbon, reduce GHG emissions, and build resilience.

The ARA would add soil health enhancement and GHG emissions reduction to the ranking criteria for applicants hoping to participate in the program. The bill would also add climate adaptation and mitigation as a resource concern. Additionally, the ARA would restore automatic funding for contract renewals under CSP to allow for continual improvement in soil health and carbon sequestration, incorporating more farmers and acres in this urgent mission.

The ARA would also create a new CSP On-Farm Conservation Stewardship Innovation Grant program to support on-farm research and development and pilot testing of innovative conservation systems and enhancements to further the program's climate mitigation and adaptation potential.

The ARA would increase total CSP funding from \$725 million to \$2 billion in fiscal year 2021 and

gradually increase funding up to \$4 billion in 2024 and beyond.

Technical Assistance, Underserved Farmers

In addition to these proposed changes to EQIP and CSP, the ARA would set aside 1% of conservation mandatory funding annually for a new conservation technical assistance initiative to enhance program implementation, and triple the set aside in both programs for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

The bill would also eliminate the discriminatory lower organic payment limit currently in place for the EQIP Organic Initiative, taking an important step to improving the program's attention to organic farming and its soil health focus and incentivizing further transition.

Agricultural Research

The fifth blog post focused on regional and long term research provisions and was co-authored by Mark Schonbeck, Research Associate for the Organic Farming Research Foundation.

Food and agriculture research is critical to improving farm viability, public health, food security, and agriculture's potential to address the climate crisis. However, USDA research funding has stagnated for decades. To accelerate agriculture's ability to first achieve net zero carbon emissions and deliver innovative, region-specific solutions to producers, the ARA would provide the first-ever legislative authorization for USDA's Climate Hubs and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Long Term Agroecological Research (LTAR) Network, each funded at \$50 million per year.

Climate Hubs

Climate Hubs are a national network of regional hubs that deliver science-based, region-specific, cost-effective and practical tools and technical support to help producers and landowners make effective conservation and business planning decisions in response to a changing climate. Managed by ARS and the U.S. Forest Service, they are tasked with partnering with other federal agencies, Extension, colleges and universities, state and local governments, tribes, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver Climate Hub services. In addition to providing a six-fold increase in funding for Climate Hubs, the ARA directs each regional hub to solicit stakeholder input on regional priorities, and collaborate with farmers and NGOs in conducting

research and outreach on priority topics including:

- GHG mitigation benefits of agroforestry, advanced grazing systems, crop-livestock integration
- Improved measurement of soil carbon, GHG emissions, and soil health
- Biological nutrient cycling and plant-microbe partnerships

The ARA also directs Climate Hubs to work with the USDA Risk Management Agency to better account for climate risk and risk mitigation through soil health management in actuarial tables and provide recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture. For just 25 cents per taxpayer, this vital network could expand its reach and impact, empowering farmers and ranchers to become active leaders in our efforts to reverse the climate crisis.

Long Term Agroecological Research Network

USDA established its first Long Term Farming Systems Trials site at Beltsville, Maryland in 1910, and has since established long term trials at over a dozen other sites across the U.S., forming the LTAR Network. Current research priorities include comparisons of soil health, nutrient cycling, water efficiency, carbon sequestration, and net GHG emissions in contrasting cropping and grazing systems. The ARA would authorize the LTAR Network at \$50 million per year. Currently, all 18 LTAR sites rely on \$20 million annually, which leaves some sites unfunded and all sites underfunded.

The ARA would also:

- Establish climate change adaptation and mitigation as major statutory purposes
- Integrate measurements and data collection across LTAR sites to enhance understanding of agroecosystem function in U.S. agricultural regions and production systems
- Make data collected through the network openly and publicly available

Understanding the relationship between the climate crisis and U.S. agriculture and optimizing agricultural practices for climate mitigation and resilience will require long-term commitment and close collaboration among researchers across all major agro-ecoregions and production systems. The LTAR Network has tackled this challenge on a shoestring budget of \$20 million annually with no guarantee of future funding. By establishing a legislative authority for \$50 million annually and affirming climate mitigation and resilience as top priorities, the ARA would substantially strengthen the capacity of the LTAR Network to help producers and our food system meet the challenges of climate change, water shortages, and natural resource degradation.

Grants to Promote Soil Health

The sixth blog in the series focused on a new block grant program for states already implementing soil

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MOSES launches Growing Wellness, peer-led mental health group for farmers

By Hawthorn McCracken

People making their living from the land face a variety of unique stressors. Changing weather patterns, fluctuating markets, and the risky nature of farm finances make farming one of the most challenging fields. When the effects of COVID-19 rippled through the food system, farmers and advocates knew the implication for rural mental health would be dire. With markets and supply chains thrown into chaos, many farmers had to pivot their production models rapidly. Rural areas became even more isolated as schools and churches closed their doors. As essential workers, farmers and laborers were among the few people who continued working through the early stages of the pandemic, all while being cut off from their usual social supports.

A small silver lining to the continued quarantine has been the increase in free online resources and virtual support networks. With access to telemedicine appointments and online communications, folks living in isolated areas or without reliable transportation have seen better access to mental health care than ever before. The problem of spotty rural broadband does present some challenges, but on a good day most anyone can access hundreds of online groups and services. While a Zoom meeting can never fully replace in-person support, it's been a lifeline to folks like myself struggling with mental health issues during the long isolation of lockdown.

I was glad to see the MOSES podcast episode about farmer mental health (episode 3 at mosesorganic.org/farming/moses-podcast). I attended the MOSES Post-Podcast Farmer Chat. It was affirming to hear from other folks dealing with mental illness and to be able to share my story in an accepting space. I've been navigating the mental health system for the past decade, and I'm passionate about changing the way we think about psychiatric care. I reached out to Chuck Anderas after the discussion to ask if there was any way I could help continue the conversation and advocate for farmer mental health. It turns out MOSES had been looking for topics for farmer-led groups, and mental health was one that lent itself well to virtual discussion.

