

Organic MATTERS



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MOA 2018 Conference Sets New Records

Article by Kaleena Miller, AERO

Photos by Robbe Lindsay, MontanaGrow

The 16th Annual MOA Conference was an absolute success. It brought together attendees from across Montana as well as vendors and speakers from across the country. The attendance this year was a whopping 288 attendees, up from 258 in 2017. The record breaking participation comes as no surprise as both the number of organic acres in Montana and demand for organic in the U.S. continues to rise.

Thursday's conference activities kicked off with the Organic University session and three tour opportunities, including [A Healthy Horizon](#), [Wilcox Eggs](#), and a cooking demonstration with [Saibeen Acord](#). The itinerary for Thursday evening included a screening of the documentary "[Dreaming of a Vetter World](#)," followed by a panel discussion. Unfortunately, technical difficulties prevented the film from being shown Thursday, but luckily they were able to run it on Friday evening, after the live auction concluded. During Thursday evening's technical time out, attendees were asked to come up on stage and share any good jokes they knew. I was pleasantly surprised by how many folks braved the spotlight, participating in the ad-hoc comedy hour. The crowd was thoroughly entertained!

Friday's agenda launched us into the start of over 40 workshops, including themes such as weeds, seeds, small farm, horticulture, marketing, risk management, and more. With 11 sessions to attend between Friday and Saturday, there was no shortage of interesting, educational, and engaging workshops. Michael Kilpatrick from [In The Field Consultants](#), delivered five workshops, covering topics such as farming success, employee management, marketing strategies, season extension and effective harvest practices. Attendees complimented Michael's ability to clearly explain the basics of launching and effectively running a diversified farming operation. Two specific resources that you don't want to pass up include Michael's [Farm Design webpage](#) and his online [Small Farm University](#).

Session 2's workshops included an MSU Research Update from Dr. Perry Miller. He provided a summary of the Fort Ellis Study results taking place between 2013-2017, with yield comparisons between organic grazing and organic till and conventional methods. One highlight included the impressive results witnessed on the Manual Farm, south of Havre. When compared with the



Dr. Jill Clapperton of Rhizoterra was MOA's 2018 Conference Keynote Speaker.



MOA's 2018 Conference attendance broke all previous conference records.



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the environment and the State economy.

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Fort Ellis plot, the sweet clover grazing results on the Manual property were far superior. Dr. Miller also prepared material on the organic hemp industry, wanting to make sure it's on organic growers' radar. The demand for organically grown hemp remains strong. One specific challenge regarding MSU's hemp trials was the process of harvesting such a green crop. Songbirds affected seed yield loss, but they were still able to harvest between 450 and 550 lb/ac, depending on the variety.

The last session before lunch on Friday included a workshop introducing a feasibility study on the "Need for 4-H Organic Farming Curriculum." Dr. Renee Gelbault King provided some background information on the existing 4-H curriculum, its relationship to the modern food system, the identified resource gap for youth interested in organic production, and the low 4-H participation numbers in science based clubs. One attendee described this session as "...the most interactive workshop I attended....I appreciated the recurring theme of 'kids get organic.'" With 20,000 youth enrolled annually throughout the state, [4-H curriculum](#) provides a tremendous opportunity to introduce our next generation of leaders to organic values such as soil health and sustainability practices. Dr. King will present her concept to the [Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service Conference](#) next month. After that, MOA members can stay tuned for a survey coming their way. Don't miss your chance to participate in the survey in 2019 so your valuable input can be collected!

During Friday's lunch, policy experts from the [Organic Trade Association](#), [National Farmers Union](#), and [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition \(NSAC\)](#) provided their analyses and insight regarding the 2018 Farm Bill. (The bill was passed not long after the MOA conference concluded with [NSAC providing a nice write up on it here](#). Also read the *Farm Bill* article on p. 9.)

