

Organic MATTERS



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Changes to MOA Membership Renewal

At the January face-to-face MOA Board Meeting, the Board decided to renew memberships just once per year, in December. This means that anyone who joins MOA or whose membership expires in any month before December 2018 will not be getting a membership renewal letter until around October 2018. Thank you, MOA members, for your support!

MOA's Contact Info Has Changed

Please note that MOA's physical mailing address, phone number and email address has changed. See the new contact information on the following page or visit MOA's "Contact Us" page on the website at <http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org/contactus.htm>.

Organic Resiliency in a Changing World MOA 2017 Conference Review

by Kate McLean, AERO

In December, I was fortunate to attend the 2017 MOA Conference. I came as a vendor (for Alternative Energy Resources Organization, a Montana nonprofit), a volunteer reporter, a conscious consumer, a cook and bread baker, and as a market gardener. The conference offered so much more than I could possibly take in, but here are a few of the highlights.

Prairie Heritage Farm

With just 30 acres, the Cowgills may be one of the smallest wheat-growing MOA members, (most of the attendees grow for the commercial market and 10,000 acres is not uncommon) but they accomplish a lot on their diverse, certified organic farm. They grow as many varieties of vegetables as the Montana climate will allow, vegetable seed, and ancient and heritage wheat and barley. On top of that, Jacob takes the grains from farm to table with his home-milled, hand-crafted sourdough breads. We joined them for a tour and baking workshop on their farm outside of Great Falls.

First we toured the high tunnels (courtesy of NRCS), stepping over dormant spinach and strawberries while Jacob described their method for growing greenhouse tomatoes. In the greenhouse we

learned about the Japanese paper pot transplanter, a clever tool that saves time and allows the farmer to transplant without being constantly bent over. The Cowgills then spoke about their recent experience being drifted during

the last growing season. When their produce tested positive for pesticides, they made the tough decision not to harvest.

In a less diverse

farm this could spell disaster, but the Cowgills are

resilient; they were able to fall back on Jacob's bread, Courtney's second job, and the crops they felt were still safe to sell.

After the farm tour, a handful of us stayed behind for Jacob's hands-on bread workshop. He generously provided his recipe and gave us a crash-course in sourdough – a process that actually takes many hours. Though Jacob insisted he still had a lot to learn about baking, it's obvious he devotes a lot of time and effort to the craft. If you haven't had a chance to try his bread, I highly recommend it (available at the Great Falls farmers market, 2J's Fresh Market, and Electric City Coffee).

Meat or No Meat?

Becky Weed (of Thirteen Mile Lamb and Wool) did not come to



Prairie Heritage Farm tour of high tunnels. Photo by Kate McLean.

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the environment and the State economy.

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MOA to debate the merits of a vegetarian diet. “Meat or no meat” is a popular debate, she explained, but it’s probably not the question we should be asking. Instead, Becky suggested, we ought to focus on survival, which means, ultimately, resiliency. As in, “Does this help us build resilience? Does it help us build a resilient system?”

In thinking about these questions, Becky found it helpful to put agriculture under the same lens as climate change. Just as we are all complicit in global warming, we are all, to some degree, complicit in the current system of commodity crops, factory farming and genetic engineering. Instead of “bargaining,” (global warming means longer growing seasons, and that’s a good thing!) we must be realistic (we face intense droughts and wildfires) and ask ourselves what practical things can we do on a local level to create solutions.

She reminded us of the proposed industrial-level slaughter and processing facility on 3,000 acres just outside Great Falls, as well as Senator Daines’s deal with China to export more Montana beef overseas and to build a large beef-packing plant in the state. With deals like these going through, “no meat” is obviously not an option, so how can we restructure our agriculture to make us less vulnerable?

We are on the right track with local, diverse farms. But ultimately, Becky conceded, we require a cultural shift that goes beyond agriculture. I left the talk with plenty to think about and a list of further reading: an article titled *UK Agriculture after Brexit* by Simon Fairle (also check out his book, *Meat: A Benign Extravagance*), an article by the Environmental Working Group titled *Feeding the World*, and Steve Running’s *Five Stage of Climate Grief*.

The Food at the Conference

Cheese: Organic Valley

Mushrooms: Garden City Fungi

Onions, Spinach, Tomatoes, Apples: Terrapin Farm

Lentils and Chickpeas: Timeless Seeds

Meatballs, Salami, and Sausage: B-Bar Ranch

Flatbread: Montana Flour & Grains

Lamb: Thirteen Mile Lamb & Wool

These are just the finger food offerings from the first evening. The food throughout the entire conference was organic, mostly local and simply amazing.