Chuck and I sent out a call for volunteers to help plan meeting topics, and got a very positive response. Many folks reiterated the need for social support groups to help alleviate isolation. Too often, mental health response is seen as a last-ditch option during a crisis. It was important to me and other volunteers to provide a supportive network and build up resilience before people hit a crisis point. We discussed building systems of community-based care that didn't pathologize or shame people experiencing mental illness. Many of the volunteers had dealt with the mental health system themselves. As sustainable farmers, we recognize the importance of creating a healthy

foundation in which folks could thrive, and not just treating disease once it becomes visible.

After a few Zoom planning meetings, we settled on a mixed format for the group, which we're calling "Growing Wellness." While we wanted to keep a video chat component, we recognized that not everyone would be able to make it to live meetings. Each monthly meeting will have two parts: a short skills workshop and a discussion group afterward. The skills presentation will be posted to MOSES social media, but the discussion will be kept private so folks can share more openly. These meetings will be complemented by an online group where members can discuss the workshop materials, find resources, and connect with peers for emotional support. To join, send an email with "Subscribe" as the subject line to GrowingWellness+subscribe@groups.io.

Meetings are 5 p.m. CT on the fourth Tuesday in September and October, and the third Tuesday in November and December. Lori Cox of Roots Return Heritage Farm in Minnesota presented "Empowered Decision Making" in the Sept. 22 meeting. She has a background in finance and technology and covered methods for problem solving and financial planning.

Email Hawthorn (mccrackencc15@gmail.com) or Chuck (chuck@mosesorganic.org) to volunteer to moderate a session or lead a skills workshop.

MarketLink helps farmers become authorized SNAP retailers

By Tiffany Torres, USDA MarketLink

Hunger is on the rise in America as unemployment skyrockets due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Between the months of March and July 2020, more than six million Americans enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps or Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT). In response to this steep rise in food insecurity, the USDA increased monthly SNAP benefits by 40%. Now seven months into the pandemic, consumers from all walks of life are turning to local foodways and prioritizing shorter food chains to feed themselves and their families. Direct market farmers are uniquely situated to serve consumers who rely on SNAP.

The opportunity to increase sales of local food

products directly to consumers comes at a critical moment in our nation's financial downturn.

According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, each \$1 billion of retail generated by SNAP creates \$340 million in farm production, \$110 million in farm value-added, and 3,300 farm jobs. Another way to think of SNAP is as an economic bolster. During an economic downturn, each \$1 in SNAP benefits generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity (Food Research and Action Center, 2020). When considering the local economy, SNAP continues to play a role in directly benefiting businesses related to local food and agriculture supply chains. By selling directly to consumers in need, farmers continue to

circulate vital SNAP dollars within local economies.

SNAP benefits are considered one of the fastest and most effective forms of economic stimulus. When the economy suffers, SNAP funding provides an immediate and temporary safety net for individuals who lose their jobs and thus have trouble purchasing food. At the same time, SNAP sustains consumer spending in moments when families may otherwise be cutting corners. The common belief that SNAP recipients collect benefits for years at a time in order to remain out of work is largely false. In fact, more than 50% of all new entrants to the SNAP program will leave the program within nine months as they become more financially stable (SNAP To Health, 2020).

"The pandemic has laid bare the importance of accepting electronic payments for the long-term viability of farmers and farmers markets," said Phil Blalock, Executive Director of the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs. Blalock oversees MarketLink, a USDA grant program which connects qualifying farmers and farmers markets with free SNAP/EBT processing equipment. "In response to CDC guidelines, touchless electronic payments are increasingly the norm at farmers markets. Moreover, many farmers are keeping their businesses afloat by taking pre-orders and payments before they even get to market. The MarketLink program is a hassle-free, streamlined solution for accepting SNAP/EBT and electronic payments designed specifically for farmers and farmers markets."

In this moment, direct market farmers and farmers markets have the unique opportunity to be agents of change amidst an unprecedented health crisis. Accepting SNAP/EBT supports communities by connecting those in need with healthy, locally produced foods while growing the farm or market's customer base, enhancing profitability, and strengthening local economies.

MarketLink connects qualifying farmers and farmers markets with free, app-based equipment for processing electronic payments, including SNAP/EBT, Pandemic-EBT, and credit/debit. The MarketLink suite of services includes one-on-one assistance with the USDA SNAP Retailer Application; a free Bluetooth SNAP/EBT card reader; one-year free use of the TotilPay Go point-of-sale app for processing electronic payments; and the option to add integrated Credit/Debit processing with discounted rates through Square. Learn more at www.marketlink.org.



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certifications to fulfill ROC criteria and, in some cases, ROC audits can be conducted simultaneously with other program audits.

How to Get Certified

The certification process works as follows:

1. Submit an initial application online. The ROA will ask you for preliminary qualifying information (such as documentation of your current certifications) and basic details about your operation, including crop and/or livestock types, your average number of workers, and your primary sales method(s). You'll need to pay an application fee that is based on the size of your operation.
2. Submit your Regenerative Organic System Plan (ROSP). If the ROA determines you're eligible to proceed after your initial application, we'll send

you a customized ROSP. You'll complete and return the document.

3. Get paired with a certifying body. The ROA currently works with four: QAI, Mayacert, Ecocert, and QCS. Your certifying body will review your ROSP, and provide you with an estimate of costs, and can answer any questions.
4. Have an audit. In some cases, you can bundle your ROC audit with your Organic audit.
5. Final review. Your certifying body will review the auditor's report and communicate with you about any issues, questions, or follow-up requests.
6. Get Regenerative Organic Certified! The ROA will issue final certificates. If your operation doesn't earn certification, you may be eligible to reapply depending on your results.

The timeline for getting certified will vary depending on your certifying body. Some are experiencing unusual delays due to COVID-19.

Stay up to date with the Regenerative Organic Alliance by signing up for our email newsletter at RegenOrganic.org. New subscribers get a four-part series on the basics of regenerative agriculture and the ROC program, plus resources for further learning. Follow the ROA on Instagram @regenerativeorganic. The most current version of the ROC framework and all governing documents are maintained at RegenOrganic.org. Send questions to info@regenorganic.org.

