



# THE ORGANIC CULTIVATOR

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## KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

### The Welter Seed & Honey Story

by Joe Pedretti, Outreach Manager

Welter Seed and Honey Company was officially started in 1955 by Herman Welter, who was dairy farming and raising a family in Northeastern Iowa, but was looking for a way to diversify his operation. "When Dad started the business he would combine clover on shares. He would receive half of the seed, and would clean, bag and sell it to area farmers," noted Karen Knepper, Herman's youngest of 13 children.

"For Dad, it was another source of income. He was also into beekeeping. He raised bees as

an FFA project in high school. It made sense to have bees to pollinate the clover and he sold the honey locally."

Over time the seed business continued to grow and diversify. They added oats, timothy, brome and alfalfa. Dairy and livestock production was prevalent in the area, so Herman stocked the seeds that were in demand and slowly expanded. By 1976 they built their first warehouse, which was expanded upon three times. "As customer demand has grown, so

*see HONEY on page 5*

## FROM THE DIRECTOR



**Cori Skolaski**  
Executive Director

What an interesting winter we've been having so far! At this writing, I'm looking out my window in southwest Wisconsin and see fog and rain, with 40-degree temperatures. With another El Nino underway, I think of how Canadian poet and writer Brian Brett calls farming "a profession of hope." That certainly rings true, doesn't it?

At MOSA, we feel there is no greater job or responsibility than to provide good safe food for the world and we feel protective of the Certified Organic label and see consumer label confusion as a serious concern. As consumers browse the shelves in their co-op or grocery store and they see "natural" products, what do they think? Does this label inspire consumer trust? Can they feel confident they are making the best choice for their family with the purchase of a "natural" product? I would argue no - that instead, the "natural" label is confusing, misleading, and it erodes confidence in ALL claims and labels, including the one you and I are the most interested in: Certified Organic.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has never developed a definition for use of the term "natural" or its derivatives, but the agency has not objected to the use of

*see DIRECTOR on page 5*



# CERTIFICATION POLICY UPDATES AND MORE

by Jackie DeMinter, Certification Policy Manager

**National Dairy Promotion and Research Board's (NDPRB) Exemption for Organic Dairies** - In January of 2005 USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service issued a final rule that exempts organic producers and marketers from payment of Federal assessments for the National Dairy Promotion and Research Program if operations meet certain criteria. MOSA is involved in verifying these criteria for those of you who apply for this exemption. We've seen confusion over the years as to what the requirements are so I want to explain what is required of us by the NDPRB. Producers must apply annually and meet the criteria annually in order to receive the exemption. Requirements are given in the application as follows:

- **You must operate under an approved organic system plan authorized by the National Organic Program (NOP).**
- **You must produce only products eligible for a 100% organic label under the National Organic Program.**
- **You must not have a split operation (both organic and nonorganic).**

Let me break them down for you.

- "Operate under an approved organic system plan" means that you must be currently certified by an NOP accredited certifier like MOSA and your certificate must be **active and in good standing**.
- "Produces only products eligible for a 100% organic label" means that you **must not have any nonorganic production** on your farm. This is not limited to just the dairy portion of your operation. It does not include personal use products such as a steer for the freezer, a small flock of laying hens for home egg use, or your personal garden. It also does not include certified organic animals marketed on the conventional market because the organic market is not yet developed, such as cull cows or bull calves. Management of breeding bulls is not considered either. However, it does include any animals or crops that are managed nonorganically and sold conventionally.
- The third requirement states again that you must **not produce any nonorganic products** on your operation.

Now to describe **MOSA's role** in this. Each November, we receive a long list of operation names who have already been granted the exemption for the year prior and have reapplied for it and we are asked to verify the information requested by the NDPRB. Then, throughout the year, we receive the same request to verify the NDPRB requirements for any farmers newly requesting the exemption. I have the following suggestions to help make this process simpler:

- You're asked to **list nonorganic land** (includes transitional) on your application for exemption. Make sure the land is listed the same as on your field history form submitted to MOSA.
- You're asked to list **nonorganic animals** on your application. You need to identify **all** animals that are not certified, including those

marketed on the conventional market. Include your **reasons for having nonorganic animals**. Are they for home use? Are they bull calves, cull cows or bulls? Are they managed organically but not certified? At inspection, make sure your inspector is clear on these same issues.

- You're asked to submit a copy of your certificate with the application. (They want this to come from you, not us.) Your most recent certificate is sufficient. You don't have to be through the process for the current year and have an updated certificate.

## Reminders regarding new crop inputs.

It's that time of year when you may be thinking about your inputs for the upcoming season and we want to remind you that all inputs need to be approved by us before you can use them and that some inputs require more information from the manufacturer before *they can be approved (this takes time)*. If you use a prohibited input on your land, you will likely be required to retransition the land for a full 36 months!

Synthetic crop inputs must be on the National List of Synthetics Allowed (.601 (j)) as plant or soil amendments and any added restrictions must be verified.

(1) Aquatic plant extracts (other than hydrolyzed)—Extraction process is limited to the use of potassium hydroxide or sodium hydroxide; solvent amount used is limited to that amount necessary for extraction.

(2) Elemental sulfur.

(3) Humic acids—naturally occurring deposits, water and alkali extracts only.

(4) Lignin sulfonate—chelating agent, dust suppressant.

(5) Magnesium sulfate—allowed with a documented soil deficiency.

(6) Micronutrients—not to be used as a defoliant, herbicide, or desiccant. Those made from nitrates or chlorides are not allowed. Soil deficiency must be documented by testing.

(i) Soluble boron products.

(ii) Sulfates, carbonates, oxides, or silicates of zinc, copper, iron, manganese, molybdenum, selenium, and cobalt.

(7) Liquid fish products—can be pH adjusted with sulfuric, citric or phosphoric acid. The amount of acid used shall not exceed the minimum needed to lower the pH to 3.5.

(8) Vitamins, B1, C, and E.

(9) Sulfurous acid (CAS # 7782-99-2) for on-farm generation of substance utilizing 99% purity elemental sulfur per paragraph (j) (2) of this section.

see *POLICY UPDATES* next page

Natural inputs- Remember that naturally dusty bulk mined inputs must be free of synthetic dust suppressants, binders, or pelleting agents. Other natural inputs need to be verified as naturally mined with no processing that would render the material 'synthetic.' You can use MOSA's Naturally Produced Verification form for this added documentation. Enzymes, microbes, yeasts, and other similar materials are nonsynthetic naturals also and just need to be nonGMO. You can use MOSA's Excluded and Prohibited Methods form for providing this documentation. Agricultural ingredients are allowed.