Chandee Bomgardner of Bomgardner Catering in Loma, Montana, deliciously executed the catering for the conference using ingredients sourced from Montana’s organic farms and ranches.

Wheat, Bread, and Community

Wheat. Bread. Community. If I had to choose three words to sum up Stephen Jones’s work, that would fit

perfectly. A wheat breeder with a PhD in genetics, he's made whole grains his life's work, and The Bread Lab is where it all comes together. The Bread Lab, a division of Washington State University, is a research center for craft baking and cooking (also malting, brewing, and distilling) using regionally grown grains selected for flavor, nutrition, and other distinctive characteristics.

Basically, they start with the farmer's interests in mind. Once they have a variety that works for the farmer, they take it to the lab and begin testing for usability. Does it make good bread? Muffins, scones? Beer? All the while, keeping nutrition in mind. Here, everything is "hundo" – 100% whole wheat. This may not sound revolutionary to someone unfamiliar with baking, but it truly is. Whole wheat is valued for its nutritive properties, but avoided for its taste and texture. Incredibly, Stephen and his team have been able to produce completely whole wheat baguettes, croissants and more, with flavor and texture that does not disappoint, by simply selecting and milling the right varieties of wheat. For not all flour is created equal, and all flour must start with grain.

Grazing Cover Crops, Bale Grazing, and Making the MOST of Your Grass

In his presentation, Rick Caquelin launched right into tips for seeding cover crops and recommending a diversity of species (8 or 9 being ideal) that includes crop types missing from your usual rotation.

Farmers are often scared to graze a mix because parts of the mix could be toxic to their animals. It's always a risk, he admitted, but cows can die a lot of different ways, even from plants that are usually safe but toxic when under stress. He recommended taking samples to your local extension agent if you have reason to believe your animals



Participants make sourdough bread at Jacob Cowgill's workshop. Photo by Kate McLean.



Panel discussion in the great room. This was MOA's first Conference at the Mansfield Center in Great Falls. Photo by Robbe Lindsay / MontanaGrow.



More than 30 vendors displayed their wares and services at the Conference. Photo by Robbe Lindsay / MontanaGrow.



Large farm equipment was also displayed and demonstrated (baby Rae not included) Photo by Kate McLean.

are in danger. Careful thinking was encouraged, but so was experimentation.

Rick explained how he had recently experimented with bale grazing his own cattle. At first resistant to the idea, he found the method required less time (bales need only be set out once a week and the twine removed, versus feeding daily and unrolling the bale entirely) and less equipment.

The takeaway was this: Grazing your cover crops benefits the soil by increasing beneficial microorganisms, but it is not a replacement for permanent pasture. Plant a diverse mix and pay close attention to your animals and conditions that might cause plant stress. Above, all make sure you are not violating any of your crop insurance rules. Ask permission if you have to.

Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity

I've read and heard plenty of opinions on the matter of gluten sensitivity but never from someone as qualified as Cheryl Reich (she lists a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and M.D. in pathology among her accomplishments). Wheat, she explained, accounts for as much as 50% of our worldwide caloric intake. In Montana it accounts for 29% of our state's revenue, and yet there is a growing anti-wheat movement due to celiac disease, non-celiac wheat sensitivity, and fad diets.

I half expected to hear that gluten sensitivity was a hoax (admittedly I hoped it was since my other job is baking bread). But Cheryl quickly dispelled that myth. She detailed the ways in which non-celiac gluten sensitivity can manifest itself, moving into a handful of slides with scientific diagrams and giving us a lesson on gut health and the effect of gluten on the bloodstream.

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It turns out that non-celiac gluten sensitivity is not a hoax. It occurs to varying degrees in an estimated 30% of the population. An elimination diet is a common method of detecting gluten sensitivity, but there are steps you can take to reduce the effects. Take probiotics, eat fermented foods (if you do eat bread, make it sourdough), eat organic plant-based meals, and avoid alcohol (in which gluten is soluble).

Panel Discussion: Women in Montana Agriculture

I was particularly excited to see and hear from a group of women farmers in a panel-style discussion. The talk was lead by Heather Estrada of FVCC's ag program and featured Becky Weed of Thirteen Mile Lamb & Wool, Laura Garber of Homestead Organics, Courtney Cowgill of Prairie Heritage Farm, Anna Jones-Crabtree of Villicus Farms, Judy Owsowitz of Terrapin Farms, and Jonda Crosby, Organic Inspector and Food Safety Auditor. Each woman gave a review of their background and current position in Agriculture, after which the discussion turned to their respective strengths and struggles as women in the field.