Zoe Schaeffer is the Communications Lead for the Regenerative Organic Alliance and a part-time farmer based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

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health initiatives, and was co-authored by Duane Hovorka, Agriculture Program Director for the Izaak Walton League of America.

State, Tribal, and local policymakers are increasingly looking at soil health strategies to address water quality, soil erosion, climate change, and farm income problems. They recognize the multiple benefits provided by soil health solutions and are taking action. States like Maryland, New York, New Mexico, and California, and the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Tribes have already created and implemented soil health initiatives.

The ARA would provide funds to help state and Tribal governments build on their existing soil health

programs. A state or Tribe with a funded soil health program could seek an annual grant from the USDA to provide:

- Technical assistance
- Financial assistance
- On-farm research and demonstration
- Education, outreach, and training
- Monitoring and evaluation

The grants cannot exceed 50% of the cost of a state soil health program, or 75% of a Tribal program, and cannot exceed \$5 million annually. The ARA would provide \$60 million a year for the program in fiscal years 2021 through 2023, \$80 million for 2024 through 2026, and \$100 million starting in 2027 and thereafter.

A federal grant program would encourage more leadership by states and Tribes and support ongoing soil health efforts. These programs complement federal working lands conservation financial and technical assistance, with state, local agencies, and grassroots farm groups providing important close to home support for innovative farmers making the transition to more regenerative and sustainable agriculture.

Next Steps

The House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis released its anticipated report at the end of June, outlining a roadmap for legislative efforts to address the climate crisis. Many of the ARA provisions, including all of the ones covered in this article, were included in the Select Committee's report. The ARA would provide the necessary resources to support agricultural solutions to address the climate crisis through major investment and commitment to working lands conservation programs, long term and regional climate and agriculture research, and supporting state and Tribal soil health programs. These investments are critical for agriculture to fulfill its climate mitigation potential.

The ARA presents a path to pivot away from current federal policy which fosters overproduction, specialization, and consolidation, inevitably contributing to greater climate disruption. The bill sets forth policy proposals to ensure farmers have a central role in climate mitigation and adaptation and showcases how the federal government can support widespread adoption of climate stewardship practices, leading to a more regenerative and sustainable food and farming system.

Cristel Zoebisch is the Climate Policy Associate at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition in partnership with the Organic Farming Research Foundation.

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State chapter of Farmer Veteran Coalition forming in Wisconsin

By Tom Manley

Most people will agree our military veterans deserve to be recognized and respected for stepping up when called to serve. Whether or not we support the policy decisions that determine how or where they serve, we overwhelmingly acknowledge the honor and sense of duty to country, mission, and each other manifest in that service. The Farmer Veteran Coalition's mission, to mobilize veterans to feed America, is deeply rooted in an awareness of the skills and character needed to create strong rural communities and find success farming. Farming takes grit, and veterans have it.

Very soon, a Wisconsin Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) chapter will officially launch after final approval from the national board. Veterans in the state will be able to better access the resources of the national organization and create a local and regional support network of farmers with their shared experience of service. The new state chapter was born out of connections made during veteran mixers and meet-ups at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference. The effort was led by Army veteran and farmer Joe Koch of Wilson, Wisconsin, with help from a small group that included Jim Paquette. Paquette, who farms with wife, Sarah, in Menomonie, is the Communication Director for the new chapter.

"For most of us, our introduction was through the national group and receiving help through the Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund," Paquette explained. "The fund has helped many a veteran farmer start or

upgrade their operation. But farming, as you know, can be a lonely business. Even though we all are farmers and veterans, we're all spread out and there was no real way for us to connect except through other outside organizations. The interest has been there for a while now. We just needed to get the right people in the right place at the right time, and with Joe taking charge, we have. With the support of the FVC, we are building a state chapter to bring together farmer veterans, to help solve problems, build bridges, and assist new veterans who have a desire to experience the world of agriculture.

"Over 10% of farmers are also veterans of U.S. military service," he pointed out. "With our aging farmer population, we need people who don't mind long days and hard work to get the job done. Veterans are perfectly suited to the task, and we're here to help get our brothers and sisters started."

Two programs of FVC at the national level are the Homegrown By Heroes (HBH) label and the Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund. The HBH label tells consumers that a product was produced by U.S. military veterans. The Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund is a small grant program that provides direct assistance to veterans who are in their beginning years of farming or ranching. Awards range from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

Raising funds for these grants will be a primary focus of the state chapter, said Paquette, who is a former Naval aviator. "As we grow, we hope to be able to branch off, and provide our own local Wisconsin

version of the grant, to specifically target Wisconsin veterans and support a more local economy."

Since each farm is as different as the farmer who works it, the grants cover a variety of projects, Paquette explained. "For some, the needs are small such as a new solar powered electric fence charger to help protect and contain their herds and flocks. For others, the needs might be larger such as assistance with a packing shed to help clean, store, and package produce for markets," he said. "We took care of each other overseas, and we want to continue caring for one another here at home."

There is obvious mission alignment between MOSES and FVC, and the two organizations are looking at the opportunities to partner on programming, outreach, and events. It will require a literal army of new farmers, from diverse backgrounds and experiences, to feed America in the organic and regenerative manner we are all working to realize. With enough collaboration and the support of veteran and non-veteran farmers alike, we can all someday proclaim, "mission accomplished."

For those looking to connect with FVC in Wisconsin, the best way to get in touch and stay up to date is to follow their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/FVCofWisconsin. Learn more about the national organization and support their programs by going to farmvetco.org.

Tom Manley is the Partnership Director for MOSES.

Organic Enforcement — from page 8

but does not process or alter such agricultural products. Without more clearly indicating the intent, there could be confusion regarding which entities must be certified. For example, will milk haulers combining loads of milk need to be certified? Will vehicles transporting non-organic and organic animals need to be certified? Will storage facilities that receive bulk grains need to be certified? Will ships that transport bulk grains need to be certified?

3. Role and responsibility for USDA NOP: The new regulations impose numerous new requirements for operations and certifiers, but the NOP must also play a role and change its own practices to catch up to the new challenges we face in organic supply chains. The proposed rule is silent in this area.