Remember that there are some naturals that are prohibited too! The following nonsynthetic substances as outlined on 205.602 may not be used in organic crop production:

- (a) Ash from manure burning.
- (b) Arsenic.
- (c) Calcium chloride, brine process is natural and prohibited for use except as a foliar spray to treat a physiological disorder associated with calcium uptake.
- (d) Lead salts.
- (e) Potassium chloride—unless derived from a mined source and applied in a manner that minimizes chloride accumulation in the soil.
- (f) Sodium fluoaluminate (mined).
- (h) Strychnine.
- (i) Tobacco dust (nicotine sulfate). Note: Tobacco dust and nicotine sulfate are prohibited. Tobacco tea, containing nicotine sulfate is also. Only raw tobacco crop residue is not prohibited.

Manure is allowed, but we do verify bedding material and additives. If manure comes from off farm, you can use the Off Farm Manure and Bedding Verification form to verify needed information. Wood shavings used must be natural. Manure application timeframe restrictions apply when manure is considered 'raw' and it is being applied to human consumption crops. Manure must be used at least 90 to 120 days prior to harvest, depending on the type of the plant. If manure is an ingredient in a blended fertilizer that will be used on human consumption crops, the application timeframe restriction also applies.

Compost / Unrestricted Manure- Manure can be composted or otherwise processed to render it a material that can be used without application timeframe restrictions. It's detailed, so contact us for more information if you have questions pertaining to your operation.

Worm castings / Vermicompost- All producers growing human consumption crops and applying worm castings must follow the 90/120 day application restriction UNLESS castings are tested for coliform and salmonella with results below  $1 \times 10^3$  (1,000) MPN fecal coliform per gram sampled and no more than 3 MPN Salmonella per 4 grams sampled AND worms are not fed animal origin feedstocks, like manure. If worms are fed animal feedstocks, in order to use the cast-

ings unrestricted, producers must also have a verified production method maintaining aerobic conditions and adequate (70%-90%) moisture.

Pesticides— active ingredient(s) must be acceptable and inerts must be on the inert list 4. Inerts may not be listed on the label, but we still have to review them.

Like OMRI and WSDA listed products, EPA registered pesticides with an EPA number, the EPA tri-leaf logo and state the phrase 'for organic production/use/gardening' on the label, are allowed.

Note that all liquid fertilizer products with a Nitrogen content greater than 3% must be OMRI listed.

If a product contains Chilean (sodium) nitrate, you will not qualify for Canadian Equivalency.

#### **National List updated:**

The final rule, effective on Dec. 14, 2015, removes four substances from the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List). Two are non-organic agricultural substances - marsala wine and sherry wine - and two are expired listings - streptomycin and tetracycline. The removal of marsala wine and sherry wine from the National List is based upon the NOSB's 2015 sunset review. Both streptomycin and tetracycline previously expired from the National List on October 21, 2014, and this rule simply removes their listings from the regulations.

#### **USDA Seal reminder!**

We've been talking a lot about product labeling and compliance. WHY? It's really important that your marketplace labels are compliant. We've recently encountered a few problems with colors used in the USDA Seal. Coloring schemes matter. We are now requiring that all labels be submitted for approval in color or as they would appear on the product packaging. NOS §205.311 dictates use of the USDA Seal. The USDA seal may be used only for raw or processed agricultural products and livestock feed labeled as 100% organic or organic. The USDA seal must replicate the form and design in the examples below and must be printed legibly and conspicuously. The coloring schemes allowed are limited to:

- (1) On a white background with a brown outer circle and with the term, "USDA," in green overlaying a white upper semicircle and with the term, "organic," in white overlaying the green lower half circle; or
- (2) On a white or transparent background with black outer circle and black "USDA" on a white or transparent upper half of the circle with a contrasting white or transparent "organic" on the black lower half circle.
- (3) The green or black lower half circle may have four light lines running from left to right and disappearing at the point on the right horizon to resemble a cultivated field.

Additionally, if you use the MOSA seal it should be in color or in black and white, as we provide. Seals may not be modified. REMEMBER THAT ALL LABELS MUST BE APPROVED PRIOR TO USE! Contact



## SUPPORT ORGANIC

### Your Comments Needed on the Term “Natural”

Natural claims on food have long been a common marketing technique. Consumers with a desire to choose “healthier” options are often misled into buying products with dubious benefits. With no standards, no third party verification, and no enforcement, just about any product can carry the natural claim, regardless of the source, processing, and ingredients.

While there has been an effort by some third party agencies to create, verify and label natural products, this has always been problematic because the word “natural” is used so cavalierly by so many food companies on foods that may contain artificial colors, flavors, genetically-modified ingredients, and other synthetic materials. Even truly “natural” products that contain no synthetic materials may be produced using any number of chemical inputs at the farm level.

Before the National Organic Standards became law in 2002, the organic world recognized that without a universal standard, there was always the potential for watered down standards and the subsequent loss of consumer confidence. Certified organic products are verified from seed to plate using national standards. Only USDA accredited certification agencies can carry out this verification. Any and all certified organic products are held to the same standards and the same process for verification. No other food product in the United States is held to the same high standard of production and processing. Natural by comparison is virtually meaningless. Even verified natural certification services suffer, because there are no national standards and no accreditation process, thus there is always a question about the veracity of any natural claim. Without strong standards, you cannot have strong consumer confidence.

Organic therefore is the only “real” choice for consumers looking for products that are produced naturally- both on the farm and during processing. Whether you are concerned that a product was produced without toxic pesticides and fertilizers, concerned that animals were treated humanely, concerned about GMOs, or concerned over whether a product contains synthetic colors, flavors and preservatives, organic is the only claim that can address all of these concerns. There is a good reason why organic is the most trusted and most successful label claim in the world. This is also why many of us are so cynical of the natural claim.

However, since the word natural is used so frequently, and so often misleadingly, some type of national definition is necessary. At the very least it will prevent the unscrupulous use of the term by companies looking to mislead or deceive consumers.

The Food and Drug Administration has finally recognized a need to define “natural” and is looking for your input. It is very important that those of us who have worked hard to make organic what it is today to weigh in on this topic. If the FDA chooses to allow natural products to be produced with GMOs and synthetic substances, and to be grown without any consideration to the environment, human health and safety, and humane animal treatment, natural labels will continue to be what they currently are- meaningless. They will also continue to divert consumer support from the real alternative- certified organic products. It is in our best interest to help the FDA create a strong definition for the term “natural”.