Being asked to participate in such a panel created mixed feelings across the group. The question was raised: Is it necessary to single women out? Some had certainly experienced discrimination in the past, such as when Judy first sought land to start her farm and was turned down based on her status as a single, divorced woman. But others hoped to move beyond the idea of gender and focus on the work at hand. A few felt that they had faced few challenges based on their gender and were given equal opportunities in their career path.

The problem is, Becky pointed out, the moment you feel as if you can move beyond gender, something happens to remind you that our society is not there

yet. The notion of "farmer" is so deeply ingrained as masculine that Courtney Cowgill did not consider it an option for her growing up. Today she calls herself a farmer, but it took her a long time to feel comfortable doing so. She urged women to take pride in, and credit for, the work they do whether that is planting and harvesting or marketing and communications. It's part of the bigger picture, all necessary to make a farm successful.



Silent auction items were donated by generous MOA members. Photo by Robbe Lindsay / MontanaGrow.

It's encouraging and inspiring that, regardless of their obstacles and their personal journeys, each of these women has found success in agriculture. I, for one, do not mind singling them out. The more we tell these stories, the more we empower women throughout our state and the world, and eventually, *maybe*, the idea of a men's panel will not seem so laughable.

Conclusion

As the women's panel concluded, I still had so many questions. Afterwards I approached Heather and Laura to ask advice on raising kids while running a business (they had wildly different advice, which I tucked away for future reference). Still I left wanting more, feeling like the talk had been cut short. But in the bathroom a few minutes later I heard Anna and Jonda continuing the discussion. They recognized me and asked my opinion. I told them how I felt: that being a woman is hard for me

not because of lack of opportunity, but because of the expectations placed on women, especially those with children. And although we didn't share that particular trait in common, they expressed a genuine interest in my experience.

As small as it may seem, the moment was, for me, one of the highlights of the MOA conference, one of many that happened behind the scenes and in between the scheduled talks, panels, and workshops. It had been five years since I last attended a MOA conference, but the feeling of community was still there. It's a community that is always evolving, always welcoming, and always has good food on the table.

MOA would like to thank the Great Falls Mansfield Convention Center for their hospitality, and the tour hosts, including Montana Egg, LLC, for hosting excellent tours. MOA would also like to thank the many volunteers, sponsors, speakers, vendors and contributors who helped make the 2017 MOA Conference a great success. Please visit our sponsor page on MOA's website at www.montanaorganicassociation.org/sponsors.htm so that you can patronize the businesses and organizations that make the MOA Conference possible.

MOA will be headed back to Great Falls for the next Conference, December 6 – 8, 2018. Please be in touch with Jamie Ryan Lockman, Conference Chair, at Jamie.Lockman@Kamut.com to volunteer or for more information.

Like to see more photos of the Conference? Visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org/conferences.htm to see more. 🍏

Kate McLean works part time for Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) as their Member Services Coordinator & Office Manager. You can also find her selling sourdough bread and handmade pastries at the Helena farmers markets.



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USDA Attempts to Withdraw Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices Final Rule

There has been great dismay in the organic community over the USDA's decision to delay, and now to withdraw, the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices final rule that was analyzed, commented on, negotiated, and finalized—all over the last several years.

In its latest Federal Register notice on the issue, published on November 14, 2017, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) stated: "Although animal welfare is an important USDA priority, AMS believes that OFPA's reference to additional regulatory standards "for the care" of organically produced livestock is limited to health care practices similar to those specified by Congress in the statute, rather than as reflecting a stand-alone concern for animal welfare."

In response to the Federal Register notice, the original drafters of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA), Senator Patrick Leahy and Senator Peter DeFazio confronted the USDA in a letter, stating, "As the original sponsors of the organics legislation, we write to make clear that this recently-developed belief is misguided, as the statutory language and legislative history make clear." Leahy and DeFazio continued to dismantle the USDA's interpretation by referencing agreed-upon definitions, key pieces of legislation, Senate reports, the role of the National Organic Standard Board (NOSB) recommendations, and the public commenting process.