As conference attendees starting digesting the notably delicious and nutritious mid-day meal, keynote speaker Dr. Jill Clapperton of [Rhizoterra](#) began her talk titled "Building the Foundation for Wellness." Dr. Clapperton reminded us that "soil productivity can't be measured in bushels per acre," and that a farmer's job is to harvest photosynthesis. When we do not have a live root in the ground, we are missing out on the opportunity for the plant to feed the soil biology that can feed and care for the plants for us. Dr. Clapperton presented a tremendous

amount of information in an easy to understand style, using analogies such as, “Plants that are given fertilizers are not doing work but being fed. When they are put to work, they ‘hire employees’ (mycorrhiza, paid with carbon).” She highlighted a stellar educational curriculum called [Bio-ninja](#), as well as a humorous [Cotton Strip Test](#), noting the chuckle worthy tagline [#soilyourundies](#). Dr. Clapperton re-emphasized some great programs that exist already such as Food Pharmacies, prescribing healthy food for ailments.

Friday afternoon sessions highlighted grant opportunities for organic producers as well as season extension techniques such as row covers and high tunnels. Fabian Menalled provided an excellent overview of the [WSARE Program](#), emphasizing how the program encourages folks to ‘think outside the box’ when dreaming up project proposals. The WSARE network functions as a peer to peer knowledge transfer database, allowing producers to share what they’ve learned through reporting. One attendee noted how engaged the audience was as it was peppered with current WSARE funding recipients. Fabian provided some useful tips for successful applications, clear information about program opportunities, and insight into the stakeholders that make up the council that reviews applications. As a current WSARE grantee, I encourage the MOA community to familiarize yourselves with WSARE funding opportunities if you haven’t already.

Friday evening’s dinner was accompanied by a talk from Bob Quinn, reminding us that organic IS the future, albeit we still have a



Panel discussions continue to be very popular at the MOA conferences.



Conference meals were prepared using Montana-sourced organic ingredients.



Networking opportunities are a valuable asset for MOA conference participants.



MOA auctions help fund the organization thanks to generous contributors.



MOA had a record number of sponsors and vendors in 2018.

few knocks and bumps to get through along the way. Bob addressed the tremendously powerful effects of glyphosate in our environment and what impacts are currently being felt by organic producers with export markets. He provided a great recap of the [1st International Conference of Wheat Landraces for Healthy Food Systems](#), which took place in Italy in June of 2018. With 125 participants representing 22 countries, the three day conference was filled with folks sharing their experiences, research, and knowledge on wheat landraces. Bob continues to remind the MOA audience how important it is for each and every person to put pressure on wherever they purchase their food from—spreading awareness of where glyphosate is in our food supply.

After dinner wrapped up and before the live auction kicked off, the Annual MOA Awards were handed out. Two very special awards given posthumously stood out to the crowd, many folks having been very familiar with these individuals. Dr. Jim Sims and Jane Kile both received the MOA Lifetime Achievement Award. Also, Matt and Sonja Johnson were awarded the Leadership in Organics Award for their organic work on Johnson Ranch in Hinsdale. (See [Awards](#) article on p. 6.)

Saturday kicked off with a three part “Agriculture in the Middle: Strategies for Intermediate Marketing” workshop, let by Tammy Howard of NCAT. A panel including representatives from Quality Foods Distributing, Western Montana Growers Cooperative, and 2J’s Market enriched the conversation about current farm to institution



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opportunities. In a similar vein, the [Harvest of the Month program](#) was described in detail during this session. This allowed producers to learn how they could influence changes in their local schools, for example, the [Beef to School project](#), among others.

Also on Saturday morning, [Dr. Jane Smith](#) spoke to a packed room about the human health effects of glyphosate in a talk titled “Dying to Eat Organic: Why Organic Producers Need Clean Food Too.” Dr. Smith shared compelling background information such as the fact that 25% of the world’s use of glyphosate is in the U.S, 66% of that is just in the last 10 years. She quoted Dr. Stephanie Seneff’s glyphosate research throughout the presentation, sharing her [online summary](#) of the research with attendees. I was pretty struck by not only how many people attended this presentation, but by how many questions there were from the room. One attendee commented that this topic could be a whole conference in itself.