Full details on how to submit your comments follow:

## FDA ANNOUNCEMENT

### FDA Requests Comments on Use of the Term “Natural” on Food Labeling

Because of the changing landscape of food ingredients and production, and in direct response to consumers who have requested that the FDA explore the use of the term “natural,” the agency is asking the public to provide information and comments on the use of this term in the labeling of human food products.

The FDA is taking this action in part because it received three Citizen Petitions asking that the agency define the term “natural” for use in food labeling and one Citizen Petition asking that the agency prohibit the term “natural” on food labels. We also note that some Federal courts, as a result of litigation between private parties, have requested administrative determinations from the FDA regarding whether food products containing ingredients produced using genetic engineering or foods containing high fructose corn syrup may be labeled as “natural.”

Although the FDA has not engaged in rulemaking to establish a formal definition for the term “natural,” we do have a longstanding policy concerning the use of “natural” in human food labeling. The FDA has considered the term “natural” to mean that nothing artificial or synthetic (including all color additives regardless of source) has been included in, or has been added to, a food that would not normally be expected to be in that food. However, this policy was not intended to address food production methods, such as the use of pesticides, nor did it explicitly address food processing or manufacturing methods, such as thermal technologies, pasteurization, or irradiation. The FDA also did not consider whether the term “natural” should describe any nutritional or other health benefit.

Specifically, the FDA asks for information and public comment on questions such as:

Whether it is appropriate to define the term “natural,”

If so, how the agency should define “natural,” and

How the agency should determine appropriate use of the term on food labels.

The FDA is accepting public comments beginning on November 12, 2015 until February 10, 2016. To electronically submit comments to the docket, visit <http://www.regulations.gov> and type FDA-2014-N-1207 in the search box.

To submit comments to the docket by mail, use the following address. Be sure to include docket number FDA-2014-N-1207 on each page of your written comments.

Division of Dockets Management

HFA-305

Food and Drug Administration

5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061

Rockville, MD 20852

For more information:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/11/12/2015-28779/use-of-the-term-natural-in-the-labeling-of-human-food-products-request-for-information-and-comments> ■

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has our business,” said Karen. “It happened gradually over the years.”

As they grew, they began contracting with other farmers throughout the Midwest and beyond to grow seeds for them. The oats and clover were grown locally, the brome came from Kansas, and the alfalfa was grown out west. Welter still grows their own wheat, rye and oat seed on their own farm, which is now 1000 acres. “Long-term relationships with growers in other parts of the country, and internationally, are important to our business. That ensures quality and consistency to our customers,” noted Karen.



Over time, Welter went from a local business to one with national distribution. While they do sell and distribute seeds locally within a three hour radius of the warehouse, they have over 300 dealers throughout the US. They also do a lot of smaller orders through UPS.

In 1999, Welter started offering certified organic seed. “We were one of the first major organic seed distributors in the U.S. We were getting more and more inquiries for organic seeds, especially for oats, alfalfa and clover. We started small at first but have greatly expanded our organic line and have expanded the varieties. Organic seeds are now 20% of our total business and still growing quickly. Since we raised bees, we never sprayed much- we were always very health-minded. Organic was a natural progression for us. It was something that we believed in,” emphasized Karen.

Welter Seed is celebrating their 60th anniversary this year. Although Herman passed away in 2005, Welter Seed remains a family business. Five of Herman’s children run the business today: Jim, Dan, Ken, Les and Karen (Knepper), and Jim’s wife Denise and son Jake are also involved. Welter Seed employs 12 staff members throughout the year. In addition to the seed business, they still farm. The dairy barn burned down 17 years ago, and they made the decision then to focus on the seed business instead of rebuilding a new dairy facility. They now raise oats, wheat and rye for seed, and also corn, hay and beans for their beef

herd. In the family tradition, they still raise bees and sell honey.

To keep up with the ever growing seed business, they built a new warehouse three years ago, and a new seed cleaning facility a few years before that. “One advantage we have is our ability to clean, condition and bag seed all at our facility. Other competitors don’t have the full processing capability,” noted Karen. While they have no major plans for expansion, they are increasing their seed offerings, with more varieties of small grains and forages, and more native grass seeds and pollinator habitat mixes.

They also plan to focus on the ever growing organic market. “We enjoy educating our customers and suppliers about organic seeds and the organic standards- everyone helps each other. We have no regrets about going organic. For us, organic is a good decision.”

For more information about Welter Seed and Honey Co., visit their website at:

<http://welterseed.com/>

Toll-free 1-800-728-8450 or 1-800-470-3325

E-mail: [info@welterseed.com](mailto:info@welterseed.com). ■

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cont. DIRECTOR from page 1

the term if the food does not contain artificial ingredients or preservatives and the ingredients are only minimally processed. However, they may contain antibiotics, growth hormones, and other similar chemicals. The FDA also did not consider whether the term “natural” should describe any nutritional or other health benefit, and there is no third party verification, inspection, or certification. As a 2014 Washington Post headline proclaimed: The word “natural” helps sell \$40 billion worth of food in the U.S. every year—and the label means nothing.

Recently, three Citizen Petitions have been brought to the FDA asking it to either provide a definition of “natural” on food labels or to prohibit the use of the word altogether. Through February 10, 2016 the FDA is accepting public comments about the natural label; if you share my concern, I urge you to submit a comment. More information about the comments and how to submit them can be found on page 3.

New Faces! With the start of the new year, MOSA welcomes new staff! Emma Garvin has been hired as the Inspection Department Assistant, helping Jenny and Liz work with our inspectors, and Kevin Channel has started as a Certification Specialist.

Dotting the I’s. As you are probably well aware, organic operations are required to submit annual paperwork updates. If you prefer to update your records online, you can visit MyMOSA at any time to do so. If you prefer paper and pen, your packet of paperwork will arrive in early February. Remember, if you submit your updates back to us by March 15 you will receive an Early Bird discount on your annual certification fee. The deadline to submit your annual update is May 1.

As always, if you have any questions or comments about anything in this newsletter – or about MOSA – please feel free to contact me at [cori@mosaorganic.org](mailto:cori@mosaorganic.org) or 608-637-2526.

Thank you for reading, and thanks for your continued commitment to organic integrity. Best wishes to you and yours for a healthy, happy, and prosperous new year. ■

# PROGRESSIVE THOUGHTS – WHAT’S AHEAD FOR ORGANIC IN 2016

by Stephen Walker, Compliance Manager

Here we are in mid-winter. In the upper Midwest, the land rests, and we seize time to gather ourselves in, and breathe. If snow comes, the landscape and its soundscape are softened. Or with ice, we’re hardened. We’re thankful for summer’s harvest put up in jars and bins, and we look ahead to longer days. Winter brings time to pause, regroup, and rejuvenate.