"The now thrice-delayed organics rule would continue the process initiated with the access to pasture rule finalized in 2010, and would, in keeping with the purposes of OFPA, establish clear and consistent standards for all organic livestock. We feel strongly that the rule is consistent with recommendations provided by USDA's Office of Inspector General and nine separate recommendations from the NOSB. It will align regulatory language and congressional intent to enable producers and consumers to readily discern the required practices for organic poultry production and to differentiate the products in the marketplace. This is as Congress intended when it enacted OFPA and established the NOSB," concluded Senators Leahy and DeFazio.

Doug Crabtree, on behalf of MOA, submitted a comment in January to Regulations.gov regarding this withdrawal. In it, he states, "As Chair of the Board of Directors of the Montana Organic Association,

I represent over 200 certified organic producers and supportive citizens. MOA members overwhelmingly oppose the withdrawal of the OLPP final rule. By proposing to withdraw the OLPP rule, the USDA is ignoring nearly 10 years of open, public debate and discourse in the organic community, in general, and specifically that facilitated by the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The failure of USDA to recognize the work of the NOSB and to accept the unanimous recommendation of the NOSB (to adopt the OLPP rule) is a serious threat to public process. If the OLPP rule is withdrawn, despite overwhelming public support, as evidenced by the vast majority of comments to the proposed rule and the unanimous recommendation of the NOSB, it would suggest that neither the public nor the NOSB have a legitimate voice in the USDA (under the Trump-Perdue administration)."

MOA, as well as dozens of organic organizations, have also signed on to a letter to the USDA urging them to implement the rule immediately, stating, "We are deeply disappointed

by your proposal to eliminate the new organic standard on animal welfare. This is an affront to the many people and organizations engaged in a multi-year, transparent, and highly participatory process that resulted in an animal welfare standard overwhelmingly supported by organic farmers, organic companies, humane animal care advocates, and consumers. Please remember that farmers choose to be organic and adhere to strict standards. We support this voluntary regulatory program on which the \$50 billion organic industry depends. The program is an outstanding example of how private initiatives can marry public process and it has had strong bipartisan approval from its inception. Organic farmers have pioneered new practices to enhance animal welfare because consumers demand it and because it makes farms more resilient and profitable. Eliminating the rule not only fails to acknowledge innovation in the organic farming sector and provide fair and transparent rules, it also undermines the faith people have in how organic agriculture is governed. We implore you to restore the organic animal welfare standard. Businesses depend upon it, and consumers expect nothing less."

As of press time, no response has been published by the USDA. We'll continue to post articles about this issue on MOA's website, under "News," at www.montanaorganicassociation.org. 🌱



Mission Mountain Organic Egg Farm

Welcome, New MOA Board Members

At the MOA Conference in December, MOA welcomed four new Board Members. But before we introduce them, MOA would like to thank the outgoing Board Members, Andrew Long, Robb Knotts and Linda Benjamin, for their service to the organization and for their work in organics.

So, without further adieu, help us welcome our new Board Members.

Gary Iverson is CEO of Montana Gluten Free Processors and a Certified Crop Advisor. He has an extensive background in Agricultural business, marketing, processing and production. He was active in organizing membership, researching product development and market potential, establishing seed sources, establishing corporate structure and developing a business plan for Great Northern Growers, a Montana Producer



Cooperative. His current efforts with Montana Gluten Free Processors have resulted in commercial production of value, such as adding gluten free oatmeal and flours. His current emphasis is continued development of value; added crops and products suitable for production and processing in Montana. Gary has a BS in Agronomy from MSU,

a license from the Society of American Agronomy as a Certified Crop Advisor, and is a USDA Technical Advisor.

John Porterfield is President of Ignimbrite Minerals, Inc. (DBA MontanaGrow). Ignimbrite Minerals is leading a green revolution in agriculture with the introduction of the first organic silicon product in US Agriculture history. Ignimbrite is defined as an Energy Efficient Fertilizer by USDA standards, boosting



the effectiveness of nitrogen, reducing water requirements, and unlocking phosphorus from soils. John is also Manager of the Hemp Holding Company in Montana, contracting hemp flower, grain, and fiber, plus hops. John grew up on a farm in southern West Virginia. His love of nutrient-dense foods and organic farming continues today through his strong support of organic research. He is enthusiastic about lending his skills to MOA through his Board work.

Jenn Swanson studied at UC Davis (*Go Aggies!*) and UC San Francisco, before returning to the family roots, in Montana. Since then, she has been involved in healthcare, agriculture (beef cows) and education. She is currently an associate professor of biology at the Catholic university



in Great Falls, the University of Providence. She currently teaches Cell and Molecular Biology, Science Writing, and Anatomy and Physiology. Her interest in organic practices brought her to the MOA conference in 2016, and she was smitten. She wants to help engage students with the organic agriculture community.