For example:

- a. The rule requires that inspectors and certification review staff have the necessary qualifications, but does not say how the NOP will ensure that accreditation auditors and

enforcement staff are qualified and have the relevant knowledge.

- b. The rule requires certifiers to share information with other certifiers in efforts to enforce the organic regulations and crack down on fraud. In a similar vein, NOC believes it is imperative that the NOP shares information with other accreditors, such as the European Union, to flag risky certifiers and operations in the organic supply chain.

4. Unintended consequences for small and lower-resourced operations: NOC strongly supports provisions that increase supply chain traceability, but we have important questions about how these provisions could negatively impact some operations in the organic supply chain. Specifically, we are concerned that new requirements for more operations to get certified could have the unintended consequence of creating disincentives for on-farm organic seed production (by requiring these operations to obtain handling certificates). We are also analyzing the rule to ensure that new grower group requirements do not unduly harm

or cause loss of organic market access for legitimate grower groups and their members. These farmers represent the largest percentage of organic farmers worldwide.

Submit Comments to NOP

Organic stakeholders have until Oct. 5, 2020 to submit comments on the proposed rule. See www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/strengthening-organic-enforcement-proposed-rule. NOC will be providing talking points and sample language.

NOC hosts a virtual meeting Oct. 26 from 1 to 4 p.m. ET, prior to the fall meeting of the NOSB. NOC's meeting provides an opportunity for the organic community to share updates, discuss challenges, and think about issues that the NOSB will discuss on subsequent days. Register for the NOC meeting online at www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/events.

Alice Runde is Coalition Manager and Abby Youngblood is Executive Director of the National Organic Coalition.

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PREP Rural — from page 9

Workers deserve a greater share of the profits they generate in the form of increased pay and benefits. They also are entitled to comprehensive health care that helps bolster their immunity to infectious diseases in advance of pandemics and offers them effective treatment in the event they become infected, especially since they are risking their lives to get food to millions of Americans and foreign markets. The federal government must mandate that industrial meatpackers implement genuinely hygienic labor protocols (that are health-driven rather than profit-driven), expand their worker safety training, and hold accountable violators of these policies.

2. Anti-trust legislation. Proper anti-trust enforcement is essential for decentralizing the meatpacking monopolies and increasing opportunities for more independent processors. The enforcement of anti-trust laws also will enable independent family farmers and ranchers to decouple themselves from industrial agribusiness' stranglehold on the food chain, which has led to an uncompetitive and non-transparent marketplace.

3. State inspection of meat processing. The current system overregulates local meatpacking facilities, making it hard for farmers and ranchers to process their livestock. During the ongoing pandemic, farmers have been told they will not be able to process their livestock until late 2021 to early 2022 in many cases. A COVID-19 outbreak that persists into fall and winter this year could further disrupt local food accessibility, as well as the operations of small farmers and ranchers who depend on these processors to sell and market their livestock. A key barrier to local and regional market access for independent livestock producers is an inspection system that allows only four companies to retain control of the entire livestock market. Legalization of state inspection would aid independent regenerative producers in their efforts to supply nearby markets with locally produced pasture- and rangeland-raised meat, a necessary aspect of local food security in the likely event of other pandemics and climate disturbances. Furthermore, interstate shipment of meat must be allowed to increase regional market access of farmer goods from consumers. The federal Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) Program can easily be joined by respective states to once again open up our borders for shipment of meat.

4. Farm subsidy reform. By distorting markets in favor of vertically integrated corporations, the current farm subsidy structure discourages innovation by entrepreneurs motivated to institute a new regenerative food system—one that improves public health by increasing access to fresh and more nutritionally dense foods. Currently, the majority of Farm Bill subsidies support the production of low-quality foods developed by a few giant agrichemical, processing, and merchandising companies motivated by profit rather than the well-being of millions of urban consumers and rural residents. Federal investment in resilient, locally and regionally oriented agricultural production must stabilize food supplies in times of disaster, invest in new, independent processing facilities, equip thousands of processing workers in all meatpacking facilities with the PPE needed to protect them from unnecessary exposure to infectious diseases, and help transition young, diverse farmers immediately into regenerative farming.

5. Resuscitate state-level corporate farming bans. Until recently, state-level corporate farming bans had long been a staple of Midwestern agricultural states. By protecting independent farm and ranch businesses from being bankrupted by multinational investor-owned companies that have benefited from special treatment by government, corporate farming bans allow for a competitive and healthy marketplace.

6. Grain reserves. Much neglected Farm Bill initiatives such as managed grain reserves should be revived to put the independent farmer or rancher in a position to increase food security in times of national disruptions like pandemics. A properly run reserve not only assures the independent producer a fiscal safety net, it also protects the food security of mass populations whose access to distant grain sources is disrupted.

The PREP Rural coalition believes these six interventions can immediately alleviate the worst outcomes for producers, essential workers, and the broader consumer base no matter their socioeconomic status. These actions can also make sure another outbreak, increasing flooding and other climate-related disturbances, and any other unforeseen emergency never gridlocks our food production again.

The organizations that served as contributors for the first dispatch were the following:

- Alliance to End Hunger
- Center for Economic and Policy Research
- Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger
- Contract Poultry Grower of the Virginias
- Doane University Institute for Human and Planetary Health
- Forward Latino
- GC Resolve
- League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) of Nebraska
- MOSES
- Nebraska Communities United
- Organic Consumers Association
- Organization for Competitive Markets
- RegeNErate Nebraska
- Regenerative Ag Alliance
- Sacred Seed
- Salem HempKings
- Socially Responsible Agricultural Project
- University of Nebraska Medical Center - College of Public Health

The next PREP Rural Dispatch Action Steps, "Neglecting Nutrition: How a pandemic exposed health disparities in the rural U.S.," will be released soon. It will draw light to the current and historical inequality from the impact of pandemics and the reasons for it, how food neglect can lead to chronic disease that worsens COVID outcomes, and how proper nutrition is also the cure to many underlying health conditions. All of the current and future PREP dispatches can be found at www.prep-thepeople.net/dispatches.