And so it is with our work in the MOSA office, where we consider how best to hold the beginning of the next year amidst the end of the last, and try to take some time for sweetness and preparation. In the wider organic community, we also periodically gather in to consider regulatory nuances, big issues, and vision.

National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meetings gather the breadth of this community together in one place. The fall meeting, in Vermont, included a whole lot of assessment and vision. Here, I’ll share some forward-thinking words from the meeting, to give a flavor of the state of our union. I hope these will help with considering how we should best move forward in 2016. Those interested in detailed meeting results on the meeting may have already read those elsewhere. Full info, including transcripts, is available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/event/nosb-meeting-2015-vt>.

## Play nicely

Early in the meeting, we heard from Vermont’s Secretary of Agriculture, Chuck Ross. He cautioned, “As we move forward in the agriculture conversation and, particularly, in the organic conversation, let us continue to be thoughtful. Let us continue to be reasoned and pursue our ag and food futures in that way. Let’s honor the need to have a healthy planet, have healthy consumers, and a healthy industry. And this is the point- let us also honor our diversity... It is so easy to find ourselves focused on the things that divide us at the expense of all the things that unite us. The issues of food and agriculture are too big, too profound to our future, to spend all our time, all our energy, all our political effort and will fighting over the things that divide us.” Debates about USDA Organic issues can mimic the tone surrounding many other current events.

We organic stakeholders have diverse opinions about the best way to grow our movement, and this passion has drawn a lot of divisive rhetoric. Several speakers touched on this theme, including Michael Sligh, who was part of the original NOSB. He said, “We must not allow false and personal attacks against any of us who have the courage, especially, to join the NOSB or maybe, ‘insanely,’ to join USDA. We must speak out on that. That is not to be tolerated. It cheapens our discourse. It harms our integrity and we must do better. We owe it to the farmers. We owe it to the workers. And we owe it to the future.”

Bill Wolf, of Wolf, DiMatteo and Associates, raised similar thoughts regarding discourse derailing vision. “Do we want organic agriculture to be truly transformative? Or will we be the Luddite movement of the 21st century? Our vision for organic farming 40 years ago was to become the mainstream progressive, renewable, sustainable system that produces

affordable, healthy food and fiber available to everyone. It would lead the way from the mechanistic era to a biological cooperative method that protects and regenerates our ecosystem, healthy soils, plants, animals, and people. We can still do this, but right now, we are getting stuck in the weeds. Farmers in the U.S. are not embracing organic and we are importing more and more ingredients. The attacks on organic from within our community, the organic perfectionist circular firing squad, has provided the fuel to damage the brand and the trust of the public. And now many competing feel-good label claims are less expensive - non-GMO, local, natural, all of those. The result: organic products are a niche and are considered elitist by many, because most people can’t afford them...

I ask three things. One, unify and promote organic instead of giving our critics ammunition. Be proud. Organic is the most transparent public open source standard in the world from seed to table. Two, be open to innovation that fits the organic philosophy. Encourage biodiversity and creativity. Let’s not nitpick is number three. Don’t reject progress while waiting for the perfect. We are at risk of being sidetracked. When organic agriculture systems are working right, it is amazing for the planet and all the creatures on it.”

## Macro challenges

Michael Sligh also urged that we set time aside to stay ahead of emerging concerns as organic grows. “Organic has much more potential to offer a world in peril than we have managed to codify or reward so far. We set out to create the sane alternative to agribusiness as usual, a way for farmers and workers to farm with dignity in concert with nature, a way for consumers to get the foods they crave and deserve from a trusted source. However, for us to meet our full potential, we must find creative and transparent ways to pick up the pace and evolve our ethic, while not violating our process or our values in the pursuit. We are aware of many macro challenges that are facing us. Our standards are lagging behind in some key areas. Other labels are beginning to catch up and even lap us in some key areas. We also need to do better to defend against those who want to ride our coattails unfairly. We also must do more to close the domestic supply versus demand gap and continue to insist that polluters pay. We are also aware that new genetic plant breeding and synbio techniques are rolling out ahead of our capacity to evaluate and there is a troubling growth of utility patents being used in organic seed production. All this is happening because of rapid growth and success but also because we are still a little too bogged down.”

## Materials – tools, or liability?

The fall NOSB agenda was loaded with 175 materials up for sunset review, to determine if they should continue to be allowed in organic agriculture. Following NOSB votes, 11 inputs will be removed from the National List, two petitions for addition of new synthetic materials to the List were denied, and there was agreement to further restrict the use of natural flavors in organic products. The NOSB also voted to modernize how inert ingredients used in pesticide products are evaluated and approved. There was a lot of debate over how the NOSB should assess materials like oxygen, which may have received little public input, perhaps because use was not considered controversial. For some materials, there were strongly divided votes that were not predicted by pre-meeting information.



Joe Smillie is a former NOSB chair, and a founding member of the Organic Trade Association and the International Organic Inspectors Association. He commented on how early decisions materials review procedures are affecting discourse. "We have to balance the perfect with the good... My view is we need to change agriculture from one percent to a heck of a lot more. And the way we're going to do that is by making the tools available to farmers and processors that they need to convert those three years when they have to grow organic and sell conventionally. That's a tough thing for any economist to swallow. The law of unintended consequences really started when (we) debated how we would draw the line between what's organic and what's not. We decided... that we would draw that line between natural and synthetic... This has led to an unintended consequence that I call the demonization of synthetic substances... We need to keep these tools and stop the demonization of all things synthetic. What's natural isn't always good. What's deemed to be synthetic is not always bad."

Mark Kastel and the Cornucopia Institute remain highly critical of the National Organic Program administration and the NOSB process. When asked by NOSB member Jennifer Taylor for potential solutions, Kastel suggested more transparency in materials review information. "This is not a scientific panel, obviously. There is one seat designated for a scientist. It is a lay panel to interpret what is best for the organic community through your prism, through the OFPA prism. So, the Congress gave the authority to this Board - not to the NOP - to choose technical advisors, scientists, that you feel comfortable with, that you feel are qualified to do this analysis. Because you folks aren't qualified... you folks need to choose to make sure, one, that the scientists are qualified, and two, that they don't have conflicts of interest."