Christine Skonberg from General Mills, held a workshop on a newly developed regenerative agriculture scorecard. As Christine looked for real feedback from producers on the merit and content of the scorecard, I couldn’t help but be impressed by the producer participation in the room. All [four producers in Montana](#) who currently have contracts with Annies (owned by General Mills) were in the workshop. One shared that they’d like to see ongoing conversations between growers and General Mills. They expressed the desire for long term contracts with the regenerative agriculture focus remaining. When talking about the new scorecard in particular, another producer shared that each farm is its own organism, which makes it challenging to compare scores between two of them. To read more about [the scorecard](#) and the on-farm soil measurement project, you can explore [Annie’s website](#).

Saturday afternoon included a panel titled “Best Practices for Real Life Farm and Ranch Apprenticeships and Internships,” facilitated by Dr. Anna Jones-Crabtree. Panelists discussed a variety of considerations for when farmers/ranchers are thinking about hiring farm labor that will affect how they design the experience for the hired labor. Are you looking for someone who already has specific

skills to bring to the job? Or, are you looking to provide an educationally enriching experience for the worker? Panelists also walked workshop attendees through a variety of different models of farm worker training programs that they offered or had experience with, including [Work Link](#) on Farmlink Montana’s website, the [Quivera apprenticeship program](#), and

[Vilicus Farm’s unique setup](#). One attendee described the session as “...a rich discussion filled with a diversity of well-considered thoughts and opinions from the panelists and participants. It really captured the spirit of generative conversation and cooperation in the ag community, and the session ended before anyone wanted it to!”



MOA draws top notch speakers, such as Bob Quinn and Senator Jon Tester.

Another workshop towards the end of conference focused on seed production control. Bill McDorman,

Director of the Rocky Mountain Seed Alliance, gave a lively presentation titled “The Threat of Utility Patented, Certified Organic, Non-hybrid Seeds.” McDorman explained that in just the past 70 years in the U.S. we have lost 90% or more of the open pollinated seed varieties which were adapted to regional growing conditions. Therefore, we have a great task ahead of us to preserve seeds that may have unique or vital traits, such as disease resistance or superior nutritional qualities. Unfortunately, most of these open pollinated heirloom varieties have been replaced by hybridized seeds.

In between sessions at the conference, the real magic took place. Old friends caught up, new friends were made, producers connected with vendors, and many laughs were shared. I’m a bit sad that we have to wait another year for the next MOA Conference. I’m sure I share that sentiment with other attendees. Congratulations on another successful event!

This article was written by Kaleena Miller of [Alternative Energy Resources Organization \(AERO\)](#), with generous contributions by Patti Armbrister, Jim Barngrover, Catie DeMets, Tammy Howard, Robin Kelson and Kei Matsunami. Photos by Robbe Lindsay of [MontanaGrow](#).

Editor’s Note: A huge thank you goes out to all MOA sponsors, vendors, donors, speakers, participants and volunteers. YOU made this conference possible. 🌱

MOA Presents Three Awards at 2018 Conference

Montana Organic Association presented its 2018 Organic Awards at the MOA Conference last December in Great Falls.

The 2018 Leadership in Organics Award was presented to Matt and Sonja Johnson, of Johnson Farm and Ranch.



Matt and Sonja are life-long residents of Valley county, north of the town of Hinsdale. Their farm and ranch includes land homesteaded by Matt's great-grandfather. The Johnsons grow oats, Kamut®, lentils, plow-down

and grazing peas, and flax mixed in with wheat. Matt and Sonja also raise conventional cattle.

The Johnsons use every opportunity to share what they have learned on their farm from grazing cover crops, using plow-downs, rotating crops, using organic fertilizers and adapting to drought and intense heat. Matt is a former MOA Board member and currently serves on the Montana Organic Commodity Advisory Council. The Johnsons have two sons, Michael and Brett, both attending college.

The Lifetime of Service Award was presented for the late Dr. Jim Sims and also the late Jane Kile.

