



THE ORGANIC CULTIVATOR

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JUST COFFEE COOPERATIVE

Social Justice in Every Cup

by Joe Pedretti, Outreach Manager

"We came into coffee in a very unorthodox way," noted Matt Earley, co-founder along with Mike Moon of Just Coffee Cooperative located in Madison, WI. "We were not apprentices or involved in coffee in any way. We came at it from a fair trade/advocacy standpoint. Mike was an organic farmer, who owned Drumlin CSA near Madison

and I was recent anthropology graduate from the University of KY. While at the University of KY, I joined a school building project in Chiapas, Mexico. This is where I first met coffee farmers and became interested in getting to know them. I then applied to grad school in Madison with the idea of studying the coffee indus-

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FROM THE DIRECTOR



Cori Skolaski
Executive Director

Today as I write this article, it solidly feels like winter; I hear the wind blustering and blowing outside my window here in southwest Wisconsin, and we're bracing for 40 below wind chills tonight. I hope that by the time this newsletter goes to press and lands in your hands or on your screen we have a hint of Spring in the air! This is the time of year that we see and wait so expectantly for the shifts; already there is substantially more daylight than we experienced just a few weeks ago; maybe next week we'll see temperatures edging above freezing. In the meantime, we look at seed catalogs, make plans for the season ahead, and wait on the warmer days.

In early February, MOSA clients received their update paperwork either in the mail or with an emailed link to their electronic files. Along with warmer weather and longer days, this is the season we get to talk to many of our existing clients and many new ones, too. Questions range from what form to fill out, how to log into MyMOSA, about our online certification system, whether an input is allowed, and everything in between. We are happy to help and answer questions! Some dates to keep in mind are March 15 - our early bird deadline to submit

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CERTIFICATION POLICY UPDATE AND MORE

by Jackie DeMinter, Certification Policy Manager

Exemption of Organic Products from Assessment Under a Commodity Promotion Law

UPDATE: On December 30th, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) published a final rule changing the exemption requirements from assessments for commodity promotion activities (Marketing Orders and Research and Promotion Programs). This rule, effective February 29, 2016, implements the provisions of section 10004 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 and modifies the organic assessment exemption regulations under 23 Federal marketing orders and 22 research and promotion programs (commodity promotion programs). This rule amends the current regulations to allow persons that produce, handle, market, process, manufacture, feed, or import “organic” and “100 percent organic” products to be exempt from paying assessments associated with commodity promotion activities, including paid advertising, conducted under a commodity promotion program administered by the AMS, regardless of whether the person requesting the exemption also produces, handles, markets, processes, manufactures, feeds, or imports conventional or nonorganic products. Currently, only persons that exclusively produce and market products certified as 100 percent organic are eligible for an exemption from assessments under commodity promotion programs.

For MOSA, this most affects the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board’s (NDPRB) Exemption for Organic Dairies. In our last newsletter, I covered the previous regulation. Please note that any applications received by the NDPRB (or other commodity programs) prior to the effective date (2/29/16) of this new rule are still being reviewed under the old guidelines. Until the rule is in effect, the NDPRB is unable to comment on how their application process will be changing, but I expect that it will be simpler for you and for us. It seems that we will only need to confirm the good standing of your organic certification and that you will only need to send in a certificate. If your application for exemption was not approved due to transitional or conventional land or animals, apply again after the effective date.

Biosecurity and Avian Influenza update

Again this year biosecurity and avian influenza are topics to pay attention to with at least one confirmed case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) already in the Midwest. As a reminder, MOSA’s policy is to follow the National Organic Program’s policy on avian influenza. They have advised us that if our local, state, or federal health authorities determine that additional action is needed in the areas we certify, we are to work with our clients to determine what emergency measures are necessary, and for how long. We do not have a general policy regarding length of confinement allowed since it would depend on the specific threat, duration, and the location. We would work with individual producers to develop a mutually agreed

upon temporary confinement plan that would effectively neutralize the threat. In the case of the 2015 Avian influenza epidemics, the NOP issued a directive to all certifiers to cease doing inspections on poultry operations in counties where outbreaks had been found. Inspections have resumed, but biosecurity threats are unpredictable so we’ll need to adapt when concerns arise. Continue to watch our newsletter for developing news and if confinement in your area is necessary or if you become aware of a new threat in your area, contact MOSA to discuss your situation. Please continue to discuss all biosecurity concerns with your inspector prior to their arrival at your farm.

New National Organic Program Final Guidance Published

The National Organic Program (NOP) recently published final guidance aiming to help certifiers and organic operations determine which substances can be used in post-harvest handling, regardless of whether it occurs on the farm or in a handling (processing) facility. The guidance also clarifies the provisions of the standards for facility pest management, either on-farm or in a handling facility.

View the Federal Register Notice <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/01/15/2016-00678/national-organic-program-notice-of-final-guidance-on-substances-used-in-post-harvest-handling-of>

View the Final Guidance: NOP 5023: Substances Used in Post-Harvest Handling of Organic Products <http://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOP%205023%20Post%20Harvest%20Hdlg%20Rev01.pdf>

View the Response to Comments <http://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOP%205023-1%20Response%20to%20Comments%20%28final%29.pdf>

The NOP has outlined specific measures that certifiers and operators need to observe when using post-harvest handling materials and facility pest management materials. The good news is that very little will change with regard to material review at MOSA. We’ll still need the same information as before. We want to emphasize a few points though.

- The use of any post-harvest handling or pest management substance must comply with EPA or FDA requirements, as applicable. It’s your responsibility to ensure that the product is intended for your use and that you follow the directions given.
- All ingredients, including inerts, must be reviewed by MOSA, unless the material is OMRI, WSDA, or EPA listed as ‘for organic production’ and bearing the trileaf logo. The great part is that most materials we see clients using are already OMRI, WSDA or EPA listed for organic use.