Becky Weed has owned and operated Thirteen Mile Lamb & Wool Company with her husband Dave Tyler for over 30 years. Sheep/grass/lamb have been the main enterprise, but the business has included grass-fed beef off and on (including some pasture for Goldhahns' C5 Organics). In



2003, Becky and Dave launched a wool mill in their barn, processing fiber from their own flock and from producers all over North

America. That business is now in the hands of an employee/neighbor and is called The Wool Mill. In 2016-17, Becky worked with Bruce Maxwell at MSU on the Agriculture Chapter of the Montana Climate Assessment. Becky has served on the boards of the Wild Farm Alliance, the Montana Board of Livestock, Lava Lake Land & Livestock, and Predator Conservation Alliance (now People & Carnivores). Her interest in the interface between agriculture and conservation stems in part from her ranching experience, but also from her education and work as a geologist in some very wild, and some very urban places. Her degrees in Geology are from Harvard University (B.A.) and University of Maine (M.S.). 🌱

Census of Agriculture

America's farmers and ranchers have the opportunity to strongly represent agriculture in their communities and industry by taking part in the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the census, mailed at the end of 2017, is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches, and those who operate them.

The Census of Agriculture highlights land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and other topics. The 2012 Census of Agriculture revealed that over three million farmers operated more than two million farms, spanning

over 914 million acres. This was a four percent decrease in the number of U.S. farms from the previous census in 2007. However, agriculture sales, income, and expenses increased between 2007 and 2012. This telling information and thousands of other agriculture statistics are a direct result of responses to the Census of Agriculture.

Producers who are new to farming or did not receive a Census of Agriculture in 2012 still have time to sign up to receive the 2017 Census of Agriculture report form by visiting www.agcensus.usda.gov and clicking on the 'Make Sure You Are Counted' button through June 2018. NASS defines a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year (2017).

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MOA Awards: And the Winners Are...

The Montana Organic Association announced and presented its 2017 MOA Awards at the Annual Conference last December in Great Falls.

The “Leadership in Organics” award is annually presented to an organic producer, handler, retailer, researcher, service provider (or other) who demonstrates an on-going commitment to advancing the adoption, practice and success of organic agriculture in Montana.

The 2017 Leadership in Organics award was presented to Kristina (Kiki) Hubbard. Kiki is the Director of Advocacy & Communications at Organic Seed Alliance. Kiki has worked on seed policy issues in the areas of antitrust, biotechnology, intellectual property, and organic regulation for 15 years. She currently leads efforts to promote policies and actions that support organic seed systems, including managing OSA’s State of Organic Seed project.

Kiki is a feather in our community cap, but this work is never about her own cap. Her strong beliefs, hard work and diplomatic and dogged approach have earned her respect from friends and foes alike. Her

efforts against GE domination has led to her work for the core of organic production, the diversity of organic seed. Her diligence and passion had led her to protect the interests of farmers and consumers, and thus the environment for our childrens’ future. Kiki lives in Missoula, Montana, with her husband and son.



The “Lifetime of Service” award is presented annually to an organic producer, handler, retailer, researcher, service provider (or other) who has demonstrated a long-term commitment to organic agriculture in Montana. The 2017 Lifetime of Service award was presented to Randy Hinebauch. Randy and his wife Lisa operate an 11,000 acre wheat/green manure/fallow farm west of Chinook, Montana, one of the oldest certified organic operations in the state (certified since 1987). They grow mainly cereal grains, pulses, and alfalfa hay, and utilize green manures in their rotation to build soil.

Randy was one of three original pioneers, leaders and advocates of organic agriculture in Montana. He was a Charter Member of the OCIA North Central Montana Chapter and served on the Board of Directors for OCIA International. Randy served a two-year term on the advisory board of the Montana Department of Ag’s Organic Certification Program, co-founded the first MOA Conference in Great Falls, and hosted a MOA farm tour in 2009. He is currently serving a third consecutive term of the governor-appointed Montana Wheat and Barley Committee.

Randy has six children, three sons who currently work on the farm, and one grandchild, Keira (pictured below), with two more grandchildren on the way.