Dr. Jim Sims earned his Ph.D. in soil science in 1966, accepting the position of assistant professor of soils in the agronomy department at Montana State University. Jim taught courses, advised and guided students and conducted lab and field research on the MAU research farm and on farmer/rancher-owned land throughout the state. This was some of Jim's most enjoyable work and allowed him to make lasting friendships with farm and ranch families.

An advertisement for Montana Milling Inc. The background features a stylized mountain range in blue and white. In the foreground, there is a large blue map of Montana. Overlaid on the map is a large, dark oval logo with the text "MONTANA MILLING INC." in gold and white. To the left of the map is a golden wheat stalk. The text "YOUR FIELDS, HEALTHY FLOUR, NATIONS FOOD!" is written in yellow at the top of the map. Other text on the map includes "SERVING THE BAKING INDUSTRY SINCE 1972!", "A MONTANA COMPANY!", "ORGANIC SINCE 1980!", and "GROWING TOGETHER!". At the bottom of the map, the website "www.montanamilling.com" is written in yellow. Below the map, the phone number "(800) 548-8445" is written in black.



Jim signed a two-year contract with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization as soil fertility expert, duty station Tripoli, Libya. Upon moving back to Bozeman in June 1977. Jim resumed his position as professor of soil management at MSU, teaching upper division and graduate courses.

Jim and his graduate students began researching cropping systems, especially cereal/legume rotations on the MSU farm and on farmer-owned land. This led to the reintroduction of pea and lentil production on dryland farms in the eastern Montana, the introduction of ley farming with medic species and an increase in the acreage of canola and other alternative crops.

Jim's research program enabled him to receive an ongoing series of U.S. State Department grants in cooperation with Alexandria University and with the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture. The projects with Egypt had Jim making two to three trips annually to work with the Egyptian scientists and Bedouin farmers. Jim retired from MSU in 1997. Jim is survived by his wife Toni Scheffele and many children and grandchildren.

Jane Kile had the uncanny ability to clearly define the challenges facing small farmers and has led initiatives to find solutions to them. After coming of age in the tumultuous late '60s and early '70s, Jane's path in life included sheepherder, natural resource specialist, community development project director, administrative assistant and farmer. She was a respected teacher, conservationist, community activist, passionate advocate for the sanctity of all life on earth and all too human being.

Jane was especially dedicated to resolving the complex land management issues of her adopted home's mountains, rivers and plains. She was a pioneer in Montana's organic farming and community supported agriculture movements who believed conserving wildlands, supporting sustainable forestry, farming and ranching and creating stable, self-sufficient rural communities were all important parts of the solution. In the early 1990s, she started one of the earliest CSAs in Montana, and was one of the first vegetable

farms to become certified organic. She was a driving force in creating the Western Montana Growers Cooperative. Jane was also influential in forming the Organic Certification Association of Montana, (OCAM), which was a predecessor to MOA.

She was widely recognized for her attention to detail, critical thinking and willingness to take on leadership roles. She often inhabited that difficult space between a good idea and results on the ground; a place of mostly hard work, compromise and, sometimes, personal pain. Congratulations to all of the MOA Award winners and their families. Thank you for all your hard work to advance organics.



Article contributors: Jim Barngrover, Susan Waters, Judy Owsowitz and Doug Crabtree 🌱

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
|  | | Southwest Sask. Organic Producers Inc. TCO Cert Chapter 8 | |
| <h2 style="text-align: center;">Producer Seminar</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Monday, February 4, 2019</p> | | | |
| Hodgeville Community Hall Registration 8:30-9:30am | | Lunch served by Ernfold 4-H Club | |
| Topics of the Day | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive Weed Control - Targeted grazing & biological control • Farm Stewardship Program • Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) Program and Funding • Intercropping, Soil Fertility & Nutrients • Role of Agriculture in Carbon Sequestration & Bio Energy • Simpson Seeds—Diversifying into Organics • Re-Gen Ag Solutions Weed Management Tools & Strategies • Buyers will also be in attendance | | Sponsors: Back to Your Roots Soil Solutions <hr/> Sunrise Foods International <hr/> Growers International Organic Sales Inc. |
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Farm Bill Delivers Victories for Beginning Farmers, Organic/Local Food

Concerns remain over long-term loss in conservation funding, failure to close farm safety net loopholes

by [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#)

After two months of negotiations, the 2018 Farm Bill Conference Committee leaders in December released a [final bill](#) that makes long-overdue investments in the future of American agriculture. Passed and signed into law by President Trump, the bill will better connect beginning and socially disadvantaged producers with the tools and resources they need to start and sustain vibrant food and farm businesses. It will also help both established and beginning farmers to tap growing markets by providing permanent, mandatory funding for local and regional food production and organic research.