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- Remember always to have your management plan and any materials approved by MOSA before you use them.
- For facility pest management plans, remember that management practices to prevent and control pests come first, but if you are still having problems, contact MOSA to discuss your plan and for material approval.

The NOP gave some specific examples:

- **Diatomaceous earth** is a natural substance used in pest management. It's commonly used to control pests in storage bins, and is regulated by the EPA. It is also listed for use as a food grade filter aid. Use must be consistent with label directions.
- **Pyrethrum, BT or other botanical or biological pesticides** are allowed as nonsynthetic substances for use in livestock and crop production. Use must be consistent with label directions.
- **Copper sulfate, narrow range oils, elemental sulfur and insecticidal soaps** are allowed for disease and insect control in crops as outlined on 205.601, but are not allowed for direct contact in post-harvest handling. They could be used in compliance with 205.271(c) for facility pest management.
- **Clove oil**, as a sprout inhibitor, is considered exempt from EPA registration requirements and is allowed as a nonsynthetic in crop production and in post-harvest handling. Any inerts must be reviewed and approved. Clove oil is allowed in direct contact post-harvest use with potatoes, so long as the label allows the use.
- **Sodium silicate** is allowed as a synthetic on 205.601 as a post-harvest floating agent.
- **Ethanol and isopropyl alcohol** are allowed for crop production as algicides, sanitizers and disinfectants as specified on 205.601(a). They are not allowed for direct contact with food products post-harvest. They could be used for facility pest management
- **Boric acid** is allowed for crops as stated in 205.601(e)(3) as an insecticide for structural pest control with no direct contact with food or crops.
- **Warfarin (poison) rodent bait stations** are prohibited for use and are not allowed in direct contact with food products post-harvest. However, they could be used in compliance with 205.271(d) for facility pest management given there is no contact with organic products and the certifier approves the use. The operator must demonstrate that preventative management practices, physical controls, and use of substances on the NL are not effective.

Final Guidance on Natural Resources and Biodiversity Conservation.

Conserving natural resources and biodiversity is a core principle of organic production. This final guidance provides organic certifiers and farms with examples of production practices that support conservation principles and comply with the USDA organic regulations, which require operations to maintain or improve natural resources.

The final guidance also clarifies the role of certified operations, certifiers, and inspectors in the implementation and verification of these production practices.

In addition, the final guidance clarifies ways to reduce paperwork burdens for those domestic organic operations that participate in a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) program.

View the Federal Register Notice <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/01/19/2016-00862/national-organic-program-notice-of-final-guidance-for-accredited-certifying-agents-and-certified>

View the Final Guidance: NOP 5020: Natural Resources and Biodiversity Conservation <http://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOP%205020%20Biodiversity%20Guidance%20Rev01%20%28Final%29.pdf>

View the Response to Comments http://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOP%205020-1%20Response%20to%20Comments_Final.pdf

This final guidance does not change MOSA's process or policies. In fact, we've inquired about natural resources and biodiversity conservation in our Organic System Plans (OSP) for a long time. This guidance emphasizes a few good points. It's your responsibility as the operator to be sure that you fill out the OSP clearly and completely outlining your practices to comprehensively support natural resources and biodiversity conservation. Our OSPs give lots of examples of practices you could use, but if you don't see yours listed, just add it in the 'other' areas. Practices can also be on other parts of your operation, on land that is adjacent to the organic land and directly benefit the organic land.

As your certifier, it's our responsibility to ensure that your OSP is complete and that you follow it. NRCS plans can be used to outline the practices you follow. It's the inspector's responsibility to observe your practices and applicable records and report back to the certifier.

Natural resources and biodiversity conservation is inherent in our industry. Organic production is defined as a production system that is managed in accordance with the Act and National Organic regulations to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity.

If you have questions about practices on your farm, please contact our office to discuss. ■

 <p>At MOSA, we treat you like you're the most important part of our work—because you are.</p>	<p>mosaorganic.org 608-637-2526</p> <p>Practical, Reliable and Friendly Certification Services</p>
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try and to help those farmers find better markets.”

The farmers in this area were selling to local buyers for the equivalent of \$.25 a pound. The only way the farmers could prepare for the next crop was to take out a loan plus interest from these same buyers. “It was a payday loan scam. The farmers could never pay them back. They were locked into these debt relations and there was no way to get out of it,” lamented Matt.

“After I moved to Wisconsin, I met Mike Moon, who had similar advocacy interests, and we decided to form a sister relationship with the coffee community in Chiapas, but we were unable to find importers/wholesalers that would pay them better. The fall-back plan, reluctantly, was to buy their coffee and roast it. They referred me to Tomás Johnson, who was in a similar situation with another group of Mexican coffee farmers. Tomás had some success in finding markets and had created a brand in St. Paul, MN. We sat down with Tomás and suggested that maybe he could buy their coffee. He said no, but insisted that we could do this. He gave us a pep talk and said that he would put us in touch with other coffee roasters who are fair trade/mission based and willing to share. That network was called Cooperative Coffees. At that time it was ten other roasters, and they welcomed us with open arms and taught us everything from basic roasting skills, helping with imports, and networking with other coffee farmers. As small roasters, the cooperative allowed us to concentrate our money together and then buy directly from farmers,” remembered Matt.

In order to gain the necessary roasting experience, Matt and Mike got in touch with EVP Coffee in Madison. Although EVP was not part of the cooperative, they gave them roasting lessons and sold them their first roaster. “They really helped us get started.”