Congratulations, Kiki and Randy, and thank you for all your work on behalf of organics. 🌱



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Organic News

Hydroponic, Aquaponic and Aeroponic Production Systems

At its Fall 2017 public meeting, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) heard significant testimony about hydroponic, aquaponic, and aeroponic operations. Since some certifiers allow hydroponic production to be certified, and others do not, the crops subcommittee put forward a compromise proposal that would require some amount of soil or compost in containers used to grow crops. This vote failed 8:7. Several NOSB members used the language of “inclusion” to justify voting down the prohibition of hydroponics in organic production.

Many organic professionals feel that organic integrity is compromised by “including” systems that do not comply with the soil nutrient cycling requirements of the Organic Food Production Act (OFPA). Ironically, aeroponics was unanimously voted to be prohibited as organic at this meeting.

Given the extensive debate on this topic, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) posted a

notice this January to clarify the status of these systems. “Certification of hydroponic, aquaponic, and aeroponic operations is allowed under the USDA organic regulations, and has been since the National Organic Program began. For these products to be labeled as organic, the operation must be certified by a USDA-accredited certifying agent, and maintain compliance with the USDA organic regulations. The NOSB has recommended prohibiting aeroponic systems in organic production. USDA will consider this recommendation; aeroponics remains allowed during this review.”

Sources: USDA/NOP and Cornucopia Institute

David Oien Honored

Organic pioneer, lentil farmer and owner of Timeless Natural Foods, David Oien, has been named the MSU College of Agriculture and Montana Agricultural Experiment Station’s 2017 Outstanding Agricultural Leader. Recipients have impacted many with their accomplishments, have a lifetime of achievement in agriculture, are industry leaders or innovative producers, and are actively involved in Montana’s agricultural community. 🌱



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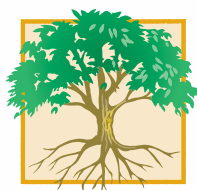
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Organic Resources

Online Tool Helps Farmers Buying Land

National Young Farmers Coalition has introduced a beta version of *Finding Farmland*, an online financial-education tool for farmers buying land. The tool includes a Land Affordability Calculator that can be used to compare financing costs for two different farm properties or to compare different financing scenarios for a single property. Visit <https://findingfarmland.youngfarmers.org/> to learn more.

Crop Budgeting Tool

A new crop budgeting tool developed by the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration enables

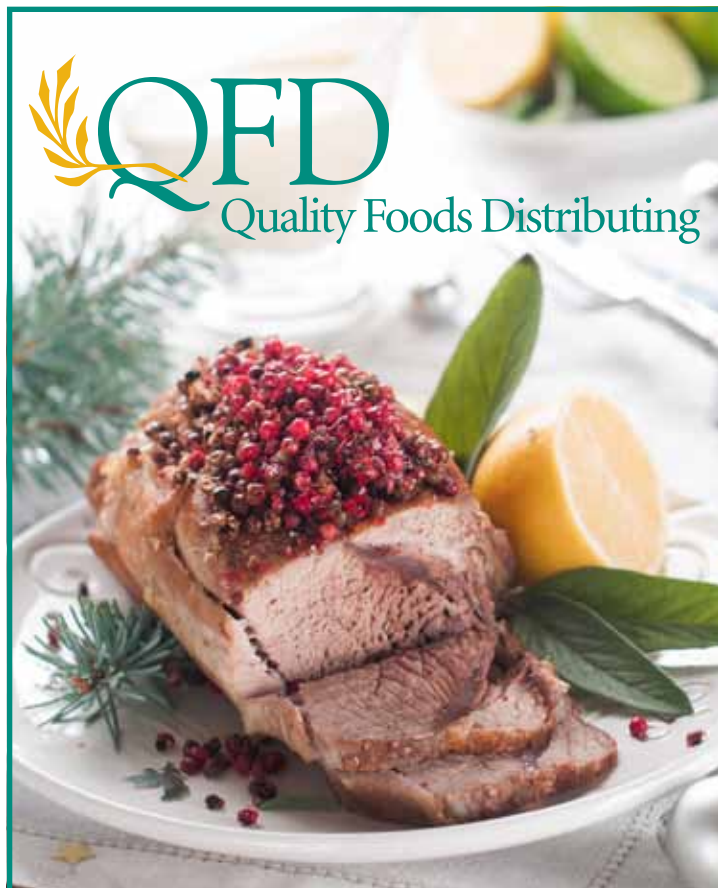
organic farmers – and those producers interested in transitioning to organic – to zero in on their specific operations and provides a new resource to help improve their current organic operation or to make the choice to go organic. The U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration, a special project of the Organic Trade Association's Grain, Pulse and Oilseed Council, has developed crop budgeting templates to help farmers in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana plan future organic crop production and understand the economic impacts of their agronomic practices. Visit <https://ota.com/about-ota/member-councils-forums-task-forces/sector-councils/grains-council>.