One material up for sunset debate was ethylene gas, now re-approved for regulating pineapple flowering. This drew a large contingency of Costa Rican pineapple growers, who shed light on how a material input and our review process can impact an economy. Stephanie Rodriguez Hidalgo works for the National Chamber of Producers and Exporters of Pineapple. She explained how conditions and quantity of production do not enable natural pineapple flowering methods to be viable, and with ethylene, production happens at once. She added, "Without this condition, growing pineapples would never be a profitable business. And maybe too, a grower cannot estimate dates to sell his production, and maybe too they cannot fulfill the demands. And maybe too we cannot give a specific date for harvesting... Inclusion in the National List will strengthen organic production, employment, and family."

I overheard a meeting attendee say they'd now refer to the National List of allowed and prohibited materials as the "International List," after they realized the global impact of our debates. The Costa Rican growers almost missed weighing in on this issue because they were not aware of the sunset review process. Few comments were received when ethylene was first discussed last spring. But, for the fall meeting, there were 43 written comments plus a lot of oral testimony. We learned that 90 percent of all the Costa Rican organic pineapple production comes to the US market. And the Costa Ricans learned why attention to NOSB agendas is important.

## More emerging considerations

There was a lot of talk about hydroponics and whether it has a place within the organic standards. This issue drew a lot of public comments, and a friendly protest featuring a few tractors driven by organic farmers, and a podium literally and figuratively based on soil. Some tout hydroponics' benefits related to efficient food production in a changing climate. Other thoughts were more like those expressed by Lisa Bunin of the Center for Food Safety, who called for a stop to certification of hydroponic systems. "This doesn't fit the definition of organic production... Certification inconsistencies violate OFPA, create consumer confusion and reflect poorly on organic. We urge NOP to issue a moratorium on new certifications and draft instructions to certifiers consistent with the legal definition of organic production."

We heard a plea to halt conversion of high value conservation areas to organic crop land. Always a strong voice for biodiversity, Jo Ann Baumgartner of the Wild Farm Alliance called for barriers to discourage the conversion of intact biodiverse ecosystems to crop production, to avoid a three-year transition required for conventional land. "Biodiversity conservation is a foundational principle of organic agriculture. We are currently experiencing the sixth wave of extinctions in the past half billion years. Unless we alter our course, it is predicted that as many as 30 to 50 percent of all species may be extinct by mid-century... We would like to know where new acreage is coming from. Is it being converted from conventional, coming out of CRP land, or from land that has no cropping history? Let's convert the 99 percent of conventional agriculture to organic before conversion of intact ecosystems."

Transitional certification also gained attention. A task force is looking at development of a transitional certification model to be ready for release in 2016. Potential benefits include enhancing the farmer/certifier relationship, encouraging earlier entry into contracts with buyers, enabling access to government programs, and developing markets for transitional products.

Upcoming NOSB work includes: a possible recommendation regarding contamination issues in farm inputs like manure, a revisit of biodegradable biobased mulch, maintaining seed purity, revisiting terminology for various genetic engineering techniques, use of antibiotics in day-old chicks, a possible organic poultry working group, and clarifying which nutrient vitamins and minerals should be allowed in foods.

## Common ground

As of the end of 2015, the daily news continued to stress society's divisions, in politics, in values, in how we relate to our global neighbor. It gets tiring. I find a lot more rejuvenation in stressing unity and promoting the "organic dolce vita."

Parting words from several outgoing NOSB members emphasized finding common ground. Over his five years on the NOSB, principled small farmer Colehour Bondera cast many votes which ended up short side of the tally. He commented, "I learned pretty quickly that I can't waste time focusing on single opinions, but really I have to focus on working with one another to seek positive improvement about how the process can

*see WHAT'S AHEAD on page 9*



## MEET MOSA STAFF MEMBER: LIZ DAINES

### **What do you do in your position at MOSA?**

I am the Inspection Coordinator, which means that I assign all inspections at MOSA. I make sure that files get sent out to the inspectors and that, when files come back to the office after the inspection, they go to the right places. I may be the only person at MOSA who touches every single file, although I have help from some great coworkers! I also work closely with the inspectors. The majority of inspections are performed by independent contract inspectors who reside in various regions across the country. I communicate with them to answer questions they may have and coordinate their inspections.

### **What do you do with your time outside of MOSA?**

I live on 13 acres with my husband and a bunch of animals, so that keeps us pretty busy fencing, cutting wood, etc. I live four miles from the farm I grew up on, and spend a lot of time there. I spend as much time outdoors as possible fishing, camping, and volunteering at a nearby State Natural Area. I also volunteer a few hours a week at a CSA farm in exchange for a vegetable share. We like live music and go to music festivals when we can get away for a weekend.

### **How long have you been at MOSA? Can you tell us about one thing that was really different when you started?**

I have been at MOSA for 4 and a half years. At the time I started, I was working at a couple of organic vegetable farms in the area, but it was during the “off-season.” I was lucky enough to continue at MOSA as a full time employee.

### **Can you tell us one thing that was really different when you started?**

One significant difference is that, when I started, often a staff member would have many roles at MOSA. Someone might be doing very different tasks, and it was often hard to find a good balance of the different work. I think we have developed a good balance of workloads since then.

### **Why organic?**

Everyone reading this knows that it just makes sense. The general public is really beginning to see this, too. I read recently that Americans spend less than 10% of their income on food, less than any other nation in the world! This is changing, though. People are starting to think more about the impact of their purchases and the real price of cheap food.

### **Why MOSA?**

MOSA is a great group of people who collaborate to find the most practical means to get the job done. Practicality has always been the foundation of MOSA, and is the thing that I value the most.

### **What are a few great things about your life?**

I love that I get to live in the place where I grew up. Not many people have the opportunity to live in rural areas anymore. I appreciate having a job where I feel like I’m making a difference, and where I can help both the inspectors and our clients get the help they need. ■

## MEETING YOUR 2016 TIMING NEEDS FOR ORGANIC PRODUCTION

*Michael Crotser: Certification Specialist*

Around the holiday season, our office prepares for update paperwork for the following certification year. Our goal is to proactively gather necessary information so that your certificate can be updated in a timely and orderly manner. One key form that is submitted each year is your Easy Organic System Plan. An important section of this form identifies any critical “timing need” for your operation. An identified timing need prepares our office to add new products to your certificate prior to sale or verify that new land is eligible for production before harvest.