“We were also working on business plans, which we started showing around to banks. Everybody turned us down. We didn’t have any money to get it started, so we went to the University of WI

Business School. They have a service where you can go in with a startup idea and they will help you write a business plan. The guy who looked at our business plan basically showed me the door in a polite way. He felt that by not maximizing our profit and because there were several other coffee roaster in the area that this was a horrible idea. My favorite quote was ‘You can’t make a living by selling coffee to a few East Side hippies,’” laughed Matt.

“Eventually we were lucky enough to run into two organizations from Madison that really helped us get going, one was The Madison Enterprise Center, which is a division of Commonwealth Development. They are a non-profit that is focused on the east side of Madison. They had a business incubator where we could get subsidized rent and access to business equipment and office space. Then we got a small \$20,000 start up loan from the Madison Development Corporation. They were the only folks with money that saw our business plan and thought that it might work. With this loan, we were able to get started in 2002.”

“We started in farmers’ markets. We only had a couple of accounts in the beginning. We quickly realized that the best way to get people to carry our coffee was by getting people to come in and ask for our coffee, and the best way to do that was by getting out in the community. We went to every protest, every solidarity meeting- everywhere where people were gathering for a cause that we were supportive of. We would show up and give away coffee on our bicycles. We also started working with local elementary schools on the east side, selling coffee as fundraisers. Everything we did was through grassroots networking. We had no advertising. We support things that are aligned with our mission. This may have alienated some people, but it has also made our customers very loyal to us, because they know exactly where we stand,” emphasized Matt.

“We started the business as a way for two people to have a part-time job while buying from a single coffee coop, but over the years our growth was always one step ahead of us, which was a blessing and a curse. It was challenging for us, with little business acumen, to keep up with explosive growth. Now we employ over 30 people and we buy coffee from 16 different cooperatives worldwide, mostly in Latin America, but also in Africa and Asia. We try to visit as many of them as we can. Part of our model is to really get to know the farmer cooperatives that we buy from. Once we start working with someone, our intention is to keep working with them. We see it as a partnership. We are not just ordering coffees off of a menu.”

Just Coffee is now sold nationwide, with the third highest presence in food cooperatives. They have been told they are sold in 87% of food cooperatives across the country. Their coffee is also sold at a lot of restaurants and cafes in the Midwest. They are also making headway in the conventional grocery market, being sold through the Roundy’s chain. “Even with a national presence, our focus is on the Midwest, from Minneapolis to Chicago,” noted Matt. “In addition to making incredible coffees, we want to have a connection with the communities where we do business. We are building a model that transcends just coffee.”

Just Coffee takes transparency of their business practices very seriously. All of their contracts are available online. They take their coffee buyers to visit the farmers and they bring coffee growers to Madison in hopes of letting people see and build relationships. “In a lot of cases these

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things are hidden, in the hopes that people won't see the impact their purchasing decisions have."

Just Coffee is committed to organic production principles. All of their farmers are either certified or in transition to organic. "Most of the farmers we work with, even those at the very beginning were farming 'passively' organic. They weren't using chemical inputs. They have been growing naturally for generations. They just didn't have access to that stuff. Over the years what we have seen, especially since coffee growers have been dealing with a devastating disease called coffee rust, is that the farmers that are using 'deep organic' practices have fewer problems compared to the farmers that are only doing the baseline practices. We have seen all of these cooperatives rededicate themselves to best organic practices- going above and beyond. They are working with soil micro-organisms, different mineral treatments, soil analysis, and composting. We have seen it go from something that was passive, and often done for a better price, to this agro-ecological idea. We see that philosophy and practice in all aspects of their community; they way they grow their food, and they way they treat their water. Organic, agro-ecological practices are a central part of our business," said Matt.

The transitional market for coffee is very difficult. The organic consumer expects the organic label, and entire production process must be changed to handle the non-organic product. "It's a challenge for us, but we think it is important to give support to these farmers that want to do the right thing. They are making that investment to convert over to deep organic practices before they get the increased income. We are committed to helping them, despite the difficulties in selling transitional coffee," noted Matt.

Just Coffee and Cooperative Coffees are working to share new innovations and developments in agro-ecological and organic coffee products. A major component of their relationships with growers is the sharing of production techniques. They frequently hold work-

shops where farmers and buyers gather together to learn and share new ideas. "We found that the farmers who adopted deep-organic practices bounced back from the coffee rust disease much more quickly. We were very worried that a lot of heirloom coffee varieties, which are more susceptible to the disease, were simply going to disappear, but now they are recovering. They explain it by saying that by improving the soil, they are improving the immune system of the plant. They are also using some innovative microbial treatments and foliar sprays. It is really quite advanced. These farmers understand that nature holds the answers if you are willing to pay attention."

"From where I sit, the future of Just Coffee is finding ways to deepen our impact. The increase in sales and income allows us to do that. We have started working with a non-profit called "On The Ground" working on water projects in coffee communities, and also on crop diversification and recovery from the coffee rust fungus. We are also working on women's empowerment in the Congo, and school building in Ethiopia. We realized, that because of our model, we are not profitable enough to fully engage in community development programs the way we want to be. Working with Cooperative Coffees and On the Ground allows us to have a much greater

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your update paperwork and receive a discount on 2016 certification fees, and May 1 - the deadline to submit your update paperwork.

Another date to keep in mind is May 10, 2016, the extension deadline that the FDA has granted for receiving comments on the label "natural." If you haven't commented yet, please do. As we talked about in the previous newsletter, at MOSA we are concerned with label confusion. We believe that the "natural" label is confusing, misleading, and it erodes confidence in ALL claims and labels, including the one in which you and I are the most interested in: Certified Organic. There is no definition for "natural" and there is no third party verification, inspection, or certification for products which use it. 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." If you would like to submit a comment to the FDA, visit www.regulations.gov and search for FDA-2014-N-1207.