Upcoming PREP discussions will focus on plantation economics and historical discrimination in the USDA, the redirection of corporate farm subsidies, and pathways to landownership.

The PREP Rural coalition is open and inclusive to individuals and organizations that align with a regenerative future. To join in discussions, email laura@gcresolve.com.

Laura Thomas and Graham Christensen are part of GC Resolve. Rob Wallace and John Gulick lead PREP Rural.

Organic No-Till — from page 5

Iowa State University partnered with Practical Farmers of Iowa on two field days this summer on Lyle's farm: the first, on June 2, demonstrated the process of roller crimping and planting; the second, a month later, showed how the WeedZapper™ worked. Videos are posted here: practicalfarmers.org/impact-of-roller-crimping-cereal-rye-live-weed-zapper-demonstration

At Iowa State University's Neely-Kinyon Farm in Greenfield, we are seeing, once again, that rain is proving to be a critical factor for high yields in organic no-till vegetables. Also, organic no-till favors broad-leaved vegetables that form a rapid canopy, like squash,

to compete with weeds that may emerge through the decaying mulch. A thick mulch from a high seeding rate will assist with weed management throughout the season. Hand-weeding and irrigation can help the organic no-till system in vegetables, unlike field soybeans and corn that must rely on sufficient rain. As of early September, over 15% of Iowa is considered to be in severe drought, with most farmers across the state needing rain.

In our virtual field day Sept. 9 at the Neely-Kinyon Farm (bit.ly/YouTubeN-KFarm), we show how the roller crimper worked on our vegetable plots. The vegetable plots are shown about 15 minutes into the video.

One last point in favor of organic no-till: We've found that nitrate leaching is reduced in the cover-crop-based systems compared to completely tilled plots; so organic no-till offers extra benefits for farmers concerned about potential nitrogen pollution from manure applications.

We hope to update everyone about our research trials at conferences being held virtually this winter, including the Iowa Organic Conference November 23 and the MOSES Conference in February.

Kathleen Delate is a professor in the Organic Agriculture Program at Iowa State University.

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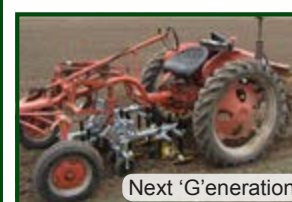
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New Leader for MOSES

Lori Stern joined the MOSES team earlier this month as the new Executive Director. (See the ED column on page 2 for her introduction to Broadcaster readers.) Lori takes over from Lauren Langworthy, who recently resigned from MOSES to join the staff of Wisconsin Farmers Union.

Lori is a passionate advocate for organic and sustainable food systems. Her background includes work on public policy related to community and environmental health, social justice, and food access. For the past six years, she has owned Cow & Quince, a locally sourced, community-supported restaurant in New Glarus, Wisconsin. The pandemic forced the closure of the restaurant.

Lori and her wife, LeAnn, live on a small farm near Monticello, where they grow vegetables and raise chickens and goats. Contact Lori at lori@mosesorganic.org or 888-90-MOSES.

2021 MOSES Conference

The 2021 MOSES Conference will be a virtual event, tentatively scheduled for the last week of February. We have reached out to several partner organizations to



share the virtual platform as a combined mega-event, making it more convenient for farmers to get the content they need.

Watch for conference details in the coming months.

Farmer Speed Presentations

Do you have a super-efficient layout for your packing shed? A great idea for marketing your meat products? A tried-and-true organic practice you use in your grain production? A can't-live-without tool or piece of machinery? Share it with your community through the virtual 2021 MOSES Conference!

One aspect of the conference we all appreciate is the chance to share ideas over lunch or between workshops. A lot of good comes from building on each other's tips and successes. To encourage that same kind of sharing in a virtual conference format, we're including speed presentations from our farmer community. Through a 4-minute video, you can show others an insightful tip you've developed to make a farm chore easier, a cool tool you're using or hack you've created, or simply film a virtual tour of your farm. So start shooting! Farmer speed presentations must be submitted by Oct. 31. See details at mosesorganic.org/farmer-share-speed-presentations.

New Board Member for MOSES

Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin has joined the 11-member MOSES Board of Directors. Regi, the recipient of a 2020 Changemaker award at this year's MOSES Conference, has worked in rural development and been an advocate for fair trade for over 30 years. He was an advisor to the United Nations, directed the fair-trade program for the Institute for Agriculture and



Trade Policy, and helped found Peace Coffee and Main Street Project. He recently established the Regenerative Agriculture Alliance, an ecosystem of people and organizations committed to higher standards in food production and supply-chain management.

To reach out to members of the MOSES Board of Directors, email board@mosesorganic.org.

Farmer Advancement Program

MOSES just received a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant to help new, intermediate, and more experienced beginning farmers find success in organic production. We will be working with partner organizations in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois to hold one-day New Farmer U trainings in the coming years. Scholarships also will be available through the grant to help beginning farmers access our Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program.

Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program

Need an experienced farmer to guide your farm or help you set up a new organic enterprise? Want to share your experience with a beginning farmer and encourage sustainable, organic production? Apply now to participate in the 2021 MOSES Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program.

Mentorships with experienced organic farmers are available in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The program runs from January 2021 to February 2022 and includes admission to the MOSES Organic Farming Conference in both years. Cost to be mentored is \$350, but scholarships are available. The application deadline is Oct. 31, 2020. See mosesorganic.org/projects/mentor-program.

Special Offer from Gempler's

MOSES events and podcasts are sponsored by Gempler's, your online outdoor general store for commercial-grade tools, clothing, and supplies plus other outdoor gear. During the month of September, Gempler's offers 20% off orders placed at gemplers.com with the code MOSES20. Standard exclusions apply; see gemplers.com/offers.

No-Spray Signs

Our signs to identify organic fields are now sold through Gempler's. These 18x23-inch signs were designed by MOSES with feedback from organic farmers. The signs are made of weather-resistant corrugated plastic and come with pre-drilled holes in



the center top and center bottom for mounting. Each order has two signs that are attached with a scored fold at the top so they can be used as a two-sided sign mounted on a T-post or cut apart to use as two separate signs. The normal price is \$15 for a pair of signs, but, now through Oct. 31, Gempler's is offering 25% off. Find signs at gemplers.com/products/gemplers-organic-farm-no-chemical-spray-sign and enter code SIGND25 at checkout to pay just \$11.25 plus shipping.