If you are adding new products to your certificate, let us know. For farm operations, this means that crops not listed on your certificate should be added. If the new crop falls within your approved Organic System Plan, this crop can be added at Initial Review. An updated certificate will be mailed with your 2016 Initial Review Letter. Your updated certificate will allow you to sell the new crop prior to inspection. Examples of new crops could include tomatoes for vegetable operations or corn for row crop producers. Any seed or crop inputs used in production will be verified at inspection, so be prepared to have all the necessary paperwork and records available. If the new product or service is not adequately described in your Organic System Plan, an inspection and review of the inspection report will be required before the new product or service is added. For example, if you produce row crops and plan to add vegetable and greenhouse production, you will have to submit a Greenhouse Organic System Plan with your update application. You will also have to update your Farm Organic System Plan to describe all aspects of vegetable production. Additionally, you will need to let us know that vegetable and greenhouse production is new and provide a first sale date of vegetables on your 2016 Easy Organic System Plan. Our office will make note of your deadline, inspect your farm and update your certificate prior to sale. If you do not inform our office of your new product or service, we may not be able to meet your needs.

Another important timing need is the addition of new land. If you are adding new land, let us know on your 2016 Easy Organic System Plan. With your update application, submit a Prior Land Use Declaration form for land previously managed by someone else. If you managed the land, submit a 3-Year Field History. Also, submit a map of the new field. All new land must be inspected and determined eligible prior to organic harvest or grazing. To determine eligibility, a reviewer will read your inspection report and assess if the new land is compliant. You will be informed whether the new land is eligible in your Certification Determination Letter. If a quick response is needed, we can call or email you to let you know if the land is eligible.

Sometimes producers want to add new land after their update paperwork is submitted. If this is the case, contact us. If your inspec-

*see TIMING next page*



cont. *TIMING* from previous page

tion has not occurred, you can submit field history information and a map at inspection and our office can verify the land is eligible prior to harvest or grazing. If land may be added, but you are still working out the details, let our office or your inspector know. Your inspector can view the land during your annual inspection. By having the new land inspected, you can avoid an additional inspection later. If needed, the required paperwork can be submitted later.

Sometimes our clients identify a timing need that requires no action from our office. Examples would include a harvest date for a crop already listed on your certificate or informing us of new land that has already been inspected. In these cases, we would let you know that your file needs no special attention to meet a need that was previously addressed. If your current certificate lists all the products that you produce, there is no rush to update it. Unless suspended, revoked or surrendered, your certificate is current and active, and will be updated during the normal certification cycle. Often, buyers do not understand our process and question the date of the certificate. If this is the case, let us know and we can talk with your buyer to confirm your certificate is valid.

This article discussed the most common timing need events resolved by our office. It did not include timing needs for handlers or unique timing needs for producers. These timing needs should still be identified on your 2016 Easy Organic System Plan. By identifying your need, we can address it as part of your normal review process. If you have a timing need after your application is submitted, please contact our office. Resolving timing needs outside of normal file review may require an additional inspection and review of your file. Additional services such as additional verifications, certificate changes outside of the annual review, international services and other administrative services are subject to an administration fee of \$90 per hour. If you have concerns that our office will not meet your timing need, contact us. We can let you know where we are in the process and work with you to resolve your need. ■



At MOSA, we treat you like you're the most important part of our work—because you are.

cont. *WHAT'S AHEAD* from page 7

be healthy, rather than isolated material choices because without a healthy process, we're not going to be healthy." And certifier representative Mac Stone reflected on the caliber and complexity of the conversation. "I grew to learn that there is no black and white. We have to vote yes or no, which sounds very black and white, but there's always losers. There's always winners. It's just really, really hard on this side of the microphone when you know that it's not all good, no matter what you do." Stone recalled a particularly difficult 2013 NOSB vote, on use of antibiotics to combat fire blight in apples and pears, "Jean and Harold and I were eating breakfast and they knew they were going to vote differently on that. They knew what a difficult vote that was going to be. But I was never more proud of a group of people. When we got through that vote, that was a tough one. But I think it created a bond that helped us since then to do good work because we knew how tough it was to do good work that day."

When our community comes together, we get stronger, and a lot of wisdom emerges. It's good fodder for pondering our blessings and our challenges on a long winter's night. In 2016, we look forward to continued good work with more respect, more raising up and less bogging down. Let's keep our eyes on the original organic vision and stay ahead of the challenges. We've got a lot of good to promote, and we owe that to all of our stakeholders, including the next generation. ■

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# CLASSIFIEDS

## LIVESTOCK

Wanted: We will custom raise your organic heifers or steers. Our stocking density is 6100 lbs for 8.5 acres of improved, organic eligible pasture near Viola, WI. Cattle will be moved daily. We also have an additional five acres of organic eligible hay ground for rent. Call Alex for details at 608-625-4402.

Wanted: We will custom raise your organic dairy heifers. Certified organic feed. Call Matt for details 507-459-7719.

Wanted: Interested in buying all classifications of organic cattle and calves for meat production.

Mike Noble, Kenyon, MN 507-789-6679.

## LAND

For Rent or Possible Sale: Organic Farm. 80 acres +/- 40 acres tillable. 33 woods/pasture. LaCrosse County WI. Organic certification last 6 years and current. CRP previous 25 years. Approx. 2/3 1st and second year corn stubble, 1/3 clover for plow down. Fall lime applied to approx. 1/2. Prefer multi year lease for 2016 or sale with terms. For more information call 651-343-7731.

For Rent: organic 38.5 acre farm. This organic farm has 10 to 15 acres of tillable fertile land, as well as pasture and woodlands against a large pond. Rental will include renovated house (two bedrooms 1600 sq ft) and shared use of dairy barn; garage; and 24x48 packing shed with concrete floor, trough drain, and updated electrical. Property has a new 60gpm 200-foot deep irrigation well, and will probably have a kitchen and bathroom available for interns. Farm is located in Clayton, WI, an hour and a half from the Twin Cities. The farm was used this year to grow produce for a 200 member CSA and other markets, so the property is ready to go for a renter next year, to share with a small log-grown mushroom farm. Rent negotiable. Available February, 2016; call Jeremy at (612) 205-8599 or email at cherrytreeshousemushrooms@gmail.com.

Wanted: Organic Land for Rent. Any size parcel within a 20 mile radius of Soldiers Grove, WI. Call Rich at 608-606-9226.

For Sale: Organic Farm, Northfield, MN. 126 Acres of certified organic farmland with full set of bldgs for veg farm or plant production. 80,000 sq ft greenhouse, 52 x 100 new four season pack shed, 40 x 60 potting shed, 48 x 100 new, heated shop. Well maintained 1200 sq ft house with full basement. Two new septic systems. Two wells. MLS #4599644 kubesrealty@kubesrealty.com 952-445-9110.