In MOSA news...recently we added two new people to our staff. We're happy to have Emma Garvin join as the Inspection Department Assistant; she will be providing technical support and training to our more than 40 contract inspectors, and provide administrative support to the department. Kevin Channell also joined MOSA as a Certification Specialist; he will be doing initial and final file reviews and inspecting client operations.

Here's a bit of trivia for you: with Kevin now on staff, there are three parents of twins at MOSA. Shauna, our database coordinator, has twin 9-year old daughters, and Ben M and Kevin are both Certification Specialists and fathers of 2 1/2 year-old twin boys; they have lots to talk about!

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 or 608-637-2526. Thank you for reading, and thanks for your continued commitment to organic integrity. ■

NAVIGATING THE GREY: SORTING IT OUT IN SAVANNAH AND BEYOND

by Stephen Walker, Operations Manager

Each winter, a bunch of us certifiers, from many USDA accredited organic certification agencies, head to someplace warm for a half-week or so, to get some training and updates from the National Organic Program, and to learn more from each other. It's a chance to hear about new procedural instructions or forthcoming focus areas as our organic label continues to mature. In sharing perspectives, we may recognize new needs for development, or perhaps we find standards issues needing more consistency. We gather insight from the diversity and breadth of our organic community. As delve into the grey, trying our best to sort it into little piles of black and white, we recognize our common regulatory struggles. Some come from imperfect but well-intentioned humans simply falling short, despite our best efforts to be clear and consistent. Other challenges arise as we navigate constant innovation in our growing organic market. In any event, this annual professional development training, including some fun nights out on the town, leaves us better for the collected perspectives. The meeting of minds and affirmation of a common mission can leave one feeling, well - I heard a colleague put it this way - "jazzed" about our work.

Our 2016 NOP/Accredited Certifiers Association training took place in Savannah, Georgia. Over three days, we shared perspectives with over 100 fellow organic certification agents, from across North America, and from Europe, Australia, and South America. We heard an update on NOP work in progress, including some standards clarifications, and some reminders about accreditation and certification requirements. We heard how best to frame questions for NOP staff. We got an overview of current international trade arrangements, and looked at the new NOP Organic Integrity Database and heard what new data will be available. We learned more about compliance and enforcement activities and procedures, including how to gather and present "sufficient evidence" when handling noncompliance situations. We also were able to submit sticky questions and hear direct answers from NOP staff. All of the above was just on day one. In two more days of certifier panel discussions and small group work, we looked at natural resources and biodiversity conservation requirements, considered best practices for ensuring organic integrity when products are handled by uncertified distributors, and we heard more about a new Organic Trade Association effort to standardize transitional certification. We also looked at best practices for consistency in product label reviews, and compared various inspection practices.

So, there you have a glimpse into the kinds of things that arise in our daily certification work at MOSA. It's a pretty unique line of work. We spend a lot of time down in the weeds, but it's all pretty interesting to us that deal with these rules and nuances every day. There's always a lot that's new, and it's often up to us to see how it fits, or doesn't.

In my job at MOSA, probably more than most, I have the interesting pleasure of sorting out the stuff which is decidedly grey, to achieve a defensible, practical decision on where we draw our regulatory lines. As new situations arise, I get to help decide how we'll break new ground, or maintain boundaries. MOSA's mission is *to promote organic integrity through*



practical, reliable and friendly certification services. With these good values, effective standards enforcement requires a lot of circumstantial consideration.

As I review my training notes for valuable take-home messages, I find that our certification program needs a few of the inevitable annual tweaks. A little more grey got sorted into black and white. I'm also taking home some affirmation that the organic standards can leave some reasonable room for use of regulatory discretion.

When faced with new certification situations, we often seek NOP guidance on how we should proceed. Over the years, the Program has developed many helpful clarifying instructions. Nevertheless, our daily work still encounters situations not clearly described in the Organic Foods Production Act, or the NOP regs, or Program Handbook guidance, instructions, or policy memos. These grey situations inspire our sticky questions for the NOP. Sometimes, we've been frustrated with a lack of useful NOP responses. In Savannah, NOP Associate Deputy Administrator Jenny Tucker explained their occasional "non-answer." She confided, oftentimes the correct answer is "it depends." Our sticky questions inform NOP development work. However, if there is no specific published policy regarding an unforeseen wrinkle in the regs, Jenny affirmed that we Accredited Certification Agents are empowered to make reasoned certification decisions. She explained that if NOP does too much to advise us in grey matters, then involvement can hamper an appeal. So, we're left with "NOP does not have a policy on that," which translates to "it depends," or we're given a recitation of a document that we'd already read.

We get it. We are highly qualified to navigate the grey. We find these "it depends" situations frequently at MOSA, perhaps daily. We annually review over 1750 Organic System Plans and inspection reports, and each one is unique. We measure this diversity, innovation and novelty against a regulation which tends toward the absolute in a few areas, but which is grey in others. Our aim is better compliance and continuous improvement. MOSA's mission statement values - reliability, practicality, friendliness, and service - figure into how we approach enforcement. Indeed, there are absolute noncompliances which cause loss of certification. However, even those are tempered by considering the sliding scale of intentions, human will, and ability to make corrections. The best path toward a desired destination can change based on the variables.

From the training, here are a few new things we'll be navigating, which will be of interest to MOSA clients.