Farm Service Agency Loans Guidebook

The National Young Farmers Coalition has published a guidebook to help young farmers and ranchers navigate the credit options offered by the Farm Service Agency. Visit <http://www.youngfarmers.org/fsaloansguide/>

Free Organic Publications

ATTRA/NCAT has many publications and videos available for organic farmers and ranchers. This treasure trove includes resources such as: *Building Healthy Pasture Soils*; *Checklists and Resources for Managed Grazing*; *Indicators of Soil Health*; *Sheeps and Goats - FAQ*; and many more. Visit <https://attra.ncat.org/organic.html>. 🌱




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A photograph showing three men in a field. The man on the left is wearing a light blue t-shirt and is looking down at a small plant sample he is holding. The man in the middle is wearing a dark blue button-down shirt and sunglasses, also looking at the sample. The man on the right is wearing a light pink button-down shirt, a white cap, and glasses, and is looking at the sample. They are standing in a field of dry, yellowish-brown grass under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a close-up of a hand holding a small plant sample is visible.

Thanks to all who responded to our request for sick Canada Thistle and Field Bindweed plants. We have begun evaluation of the samples with researchers at MSU and hope that it will be possible to isolate organisms that can be developed into viable biocontrol agents.

Donations are still welcome
Organic Advisory and Education Council
c/o Ole Norgaard
475 Vixen Lane
Shonkin, MT 59450

Financial Resources

Finance Programs Directory

The National Council of State Agricultural Finance Programs and the Council of Development Finance Agencies have released the 2017 National Council of State Agricultural Finance Programs Directory. The directory outlines 83 individual programs that assist beginning and first-time farmers, existing family farm operations, and agribusiness firms. The 177-page directory is free online at <http://stateagfinance.org/uploads/NCOSAFP%20Directory%202017.pdf>.

Organic Transitions Grant

USDA'S National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) announced \$3.8 million in available funding to address

critical issues related to organic agriculture. Funding is made through NIFA's Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants - Organic Transitions (ORG) program. The ORG program supports the development and implementation of research, extension, and education programs that enhance organic livestock and crop production. Organic agricultural systems provide many ecosystem services, and natural resources stewardship is a key principle in organic farming. The deadline for applications is March 29, 2018. Visit <https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/organic-transitions-org>. 🌱

MOA is #Still-In

In light of the Trump Administration's position on the Paris Climate Agreement, thousands of businesses and organizations from across U.S. civil society have signed the "We Are Still In" declaration, committing to pursue the goals of the Agreement.

In the midst of this uncertainty, Food Tank is highlighting 25 farmer-led and farmer-focused organizations working in the U.S., including the Montana Organic Association, who are committed to supporting the goals of the Paris Agreement and working towards them.

Visit <https://foodtank.com/news/2017/11/paris-agreement-still-in/> to read the declaration and to learn more. 🌱



Underpants to Improve Quality of Beef?

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and Quality Meat Scotland claim interring a pair of cotton briefs in a pasture can reveal important information about soil fertility. Experts say that sterile and lifeless soil will keep underwear intact, but organically thriving soil will deteriorate the briefs, leaving nothing but the elastic waistband. After two months, dig them up to judge how healthy the soil is. Soil on ranches directly influence how well cover crops grow and, consequently, the quality of the feed they produce. Better feed produces healthier and more flavorful animals. Let us know how your experiment goes, but please do not send us your evidence. 🌱

Calendar of Events

Find the organic events in your area by visiting www.montanaorganicassociation.org/events.htm.

Organic Matters Ad Rates

Ad prices and dimensions:

1 page ad --- \$110 (Size: 7-1/2W x 10H")

3/4 page ad --- \$90 (Size: 7-1/2W x 6-1/2H")

1/2 page ad --- \$65 (Size: 7-1/2W x 5H") -OR-
(3-1/2" W x 10"H)

1/4 page ad -- \$40 (Size: 3-1/2W x 4-1/2"H)

Business card ad --- \$30 (Size: 3-1/2W x 2H")

***If you are a Farm/Ranch Business level member, you will receive a 5% discount on your ad. If you are an Organic Business or Lifetime member, you will receive a 10% discount on your ad. All ads must be print ready.