National Organic Standards Board Fall Meeting

The comment period is open for the fall meeting of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), which takes place online Oct. 28-30. The deadline to submit written comments and sign up for oral comments is Oct. 1. The NOSB will vote on the continued allowance of over 50 substances currently allowed on the National List as inputs in organic production and handling. For the complete list, see the meeting agenda, proposals, and discussion documents at www.ams.usda.gov/event/national-organic-standards-board-nosb-meeting-cedar-rapids-iowa.

Certification Cost Share

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has revised the reimbursement amount available through the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP). Certified producers and handlers now are eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 50% of eligible expenses, up to a maximum of \$500 per scope. Eligible expenses include application fees, inspection costs, fees related to equivalency agreement and arrangement requirements, travel expenses for inspectors, user fees, sales assessments, and postage. Applications for expenses paid between Oct. 1, 2019, and Sept. 30, 2020, are due Oct. 31, 2020. Contact FSA or your state agency.

Organic Farming Business Management

The University of Minnesota, in partnership with state-level farm business management (FBM) programs, is looking for organic farmers in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota to participate in FBM training and the Organic Benchmarking Project. Organic producers of dairy, alfalfa, corn grain, corn silage, hay/haylage, soybeans, or wheat can receive reduced tuition for FBM now through 2022. Each participating farm will receive individualized benchmark reports, financial analysis, and cash flow reports while working with their FBM instructor to enhance management and financial capacity on their organic farm. For contact information, see agcentric.org/organic-farming-resources.

SHIPP Extension

USDA has extended the application deadline to Nov. 20, 2020, for the Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP), a new pilot program that enables farmers in Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota to receive payments for planting perennial cover for conservation use for three to five years. For more information, contact your local Farm Service Agency or see bit.ly/SHIPPdetails.

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Local Food Campaign

The Local Food is Essential campaign educates consumers in Minnesota and Wisconsin about the issues many local food growers face due to COVID and encourages them to buy locally to help small-scale farmers survive this crisis. The website includes a toolkit farmers can use to encourage customers to buy locally. The toolkit includes web banners, sample posters, and logos formatted for social media. The site also offers yard signs ideal for farmstands or CSA pick-up locations. Learn more and click on "Campaign Toolkit" at localfoodisessential.org.

Online Pasture Management Course

The University of Wisconsin-Madison recently launched an online pasture management course based on the UW-Madison Farm & Industry Short Course content. This course will cover pasture establishment, cool-season grass and legume growth basics, and pasture nutrient management. The course also discusses how to manage nutrient needs, water systems, grazing dairy cows, and pasture-raised beef, sheep, and goats. The final project is to develop a managed grazing plan for your farm (real or imagined). The online class consists of 11 hour-long video-recorded lectures that students can view in their own home at their own pace. Scholarships are available. See wsbdf.wisc.edu/program-offerings.

Cover Crop Survey Results

USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program recently published a report analyzing the results of the 2019-2020 Cover Crop Survey of 1,172 farmers with respondents in every state. The survey assessed the benefits, challenges, yield impacts, and scale of adoption of cover crops across the U.S. More than 90% of participating farmers reported that cover crops allowed them to plant earlier or at the same time as non-cover-cropped fields. Among those who had "planted green," seeding cash crops into growing cover crops, 54% said the practice helped them plant earlier than on other fields. Respondents also said that cover crops improve the resiliency of their soil, and the longer they use them, the greater the yield increases and cost savings are. See the full report at www.sare.org/news/2020-cover-crop-survey-report.

Minnesota Value-Added Grant Program

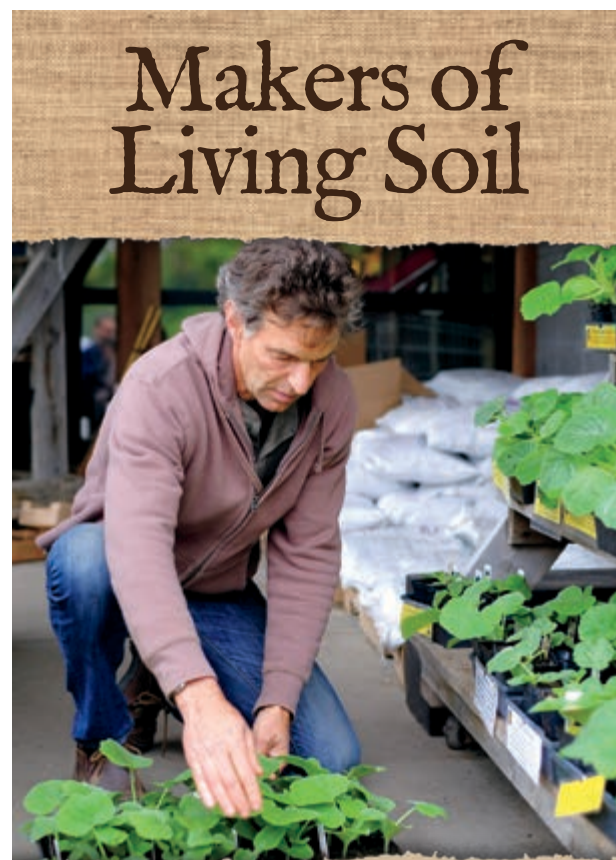
The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is accepting applications for the Agricultural



Growth, Research, and Innovation Value-Added Grant Program. The program will award approximately \$1 million to for-profit businesses, agricultural cooperatives, and local governments to purchase equipment that helps increase sales of Minnesota agricultural products. This includes responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest in the Twin Cities. Grants reimburse up to 25% of the total equipment cost, ranging from \$1,000 to \$150,000. Apply by Oct. 29, 2020. See www.mda.state.mn.us/grants-available-value-added-agricultural-processing.