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- We will see a revision to NOP Policy Memo 11-7, regarding private label certification. The NOP sees challenges with private labels' integrity, traceability, and consumer confusion. As at last year's training, the NOP stated that the company identified on a retail product information panel MUST be certified.
- MOSA gave extensive feedback on annual field evaluation requirements for inspectors, including two recent letters addressed to the NOP and relayed to other certifiers. We agree that field evaluations are an important check, but their extreme logistical challenges have negative consequences, including some certifiers reducing their inspector numbers by as much as 40%. Cheri Courtney, the Director of the NOP's Accreditation and International Activities Division, indicated that a revision based on certifier comments is already written. She didn't reveal any revised requirements.
- Several materials are going off the National List. Rotenone was recommended for prohibition from organic use by the beginning of 2016. A forthcoming rule change will codify this.
- Organic product brokers, distributors or traders may maintain most of their auditable activity on computers, but nevertheless, their inspection has to occur in person.
- Accreditation audits found that certifiers achieved 96% compliance with the many measures on audit checklists. Common improvement needs include adequacy of trace-back and mass balance audits, consistency in strictness of sanctions issued by certifiers, and protocols for certifying grower groups.
- We had much discussion about resolving proposed suspensions of certification. The NOP recognizes that many proposed suspensions result from folks' failing to address relatively simple requirements, like submitting organic plan info, or fees, or minor missing records. As written, the regulations do not support resolution of proposed suspension issues, except through a mediation or appeal process. These aim to reach a documented settlement agreement. That's a lot of process compared to just acknowledging "thanks for sending the check."
- Looking ahead, guidance is in development for treated lumber, calculating organic content, and pesticide spray drift. We'll also see new rules regarding origin of livestock, aquaculture, pet food, animal welfare, apiculture, and organic plan documentation of conservation activities.
- And, we heard more about whether or not hydroponic systems should be able to be certified. Eight certification agencies, including MOSA, now certify a total of 39 hydroponic operations, and more are expected. The hydroponic task force will report to the National Organic Standards Board by summer. Task force appointments are evenly split among folks that see soil as the basis for organic agriculture and so think hydroponic or aquaponic systems can't meet organic requirements, and folks that see water-based systems as a progressive solution for food security in a changing environment, where alternative management can meet organic tenets: fostering resource cycling, promoting ecological balance, and conserving biodiversity.

So, there's lots of change to be figured out. The other day, I was chatting with my MOSA friend Rebecca Claypool about all the grey in our work, and

noted how some of our colleagues and stakeholders seem to have little tolerance for the grey. In fact, the organic label promotes strong standards in black and white. Rebecca responded, *"It's just an honest reflection of life and the world. It is all complex and grey, but we navigate."* (And so, we found the "navigating the grey" metaphor.) I countered that I'd probably not go so far as to say it's ALL grey. I like to think there are some absolutes in which can have simple faith. On the other hand though, I admitted my personal inclination is to rebel when I recognize constraints. I can tone that down, but sometimes, I just don't want to. Some folks might react to that with something like, "grow up; get with the program." However, I find that a tendency to question norms is common in many folks in our organic community. It keeps us vibrant, this navigating the grey. But still, we seek some constants, and our standards seek to draw clear lines.

That chat with Rebecca was on a Friday. Sometimes on Fridays I don't get a whole lot of traditional work done. It could be from looking at so much grey and black and white all week. The eyes and brain are too tired. So on Fridays, conversations take a different tone, from silly to philosophical. Later that same day, I was emailing with another certifier friend - Darin Jones, Processing Program Manager at Oregon Tilth. We were comparing how we divvy up our review work among staff, and I shared how I promote keeping our work rewarding, to nurture the talent and passion in the next generation - for the betterment of our own businesses, for the organic label, and for these great people we work with and care for. But, I lamented how frequent change affects our ability to stay in balance. With echoes from the earlier conversation with Rebecca, I wondered out loud where we find our "constants." Darin Jones, a wise man with a good heart, had this to say, *"We have only one thing in our power and that is to serve others. What we serve them is up to us and whether they choose to receive it or not is up to them."* Wonderful, I thought. MOSA's mission statement is about service to others that's reliable, practical, and friendly. Service to others unifies our individualized work in various places in this one organic web. It's a constant in the midst of growth and change.

I also got to wondering about the origins of the phrase, "the only permanence is change." This goes back 25 centuries, to the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus. In his contribution to the eternal quest to find the essence of physical and natural things, Heraclitus said "Life is Flux." He observed that all things in nature come into being through opposition, and are in flux like a river. So, he followed, what may appear to be opposites are really the same, in that they are all subject to change. What arises from one, vanishes into another. Rather than avoiding changes, we might embrace them as a creative force. That doesn't necessarily make change easier.

Sometimes, organic production is unfairly mischaracterized as being an "old" method of agriculture, stuck, not ready to embrace new agricultural technology. That's just not true. We see the forward-thinking passion when we get together with others from the organic community who are jazzed about their work. We navigate perpetual innovation in organic systems, while holding our constant values like service, sustainability, ecological balance, and maybe a bit of rebellion. Organic requires progressive thinking. Looking ahead seven generations calls for embracing changes and steering through some uncertainty. And service to others makes a reliable sextant for that long journey. ■



MEET MOSA STAFF MEMBER: BEN MACDONALD

What do you do in your position at MOSA?

I am a certification specialist and staff inspector. This means, among other things, I audit files at the initial and final review stages. I also inspect all types of operations.

What do you do with your time outside of MOSA?

I've been blessed with two rambunctious little boys and a brilliant and beautiful wife. Most of my time away from work is spent at home with them: making and eating food, doing dishes, reading books, tending to the home and garden, and telling jokes.

How long have you been at MOSA?

I started working for MOSA in early February of 2014.

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

We've grown quite a bit in the last two years! There have been many wonderful new additions to our staff abounding with experience and good energy.