Visit: <http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org/omadrates.htm> for details or call Susan Waters at (406) 274-4869.

Join MOA Today!

Each membership level delivers a quarterly newsletter devoted to sharing the latest news and information about the association and the organic industry, discounts to MOA events, special mailings on legislative alerts and events, a MOA member vote, and the networking and educational opportunities presented by joining others who share interest and experience in the field of organics. Other member benefits include eligibility for a Workman's Comp premium discount, safety training and other services to assist you in your organic endeavors.

Please sign me up as a MOA Member!

Name: _____

Farm or Business: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Type of Work: _____

Annual Membership Levels:

- ☐ Individual.....\$30
- ☐ Household.....\$50 (includes two memberships)
- ☐ Farm/Ranch/Business.....\$75 (includes two memberships, a 5% discount on newsletter ads and a website directory listing)
- ☐ Organic Business.....\$250 (includes two memberships, a 10% discount on newsletter ads and a website directory listing)
- ☐ Lifetime.....\$750 (includes two memberships, a 10% discount on newsletter ads and a website directory listing)
- ☐ Lifetime Business.....\$2500 (includes two memberships, a 10% discount on newsletter ads and a website directory listing)
- ☐ Publication/Media.....\$500 (includes full page, quarterly newsletter ads, a website directory listing, and full media coverage)
- ☐ Silver (-5%).....\$1650 (includes two memberships; full page, quarterly newsletter ads; a website directory listing; full media coverage; two conference registrations & conference lunch sponsorship)
- ☐ Gold (-10%).....\$2000 (includes two memberships; full page, quarterly newsletter ads; a website directory listing; full media coverage; two conference registrations & conference dinner sponsorship)

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Owner: Jill Owen



A View From the Chair

Generally, I open this column with a reflection on weather. Suffice it to say that we've had a real winter in Montana. While our field lay beneath a blanket of snow, I traveled not south (as might be wiser), but east.

At the end of January, I represented MOA at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) winter meeting in Washington DC. NSAC is made up of over 120 member organizations that work across the country in the realm of sustainable agriculture. NSAC has a strong presence in the capital, advocating on behalf of its member organizations for policies that support a more just and sustainable agriculture.

At the Winter Meeting, members come together to discuss, debate and prioritize policy positions that NSAC staff will advocate for in the year ahead. The work is especially important at this time, as Congress is developing a new Farm Bill. After the meeting, NSAC took our message directly to "the Hill," with each member meeting with our Federal delegation to lobby for NSAC priorities in the Farm Bill.

On behalf of MOA, I advocated for improvements in crop insurance for organic farmers; increased federal funding for organic agriculture research; and conservation programs (and funding) to support organic farming practices. We also support continuation of cost share payments for organic certification; USDA programs

(and funding) for Beginning Farmers; and increased enforcement by USDA to keep fraudulent "organic" imports from entering the US market.



MOA has a lengthy list of policy priorities. I was pleased to find that most NSAC members shared our concerns. NSAC staff helped us focus on which of our issues are practical and possible in the current political climate.

I was pleasantly surprised that there are already Bills introduced that include several of our priority issues. The Crop Insurance Modernization Act, <http://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/campaigns/fbcampaign/crop-insurance/crop-insurance-modernization-act/>, includes much of what we would like to see in improvements to the "safety net" for organic farmers. The Organic Agricultural Research Act, <http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/organic-ag-research-act-2017/>, would increase funding of organic research. I urge EVERYONE to read these bills. Then, call, email or visit your legislators. Tell them,

as I did, that we need and expect our representatives to support legislation that helps, supports and protects organic farmers and farming in Montana.

The Bills indicated above are House Bills. In order to become part of the Farm Bill, we need companion legislation in the Senate. I met personally with Senator Daines, who is on the Senate Agriculture Committee, and asked for his support of these issues (crop insurance modernization, organic research and conservation programs). I assured him that these were critical needs for our farms and for organic agriculture in Montana. He is open to our request, but needs to hear from more of you! So, please let Senator Daines, <https://www.daines.senate.gov/connect/email-steve>, know that we need him to co-sponsor these bills in the Senate.

I understand that not everyone has time (or patience) to engage in politics. I heard a speech by a long-time Senator in which he said "In politics, you are either at the table or you are on the table." In other words, those that show up and raise their voices "at the policy table" can influence legislation. But, those that do not may find their needs and interests sacrificed. Don't let yourself be "on the table." 🍀

Doug Crabtree, MOA Board Chairman