## EQUIPMENT

For Sale: Equipment: Kovar 24 foot tine weeder with hydraulic wings, gauge wheels, and independent wishbones added. Like new- \$1950. Grouser front mount three point hitch to fit John Deere 8000 or 8010 series tractor; very heavy duty

hitch. John Deere 200 stacker and mover. Priced to sell. Goodhue MN. 651-380-9635.

For Sale: 1978 IH Combine. 3200 hours. Great Shape. Comes with a 944 4-row corn head. La Farge, WI. Call David at 608-479-1222.

For Sale: John Deere Combine Engine. Serial 287700T. Model 6329DH01. 90-100 HP. Complete with radiator, alternator, battery, starter, fuel tank and instrument cluster. 4000 hours. \$2500. Will Deliver. Rockland, WI. Dale. 608-498-6656.

For Sale: John Deere Corn Sheller on Stand. \$135. Rockland, WI. Dale. 608-498-6656. (

For Sale: Massey 1135 Tractor. New hydraulic pump and brakes. Tires good. Uses some oil. Open station. \$6500 as is. Rockland, WI. Dale. 608-498-6656.

## MISCELLANEOUS

For Sale: Mr.K's garlic tincture & garlic vinegar approved for use as treatment in organic production. Helps with mastitis, scours, etc... 330-674-3999 x3.

## VEGETABLES/FRUITS

For Sale: Fresh Cranberries certified organic by MOSA. Available in 40 pound lots in poly mesh bags. Will keep for 12 to 20 weeks at 40 degrees Fahrenheit with good ventilation. Selling price is \$2.50 per pound. Contact Shirley at 715-652-0171.

## FORAGE/GRAIN

For Sale: MOSA Certified Organic Hay. 1st, 2nd and 3rd cuts. 3x3x8' bales. 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th cut baleage. Oats and peas baleage. In-line wrapped. Test results available. Bales start at \$35 each. Call Paul- 608-498-2882.

For Sale: Organic Hay. Large Squares. 108 bales of 1st crop- 83.23 RFQ. 96 bales of 2nd crop- 113.91 RFQ and 54 bales of 3rd crop- 135.38 RFQ. Baled dry and stored inside. Montfort, WI area. Call Chuck- 608-943-8541.

For Sale: Organic Baleage in 4X5' round bales. Excellent quality ranging from 135 to 250 RFQ. Goodhue MN 651-380-0635.

For Sale: Organic and Transition Oat Straw. Net wrapped 4x5 bales, \$35 per bale, deliver available call Tony at 608-477-0069, Wonewoc, WI area.

For Sale: Certified Organic Baleage. Lg. Rounds- \$40 per bale. Timothy/alfalfa/grass/clover mix. Pickup in Varrettsville, OH. Need to move by Dec 1. Call Roy Miller- 440-214-2566.

For Sale: Certified Organic Hay. Lg. Rounds- \$50 per bale. Excellent quality alfalfa hay. No rain. Trucking available in WI. Call Dave- 920-650-2976.

For Sale: Certified Organic Oat Straw. Large squares- \$40 per bale. Stored inside. Boaz, WI. Call 608-536-3187.

For Sale: Organic 2015 crop balage. 86 3x3x5 squares- 3rd cutting, clover/grass mix. 46 4x4

rounds- sorghum sudan/clover mix. 14 4x4.5 rounds- 1st cutting ryegrass/clover mix. 19 4x5 rounds- 2nd cutting ryegrass/clover mix. Also 7 4x5 rounds of dry hay- stored inside. All feed is being tested. Call David Chupp 715-223-7381. Spencer, WI.

For Sale: Organic hay (1st, 2nd and 3rd crop), organic haylage, and organic barley hay. Near Rushford, MN. Email heidimae@rocketmail.com.

For Sale: Certified Organic Winter Rye and Non-GMO VNS Winter Rye. Germ tested. NE WI. Call 920-427-6663.

For Sale: Certified Organic Hay. Very good quality. Mostly alfalfa, some grass. Available in dry 3x3x8 large squares, small squares and well-wrapped baleage (3x3x5.5). NE WI. Call 920-427-6663.

For Sale: CERTIFIED ORGANIC HAY. Approx. 450 small square bales of 2015 grass mix. \$2.00/bale. Approx. 100 small square bales of wheat straw. \$2.00/bale. Approx. 100 small square bales of 2015 alfalfa/grass mix. \$2.50/bale. Approx. 300 small square bales of 2014 2nd & 3rd crop alfalfa. \$3.00/bale. CONTACT DENNIS - 608-416-0364 - Brooklyn, WI.

For Sale: Organic alfalfa second cutting 3x3x8 sq. bales. Test results available. Brad, Allenton WI (262) 305-7623.

For Sale: MOSA Certified Hay. Round bales. No Rain and tight. 4x4 (approx. 600lbs) twine wrapped grassy hay with alfalfa and clover: 1st crop \$23 ea 2nd crop \$34. 4x5 net wrapped (approx. 800lbs) 1st crop \$32 - \$34 (much higher alfalfa) each. 7 miles east of Viroqua. Can load. Bill 608-606-4369.

For Sale: 2015 certified organic dry hay. Tight 4'X5' Netwrapped round bales. NO RAIN. Eight Lots--all forage analyzed--results available. First, second and third crop. Approximately 500 Tons. Delivery within Wisconsin and U.P. Michigan can be arranged. 715-473-2154 (message line). medow@medowfarmsorganic.com.

For Sale: Organic 4x4 Silage Bales. 1st and 2nd crop alfalfa/grass mix. Can Deliver. Rockland, WI. Call Dale at 608-498-6656.

For Sale: MOSA Certified Organic Fall Rye Seed. Cleaned, ready to plant in 35 bu totes. \$19.00/bu.

5 miles SE of Hillsboro WI. Contact Ben, 419-294-8598 or 608-489-8598.

For Sale: 15 large square bales clean, Transitional Oat Straw. \$35/bale. 5 miles SE of Hillsboro WI. Contact Ben, 419-294-8598 or 608-489-8598.

For Sale: Organic Seed Wheat: Soft Red Winter-VNS:\$25/bu, Hard Red Spring-VNS: \$25/bu, Heritage Turkey Red winter: \$35 per bu. Available in 40 bu totes or smaller if requested. Wisconsin grown, cleaned by fanning mill and gravity table, germ tested by WCIA. Call 608-583-2100.

For Sale: Certified organic first crop hay, 4' x 5' round bales. Tight, average weight 950 lbs, no-rain, polytined, grasses(June, Brome, Timothy),

Legumes (Trefoil, red clover). Hauling available. References can be given. Northern Wisconsin. Ask for Dale, 715-685-4291, or e-mail at heavydale@gmail.com.