Why organic?

Those of us who are fortunate enough to have the option to choose organic are very lucky. Yes, it tastes better and is healthier....but more than that I feel it is our responsibility, if we are able, to make 'good' decisions during our stay on Earth. It is worthy to support family farmers over corporations. It is good to support people and planet over profit, and it is good to support diversity over monoculture.

Why MOSA?

I work with good people in the office and MOSA is lucky to work with and meet decent and interesting people in the fields, facilities and markets.

What are a few great things about your life?

The best thing in my life is my aforementioned family. Other good things include: good conversations with friends, jazz music, sunshine in the winter, rain in the summer, walking to work, getting lost in a book, rhythm and blues, coffee, bacon, donuts...mmm...donuts. ■

READY... SET... GROW!

by Ben Caldwell, Certification Specialist

Avoiding delays in Initial Review

Is it that time of the year already? I know most of us are glad winter is almost over, but there sure is a lot to do to get ready for another season! For current clients, one of the most important steps you will take in renewing your MOSA organic certification this year is getting your 2016 update paperwork turned in on time and making sure it's complete. For new clients, a complete application can be instrumental in making sure we get you certified in time to meet your needs.

Paper or Online?

If you have not told us you'd like to review and submit your paperwork electronically, you will receive hard copies of everything. At any time, you can choose to work electronically instead. To find out how, review the instruction sheet included with your paperwork, or simply visit MyMOSA.org and dive right in!

Here are a few tips to help you avoid common pitfalls and to rest assured that we received everything we need from you:

For new clients:

"Wow, that's a lot of paperwork!" Looking at that stack of papers can feel daunting and it can be a challenge to tackle them all. The best advice we can give is to grab the instruction sheet that came with your packet, and just take it all one page at a time. Carefully consider whether or not a document applies to your operation, and if you're not sure, make a note of it so you can ask us about that one specifically. We encourage you to look over all the forms before calling or writing to us, so that you can both have a complete and specific list of your questions, and have every opportunity to answer them for yourself by seeing the big picture. Every farm or operation is different, but if you take your time, make sure to ask questions when you have them, fill each applicable form out thoroughly, and follow the form instructions, then you're off to a great start! This should always include a completed Organic System Plan (OSP) for each scope of production being requested (i.e. Farm, Livestock, Handling). We won't be able to review your file without those. It's important to note that as a new client your initial deposit of \$590 is required to begin the review process. This should be included with your complete application. Please also review the notes below for existing clients- they may have less to send in (it gets easier, something to look forward to), but much of the advice and policy still applies.

For existing clients:

Thanks for continuing your certification with MOSA! It is that time of the year again, and we do need to receive your complete application and first quarter fees payment by May 1st to enable us to schedule all of our work efficiently and to avoid noncompliance. Getting your application in earlier than this can save your some money (\$25 Early Bird discount if update forms and fees are received by March 15th). It also helps us prioritize your file for inspection/review, and assures that any new land or products (be sure to let us know about them!) are properly considered for addition to your certification. If you need a little extra time, we do offer a one time deadline extension of your due date to May 15th for \$60. Applications received after May 1st without an approved extension request will be assessed a late fee of \$150 per

see GROW! next page

cont. GROW! from previous page

month. Getting your application in on time is just a part of what it will take to get to the next step in the process. Here are some things that are commonly omitted or submitted incompletely, which can result in delays and potential compliance concerns:

Prior Year Requirements - It is important thing to carefully look over your Certification Determination Letter from last year. This letter may contain important things to consider in the coming season, and information that you will need to submit with your update application. Also, any conditions for continuing certification must be addressed. If you can't find it, let us know and we can reissue it.

Current Year Field Plan - Your Current Year Field Plan (CYFP) should list all fields in your operation thoroughly and clearly, including new land requested for production. Please pay special attention to ensuring that field numbers and acreages either are the same as last year, or that a thorough explanation is provided for any changes.

Three Year Field History or Prior Land Use Declaration - If you have any new land this year, or land that hasn't been listed on a previous CYFP, we'll need to verify that this land is eligible for organic production. If you've managed the land for a full 36

months prior, complete the Three Year Field History. If somebody else has managed the land for the past 36 months, you'll need them to thoroughly complete the Prior Land Use Declaration. If you've managed the land for only a part of the time, you'll need to send both. Make sure these forms list all fields, and provide an explanation of field number changes if you have made them.

Crop/Livestock Input Inventory - If you are proposing any new inputs for use this year in your crop, livestock, or handling operation, you must submit these to us for review prior to use. Be sure to fill in the product name, manufacturer, and intended use sections.

Farm maps with fields, buffers and acreages identified - If you have added any new land, changed buffers, or changed field designations/sizes, we will need new maps to reflect this information.

Livestock List - If you have livestock, you will need to submit a list of all new animals, including purchases. This list should include slaughter eligibility, dates of birth, and other information as needed to maintain traceability in your herd.



CLASSIFIEDS

LIVESTOCK

For Sale: 10 Organic jersey/jersey cross springing heifers. Due late March/April. AI bred to New Zealand Genetics. New Holstein, WI. Call Kay- 920-894-4201 or email kwcraig1980@yahoo.com

For Sale: Large, fancy Holstein heifer for beef. La Farge, WI. Call David @ 608-479-1222.

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

Land for Sale: Approximately 8.5 acres located in Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County, WI. Great location off of HWY 29 West. Small log cabin, Cleary storage shed and High Tunnel on property. Has been certified organic for at least the last 10 years. 2.5 acres has been operated as small vegetable garden supplying a processing operation. Opportunity to sell fresh vegetables on-site. 6 acres is currently in hay. For more information contact Peggy Linzmeier by phone at 920-660-1128 or email peggy@linzmeiermarket.com.