Farm Aid Festival

Farm Aid 2020 will be a free at-home festival experience taking place online Saturday, Sept. 26 from 7-10 p.m. CDT at farmaid.org. Donations made during the event will further Farm Aid's mission to build a more vibrant, family-farm-centered agriculture system. MOSES is proud to be a Farm Aid grant recipient and to support family farmers.



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New Certified Regenerative Label

Building on its successful family of leading labels, nonprofit certifier A Greener World has launched a plan-based regenerative certification, Certified Regenerative by A Greener World (AGW). The certification will provide a whole-farm assurance of sustainability, measuring benefits for soil, water, air, infrastructure, biodiversity, animal welfare, and social responsibility. See agreenerworld.org/certifications/certified-regenerative.

Vegetable Farm Labor Survey

Labor is generally the single largest daily expense on vegetable farms. To help design better systems for tracking labor costs, Kitchen Table Consultants is surveying vegetable farmers to learn about the systems they currently use to capture labor data, and how they do or don't use this for managing profitability while maintaining a positive and humane work environment. Take the initial survey at bit.ly/surveyFarmLabor. If you're selected for a follow-up interview, you will be given a \$100 Visa gift card for your time.

Greenbook of Sustainable Ag Grant Projects

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has published the 2020 edition of its *Greenbook* publication, featuring Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant (SustAg) projects from the last three years. Andrew Petran of Twin Cities Berry Company is among the eight farmers featured in the annual Greenbook, now available at www.mda.state.mn.us/greenbook. Petran's project looked at expanding the effectiveness of non-chemical pest control in organic strawberry production.

Minnesota farmers and nonprofit, educational organizations may apply for the current round of SustAg grants by 4 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10, 2020. For more information and to apply, see www.mda.state.mn.us/sustagdemogrant.

Digital Crop Doc

The University of Minnesota Extension crops team has launched a new online program called MN Digital Crop Doc to help farmers diagnose disease in crops such as corn, soybean, small grains, sugarbeet, and alfalfa. When you're out scouting, you can simply take photos of disease symptoms with your smartphone and submit them to the Digital Crop Doc website. Then submit the photo and form at extension.umn.edu/crop-production/digital-crop-doc.



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Certified Organic Alfalfa for sale. 3x4x8 large square bales. 1st cutting range RFV 181-150. \$240-\$200 per ton. 2nd cutting test pending. Located in North Central Missouri. Call 660-654-3175.

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Organic Rye for sale. Cleaning available. Sno Pac Farms, Caledonia MN. 507-725-5281.

Organic Winter Wheat for seed or feed. Also have organic hay mix large square bales. Call for price. 605-880-2121.

For Sale: Organic Winter Rye. 2020 crop. Ron at 715-977-0602. Baldwin, WI.

For Sale: Organic Corn. Will grind. Organic Hay, big bales, wrapped and dry. Organic Oats. Can deliver. SW WI 608-574-2160.

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Northwood Mushrooms (aka Cherry Tree House Mushrooms) is a small farm near the Twin Cities specializing in log-grown organic mushrooms. We're hiring for seasonal and year-round positions to start immediately: mushroom worker and production lead. Benefits include free housing and mushrooms, \$11 to \$15 per hour. Find more details at northwoodmushrooms.com or call Jeremy at 612-205-8599.

Homestead Manager Apprentice. Remote Northern Michigan organic vegan homestead community offers one year full-time training course. Learn all aspects of growing and marketing produce, beginning February 1 and ending November 30, hours vary. Includes room, board, Wi-Fi, and \$100 month stipend. Honest, cheerful, vegan, clean/sober applicants email rawnursejanet@yahoo.com

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For Sale: Audio recordings of workshops presented at the 2020 MOSES Organic Farming Conference. MP3 downloads are \$5 each. The complete set of workshop recordings on a USB drive is \$75. mosesorganic.net.

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CSA Ideas Lab: CSA as a Vehicle for Food Access

September 24 | Noon | Online

Hosted by CSA Innovation Network, this is a monthly discussion series focused exclusively on topics of interest to CSA farmers and farmer support providers. Email info@csainnovationnetwork.org for more information.

Virtual Soil Health & Climate Listening Session 1

September 24 | Noon – 1:30 p.m. | Online

Join the Land Stewardship Project's Soil Health and Climate Organizing Committee to share your story on soil health and climate, brainstorm how to build soil and mitigate the climate crisis through agricultural policy, and learn about how to get engaged in LSP's Soil Health and Climate Issue Campaign. RSVP Amanda at 612-400-6355.

Stepping up to Contract Seed Production

September 24 | 3:30 p.m. | Online Forum

Learn how to pursue, negotiate, and deliver on seed contracts. Speakers include: Mike Levine and Erica Kempter from Nature and Nurture Seeds, Ira Wallace from Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, and Koby Jeschkeit-Hagen from Seed Savers Exchange. Hosted by Organic Seed Alliance and North Circle Seeds, with funding from NCR- SARE. To register call Cat at 360-472-0247.

LSP Workshop: Compost Check-In Call

September 24 | 7 – 8 p.m. | Online

This will be a group discussion format. Share if you built a composter, what model you used (Johnson-Su or turned pile), and what it looks like before we head into fall/winter. This is a great opportunity to learn more about composts, ask questions and to share your composting experience. Contact LSP's Shona Snater at ssnater@landstewardshipproject.org with any questions or for help registering.

4th Annual Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day – Part 3: The First Encounter

September 25 | 12:30 – 1:15 p.m. | Online

Learn about precision cultivation of direct-seeded vegetables. Once the weeding tool has been mounted and adjusted in the shop (episode 2) watch the first run in the field and see how results are judged and adjustments are made to correct issues in order to quickly achieve accurate weeding in direct-seeded crops. This will be streamed live on The Land Connection's and Practical Farmers of Iowa's Facebook pages. Call 217-840-2128 to learn more and register.

Common Ground Country Fair

September 25 – 27 | 9 a.m. | Online

Hosted by MOFGA, this annual event will be online this year, featuring educational offerings created by the community and available via a content library, a marketplace for vendors, beautiful Common Ground Country Fair merchandise, and much more. Questions? Call 207-568-4142.