*To submit an ad to be posted in the printed version of the Organic Cultivator and on the MOSA website, send it to MOSA, PO Box 821, Viroqua, WI 54665, or email to [mosa@mosaorganic.org](mailto:mosa@mosaorganic.org). All ads will be posted for 60 days free of charge for MOSA clients (100 words max). For non-clients, cost of an ad is \$5.00 for 40 words, and \$0.10 per word over 40 (max 100 words).*

*MOSA does not guarantee that all products posted on this page are certified organic, and MOSA is not responsible for the accidental purchase of non-organic products through the use of this page. Always check to guarantee the certification status of any product before purchasing or using. ■*

## EVENTS

### JANUARY 2016

**Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference (ISAOC)**  
Jan. 6-8 | \$75 | Springfield, IL

The Illinois Specialty Growers Association (ISGA) presents their annual conference featuring keynote speaker, Tom Turpin, professor of Entomology at Purdue University. Pre-conference workshops are available on Wednesday. Thursday and Friday feature several workshops devoted to organic production. Topics range from grains to cover crops, fruits to vegetables, and marketing to pest control. For more information or to be mailed a 2016 conference brochure, contact: Illinois Specialty Growers Association, 1701 Towanda Ave., Bloomington, IL 61701; call 309-557-2107, or email [cbclary@ilfb.org](mailto:cbclary@ilfb.org).

**Minnesota Organic Conference**  
Jan. 8-9 | St. Cloud, MN

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture presents their annual Organic Conference. This year's keynotes include entrepreneur Pam Marrone and economist Richard Levins. With breakout sessions, meals, and a large exhibit hall, this conference offers something to organic farmers from beginners to experts. Go to <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/~media/Files/food/organicgrowing/2016mocbook.pdf> or call 800-450-7272.

**Transitioning to Organic Grains**  
Jan. 13 | 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. | \$40 | Woodstock, IL

The Land Connection presents this organic field crop production and marketing seminar devoted to grains. Experts will focus on how to select ideal alternative grain crops, plan for soil fertility and pest management, and navigate organic transition and certification. Go to

<http://thelandconnection.org/farmers/farmer-training-intensives/grains> or call 217-840-2128.

**Webinar: Building a Legally Sound Intern and Volunteer Program for Farm Work**  
Jan. 19 | 2 p.m. | Free | Online

Many farmers are aware that doing farm work with interns and volunteers can be legally complicated. Many farms have faced steep fines for setting these agreements up incorrectly, but all hope is not lost. Join Farm Commons to get ahead of the learning curve and learn ways to build a legally compliant intern or volunteer program for your farm. Contact us at 608-616-5319 or go to <https://farmcommons.org/building-legally-sound-intern-and-volunteer-program-farm-work>.

**2016 Organic Agriculture Research Symposium**  
Jan. 20 | Pacific Grove, CA

The symposium takes place immediately before the Ecological Farming Association's annual Eco-Farm Conference and features researchers from all disciplines related to organic farming and food systems, and other systems of sustainable agriculture that employ techniques compatible with organic standards. Go to <http://www.ofrf.org/events> or call 831-426-6606.

**Practical Farmers of Iowa**  
Jan. 22-23 | Ames, IA

Annual conference open to everyone. The event attracts farmers of all sorts, sizes, systems and enterprises, as well as non-farmers interested in their food's story. Event includes pre-conference short courses that run the day before and morning of the conference to in-depth workshops, roundtables, breakfast meetings and a rich array of sessions in several core tracks. For more information call 605-229-4040 or go to <http://www.npsas.org/news-events/2016-winter-conference.html>.

**Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference**  
Jan. 29-30 | Acme, MI

This ISLAND initiative conference equips the small farm community with the tools to be successful. It also serves as a forum to the open exchange of ideas between small Michigan farmers to promote and build a local, vibrant, agricultural community. Call 715-723-5561 or go to <http://www.smallfarmconference.com/>.

**Wisconsin Farmers Union Annual State Convention**  
Jan. 29-31 | Appleton, WI

The Wisconsin Farmers Union hosts their 85th Annual State Convention. Call 231-622-5252 or go to [http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/farmers\\_union\\_events.phtml](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/farmers_union_events.phtml).

### FEBRUARY 2016

**Organic Seed Growers Conference**  
Feb. 4-6 | Corvallis, OR

The Organic Seed Alliance hosts the largest organic seed event in the U.S. Expand your seed knowledge and skills, hear the latest in scientific research, and discover new resources and tools

that help you grow and sell more seed. Learn more by calling 360-385-7192 or go to <http://seedalliance.org/2016-conference>.

**Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference (IMFC)**  
Feb. 7-8 | \$100 (for general public) | St. Paul, MN

The goal of the IMFC is to advance the success and sustainability of immigrant and minority farmers. Farmers, advocates, educators, professionals, experts, and agency officials gather together around 12 workshops and networking time. Call 651-636-4567 or go to <http://www.imfconference.org/conference-information.html>.

**SFA Annual Conference: Cultivating the Wisdom of the Community**  
Feb. 13 | \$65 | St. Joseph, MN

The Sustainable Farming Association's annual conference includes a keynote, workshops and a trade show. This year features a new opportunity "Wisdom of the Community" – or WOC Talks – similar to TED Talks. Family programming is also available for children, ages 3-12 for a nominal fee. Call 844-922-5573 or go to <http://www.sfa-mn.org/conference/>.

**SFA Midwest Soil Health Summit**  
Feb. 17-18 | \$200 | Alexandria, MN

The Sustainable Farming Association's summit features soil health experts and farm leaders for two days of education and farmer networking – all geared at improving the health of your soil. A variety of speakers including producers, researchers, and soil health experts offer their insights. Call 844-922-5573 or go to <http://www.sfa-mn.org/conference/>.

**The Science of Cover Crops**  
Feb. 24 | FREE | Madison, WI

This one-day conference has been coordinated by University of Wisconsin Extension, the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, and the Midwest Cover Crops Council to discuss what is truly known about cover crop benefits. The conference is geared toward farmers, consultants, industry, government and research audiences. Please plan on active discussion. Contact [mdruark@wisc.edu](mailto:mdruark@wisc.edu) or call 262-642-3303.

**MOSES Organic Farming Conference**  
Feb. 25-27 | La Crosse, WI

The MOSES Conference is the largest event in the U.S. focused on organic and sustainable farming practices. Pack your plaid and come ready to expand your farming knowledge, discover new resources and tools, make connections and find support for your farm endeavors. Call 715-778-5775 or go to <https://mosesorganic.org/conference/>. ■





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