EQUIPMENT

For Sale: John Deere 725FM. Six-row narrow front, front mount cultivator. Call Paul for pricing. 608-498-2882.

For Sale: Tyler 5-Ton Fertilizer Spreader. Like new condition. \$4800. Two Rivers, WI. Call 920-860-2118.

For Sale: Factory 20-ton Hydraulic Wood Splitter. Horizontal or vertical use. Three point hitch. 608-269-1748.

For Sale: Equipment: Kovar 24 foot tine weeder with hydraulic wings, guage 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.

MISCELLANEOUS

For Sale: Certified organic molasses. 5 gallon pails. FOB Verona Wisconsin 53593. \$70/pail. Discounts for larger quantities. Pure Sweet Honey Farm 608-845-9601, psh@chorus.net.

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.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Opening: IPM Institute Seeks Sustainable Agriculture Analyst for Sustainable Food Group

Full-time position, responsibilities include contributing to quality assurance efforts for sustainability programs for farmers, food companies and supply chains. We offer a flexible schedule and hourly compensation commensurate with skills and experience (\$16.50 - \$17.50 per hour). Benefits include health insurance and retirement plans, and paid holidays and vacation. For more information visit: ipminstitute.org.

Help Wanted: Herdsman for 100 cow organic dairy. Robotic milking. Full-time position. Good salary. Baldwin, WI. Call Rich. 715-410-1060.

Help Wanted: Organic Dairy farm looking to hire a full time milker. 30-stall rotary milking parlor. Experience preferred but not required. We offer competitive wages plus overtime pay on Sundays and Holidays, bonuses, health and dental insurance and 401(k). 35-45 hours/week, every other weekend off. Located in Columbus, WI. 608.825.0168. millerinc@frontier.com. www.rg-millerfarms.com.

FORAGES & GRAINS

For Sale: Organic Soybeans, approx. 300 bu (uncleaned) located in Bonduel (near Green Bay) area. 2015 growing season. Call 715-758-2280 or email me at ppawlak@ezwebtech.com.

For Sale: Organic dry hay round bales 1st, 2nd and 3rd crop; silage bales 1st crop; and straw. Delivery available. Sno Pac Farms. Caledonia, MN. 507-725-5281.

For Sale: 2015 Organic Hay. 4x5 roto-cut rounds. Dry & wrapped baleage. Tests available.

2015 Dry Shelled Corn for sale. 5,500 bu. Menomonie, WI. Call 715-664-8374 or 715-495-2813.

For Sale: MOSA Certified Organic Hay. 1st, 2nd and 3rd cuts. 3x3x8 bales. 1st and 2nd cut balage. Oats and peas balage, In-line wrapped. Test results available. Bales start at \$30 each. Stoddard, WI. Call Paul- 608-498-2882.

For Sale: MOSA Certified Organic Hay. 2nd crop grass/alfalfa mix round bales stored inside. 20.5% protein, 122 RFV. Decorah, IA. 563-382-8045.

For Sale: MOSA Certified Organic Corn 5000 bu. Certified Organic Alfalfa hay 2014 year 3rd, 4th cuttings RFV 152.

South WI. Contact Ervin Landis 608-426-1726.

For Sale: Certified Organic Rye Straw. Big bales-\$40 per bale. Call 608-574-2494. Argyle WI.

For Sale: Certified Organic Barley Straw. Small squares of very clean, solid, tight bales. La Farge, WI area. \$4.00/bale. Call 608-479-1222.

For Sale: MOSA certified organic rained on hay, '4x5' round \$30.00 each. Also 1st crop hay, small squares, tested. About 40 bales '4x5' round 2nd crop \$ 60.00 each, tested. Medford, WI 715-748-6863 organichay11@hotmail.com.

For Sale: 2015 Organic Hay. MOSA certified. 3x3x8 large squares. Dry hay and balage. 105-153 RFV. Transportation available. Wonewoc, WI. Kent Wolf. 608-553-1136.

For Sale: 2015 Organic Oat Straw. MOSA certified. 3x3x8 large square bales. \$30 per bale. Transportation available. Kent Wolf. Wonewoc, WI. 608-553-1136.

For Sale: 1300 Bushels Organic Oats 35# TW. 1st, 3rd, 4th crop line wrapped round bales, feed test available. Cuba City, WI. Call Gary- 608-732-0237.

For Sale: High Quality Roasted Soybeans and numerous brands of organic farm seeds. Golden Grains. 608-269-5150.

For Sale: Organic 3x3x8 1st Crop Dry Hay. Test results available. Sparta, WI. 608-269-1748

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.

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. 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

MARCH 2016

13th Annual Indigenous Farming Conference: The Power to Heal

Mar. 3-6 | Callaway, MN

The White Earth Land Recovery Project hosts their 13th Annual Conference at the Mapleag Resort. Focal points of the conference include a seed swap, topics surrounding the relationship between food and health, and the wisdom of traditional varieties and methods. For more about the White Earth Land Recovery Project or this event, contact them: 607 Main Avenue, P.O. Box 97, Callaway, Minnesota 56521. Toll Free: 800-973-9870, Phone: 218-375-2600, Fax: 218-375-2603. www.welrp.org.

Upper Midwest Hazelnut Growers Conference

Mar. 4-5 | Gays Mills, WI

UW-Extension invites you to the 7th annual Upper Midwest Hazelnut Growers Conference. Hazelnuts are an emerging crop for the Upper Midwest with the potential to provide significant economic returns to growers while improving soil and water quality on agricultural lands. This Conference provides information on how to grow, harvest, and sell hazelnuts. Friday's focus is hazelnut processing and Saturday is focused on production. Questions or comments can be directed to: jason.fischbach@ces.uwex.edu.