Farm-Aid 2020: On the Road

September 26 | 7 – 10 p.m. | Online

This virtual at-home festival experience is going to be incredible and will allow more viewers than ever before to take part in this annual festival, with a star-studded line-up. The diversity and strength of family farmers with stories from across the country will be showcased. 617-354-2922.

Healthy Soils for a Sustainable Future:**Soil Health and Greenhouse Gases**

September 29 | 11 a.m. | Online

Hosted by USDA Northeast Climate Hub, this webinar is intended for technicians and educators who are looking to assist landowners in navigating options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from soil through soil carbon and nitrogen management. Other social, environmental, or economic considerations will also be addressed in this presentation. 608-868-7673.

**Savanna Institute Webinar:****Elderberry Processing and Market Opportunities**

September 29 | 12 p.m. | Online

Presenters Terry Durham and Chris Patton, Midwest Elderberry Cooperative, will talk about processing for commercial and small scale use, food safety compliance with GAP and FSMA, retail direct marketing opportunities for new and existing growers, wholesale/contracted berry and/or flower sales opportunities, River Hills Elderberry Producers, and the Midwest Elderberry Cooperative. To register call 608-448-6432 or email info@savannainstitute.org.

Financing Food Systems Entrepreneurs

September 29 | 12 p.m. | Online

CDFA Food Systems Finance Webinar Series is a free, online series connecting businesses and projects within the food system to development finance tools, such as bonds, tax increment finance, tax credits, revolving loan funds, and more, to create equitable local and regional food systems. This is the last in a recorded four part series. Phone: (614) 705-1300. Email: info@cdfa.net.

Virtual Soil Health & Climate Listening Session 2

September 30 | 7 – 8:30 p.m. | Online

Join the Land Stewardship Project's Soil Health and Climate Organizing Committee to share your story on soil health and climate, brainstorm how to build soil and mitigate the climate crisis through agricultural policy, and learn about how to get engaged in LSP's Soil Health and Climate Issue Campaign. RSVP Amanda at 612-400-6355.

Sheep/Goat Webinar: Connecting Producers to Consumers

September 30 | 6:30 p.m. | Online

The University of Minnesota Extension hosts this discussion that will center around the different types of processing and direct marketing, animal ID & record keeping, factors affecting the marketing of sheep/goats, cuts of meat, profit calculators, outlets for direct marketing, and how to tell your story. Please register at z.umn.edu/Goat-SheepMarketing. Any questions please contact: Brenda Miller at nels4220@umn.edu or Colleen Carlson at traxl042@umn.edu.

Silvopasture Field Training Workshop

October 1 | 8:30 a.m. | Brainerd, Minn.

Learn the principals of this managed intensive grazing system and hear from farmers utilizing these principles. Registration limited to only 25 people. Hosted by SFA. Call Tyler at 320-249-1841 to register.

7 Secrets of Effective Farmers Webinar Series:**Succession Planning**

October 1 | 11 a.m. | Online

University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture's free monthly webinar series covers a variety of topics related to effective farm business management, marketing, and planning. This session focuses on succession planning. Contact Iris Cui with questions at xcui10@utk.edu or 931-648-5725.

Advancing Industrial Hemp

October 5 | 10 a.m. | Online

This event is focused on advancing the education of growers who are trying for market share, a higher quality product, a higher CBD percentage and to improve their soil management program. Gain in-depth information on soil analysis, fertilizer and crop nutrition, and pest and weed management from hemp industry innovators and soil health experts. Hosted by ACRES. Call 800-355-5313 for more information.

Virtual Soil Health & Climate Listening Session 3

October 6 | 7 – 8:30 p.m. | Online

Join the Land Stewardship Project's Soil Health and Climate Organizing Committee to share your story on soil health and climate, brainstorm how to build soil and mitigate the climate crisis through agricultural policy, and learn about how to get engaged in LSP's Soil Health and Climate Issue Campaign. RSVP Amanda at 612-400-6355.

Urban Food Systems Symposium

October 7 | 10 a.m. | Online

This symposium includes knowledge on: urban agricultural production, local food systems distribution, climate change, nutrition, urban farmer education, urban ag policy, planning and development, food access and justice, and food sovereignty. Hosted by Kansas State University. Questions? www.urbanfoodsystemssymposium.org/contact/.

Community Conversations to Build Agrarian Commons

October 7 | 6 – 8 p.m. | Online

An initial catalyzing working group is forming to convene community conversations to design how Agrarian Commons can meet the needs of farmers for long-term access to affordable land to grow food for their communities and build livelihoods that support them and their families and communities. Learn more at landstewardshipproject.org/events/item/1537.

Inclusivity in Cooperative Extension Programming, With an Emphasis on Natural Resources and Climate Change

October 12 | Noon | Online

Through a case study from Washington, DC, participants will learn how to get feedback from historically underrepresented groups and tailor cooperative extension programs to people of different races, ages, and academic backgrounds. Sponsored by USDA NRCS. Contact Jennifer at jennifer.ryan2@usda.gov to register.

Fence Options for Grazing Cover Crops and Corn Residue

October 13 | 1 – 4 p.m. | Paynesville, Minn.

October 29 | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. | Goodhue, Minn.

SFA's ongoing Dirt Rich work continues this summer with four in-person events that, like the corresponding podcast, feature expert knowledge and farm information focused on the Five Principles of Soil Health and especially, in the case of these events, livestock integration. Each event will be led by SFA Senior Technical Advisor Kent Solberg and the accompanying SFA staff farmer host. These in-person events will be limited to 10 participants each to follow appropriate social distancing guidelines. Email Kent at kent@sfa-mn.org.

2020 WFAN Annual Conference

November 6 & 7 | Online

The conference will offer seventeen different workshops, affinity groups, a movie night, yoga sessions, creative expression rooms, and more. Email info@wfan.org to learn more.

ACRES Eco-Ag Conference & Trade Show

December 1 – 4 | Online

This educational experience and trade show, now in its 45th year, unites farmers, ranchers and ag professionals from every facet of eco-farming to share their experience and expertise. You will learn useful, practical information that they can apply to your operations. Call 800-355-5313 for more information.



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