Organic Association of Kentucky Annual Conference

Mar. 4-5 | Shepherdsville, KY

The Organic Association of Kentucky (OAK) hosts Rodale's Jeff Moyer as keynote for this year's conference. Jim Munsch of Veggie Compass, Dr. Guy Jodarski of Organic Valley, and others will share their knowledge. Tracks are available for livestock, produce, no-till production, blueberries, low and high tunnel production, DIY solar, and more. For more, email info@oak-ky.org.

Commercial Goat Dairy Operators Workshop

Mar. 5 | St. Charles, MN

The University of Minnesota Extension's Dairy Team hosts a day covering nutrition management, animal health, and milk quality in a commercial goat dairy. Food will be provided. Contact Wayne Martin, Extension

Educator, for more information and to register: marti067@umn.edu; Phone: 612-625-6224.

Access to Land and Financial Capital for New and Beginning Farmers

Mar. 7 | East Lansing, MI

The MSU Student Organic Farm, Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS) and Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS) have partnered with Genesee County and the Extended Area Women in Agriculture Network to present this workshop covering land access and financial capital. The full-day session helps beginning farmers understand the types and uses of capital and prepare to access it. Explorations include land tenure options, financial and investment readiness, finding and assessing land, and negotiating with investors and landowners through discussions, handouts and exercises. For more information, contact miiffs@msu.edu or call 517-432-0712.

People for Pollinators

Mar. 8 | St. Paul, MN

Jim Riddle, Sarah Foltz Jordan, Don Arnosti, Vera Kirschik, Lex Horan, and Robert Engstrom headline for this event sponsored by Pollinator Friendly Alliance and Pollinate Minnesota. The in-depth symposium is designed to inspire, connect and unite a pollinator friendly Minnesota. Learn about pollinators and their relationships to wildlife, biodiversity, farm and urban habitats, pesticides and advocacy issues in a motivational and friendly environment. Learn more and register.

Planning Your Farm Transition

Mar. 12 | Plainview, MN

The Land Stewardship Project offers tools and problem-solving conversations for families planning to transfer their farm to the next generation of operators. The workshop focuses on short and long term goals, financial needs in retirement, transition models, and resources and communication tools to help you throughout the process. Participants walk away with individualized technical support, an action plan for next steps, and more clarity around the process of their farm transfer. Contact LSP: 507-523-3366; stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.

3rd Biennial Food Hub Conference

Mar. 30-Apr. 1 | Atlanta, GA

The Wallace Center hosts this year's Food Hub Conference including a number of full day intensive trainings as a pre-conference option, a trade show area, and a collection of sessions tailored to those developing food hubs in their community. Those directly involved in a Food Hub qualify for a reduction in their registration fee by filing out a questionnaire to determine qualification. Contact us at contact@ngfn.org. **Tiered early bird reduced rate deadlines are mid-night Dec. 31, 2015 and Feb. 15, 2016. Food Hub members receive \$100 fee reduction at all tiers.*

APRIL 2016

Organic Berry Workshop

Apr. 2 | North Branch, MN

Jim Riddle of Blue Fruit Farm instructs this day hosted by Women's Environmental Insti-

tute. The interactive workshop focuses on the establishment, management and production of perennial fruits, including blueberries, black currants, elderberries, aronia berries, junberries, honeyberries and plums, although strawberries and raspberries will not be covered. Jim shares planting, site selection, soil preparation, weed control, aisle maintenance, irrigation, propagation and pollination techniques along with specific production and management considerations. Contact us: North Branch: 651.583.0705, or St Paul: 651.206.7651; Email: wei@w-e-i.org

Small Engine and Tractor Workshop

Apr. 3 | Daneville, IL

Small engines (for tilling or mowing) and tractors (for cultivation and light work) are essential farm tools. Richland Community College experts cover the operation and maintenance of engines in the morning and tractors in the afternoon. Participants will work hands-on with machines. Contact us at The Land Connection at 217-840-2128. **\$55 for either morning or afternoon session, Full day for \$100.*

Terra Firma: Sarasota Film Festival Premiere

Apr. 5 | Sarasota, FL

Since 2001, over 280,000 women have been sent to the Middle East to serve in the War on Terror. Many return traumatized by their experiences. The film, Terra Firma, weaves together the stories of three women veterans who were among the first to deploy. After years of struggling, each has found ways to heal the hidden wounds of war through farming. The film follows the women as they go about their daily lives, reflecting on their time in the military, the impact of war on their lives, and their newfound purpose and peace of mind serving their country by growing food for their communities. For more about the film, go online to: <http://terrafirmafilm.com/>

Good Food Law Workshops: Food Labeling

Apr. 5 | Minneapolis, MN and Online

Throughout five daytime workshops, farmers and food business owners will have the opportunity to network, ask questions and learn how to strategically grow and protect their food enterprise. Those that join the attorneys of Jambor Heyman and the Linden Hills Farmers Market in person will also have the opportunity to partake in local food and beverages, but you can also participate online. This session revolves around the subject of food labeling. Contact us by phone at 612-234-2711 or by email at hello@jamborheyman.com.

Good Food Law Workshops: Employees

Apr. 26 | Minneapolis, MN and Online

Throughout five daytime workshops, farmers and food business owners will have the opportunity to network, ask questions and learn how to strategically grow and protect their food enterprise. Those that join the attorneys of Jambor Heyman and the Linden Hills Farmers Market in person will also have the opportunity to partake in local food and beverages, but you can also participate online. This session revolves around the subject of employees. Contact us by phone at 612-234-2711 or by email at hello@jamborheyman.com. ■



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