“Despite these historic victories and investments, the final bill contains serious shortcomings.”

“By providing key “tiny but mighty” farm bill programs with permanent funding, the 2018 Farm Bill will make a critical investment in the future of American agriculture,” said Juli Obudzinski, Interim Policy Director at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). “No longer will the family farmers who rely on these programs to start or grow their small businesses, or the food and farm organizations who provide direct training and outreach services, have to worry about the fate of these vital resources each farm bill cycle.”

The bill provides permanent, baseline funding and also makes significant policy improvements to the following tiny but mighty farm bill programs: the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (also known as “Section 2501”), Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program, and Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP). The final farm bill combines BFRDP and Section 2501 into the new [Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach \(FOTO\)](#) program, and merges VAPG and FMLFPP into the local [Agriculture Market Program \(LAMP\)](#).

NSAC actively endorsed both FOTO and LAMP, and has for years advocated that Congress shore up these programs by providing permanent baseline funding so that legislative delays don’t result in funding or support gaps for America’s family farmers and farm organizations.

“The final deal addresses a growing need to scale up our nation’s farm-to-fork initiatives, invest in healthy food, support the next generation of farmers and other underserved producers, and continue making strides in organic agriculture research,” said Obudzinski. “We thank the Chairs and Ranking Members of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees for providing much needed stability and reliability through these permanent investments.”

The final bill also rejects the House’s efforts to eliminate the [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#) and preserves current funding across the conservation title. The conference report also makes important policy improvements to encourage cover cropping, resource-conserving crop rotation, and advanced grazing systems.

“We are glad to see that the conference report retains CSP’s structure as a unique and independent program, and believe these reforms send a strong message to USDA to focus funding on the most impactful conservation activities to address our most pressing environmental challenges,” said Obudzinski. “We also applaud conferees for boosting conservation easement funding and for ensuring that the Conservation Reserve Program includes the new Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers (CLEAR) initiative to support conservation buffers to benefit water quality.”

Despite these historic victories and investments, the final bill contains serious shortcomings. Overall, the bill fails to address some of most significant challenges facing American agriculture and rural communities – food and farm business consolidation, dwindling rural populations and resources, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. In some cases, the bill not only fails to move the needle forward, it actively takes steps backward by failing to restore funding cuts to conservation programs or close widening loopholes in our commodity subsidy and crop insurance programs.

Over the next ten years, the 2018 Farm Bill will cut billions in funding for performance-based



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conservation through CSP. By failing to restore the \$6 billion cut to conservation funds made in the 2014 Farm Bill, the only way to provide for other necessary increases within the Conservation Title – given limited available funds – was to cut funding from working lands conservation. That cut may start out small, but for the next farm bill in 2023, it amounts to a \$5 billion reduction in combined budget authority for CSP and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.


“The final bill will ultimately shortchange working lands conservation by stripping billions in conservation support to farmers through programs like CSP,” said Obudzinski. “We are disheartened to see that this farm bill further reduces CSP funding at a time when farmers are increasingly struggling to deal with extreme weather and other climate change-related challenges.”

NSAC is also deeply disappointed over the bill’s inaction on crop insurance and commodity subsidy reform and failure to address issues like low farm income or farm consolidation. Instead of making much-needed reforms to the nation’s farm safety net programs, the final 2018 Farm Bill *expands* existing loopholes – the result of which will be million dollar per year subsidies for the wealthiest mega-farms and payments for nieces, nephews, and cousins who may never have even seen a farm let alone actively work on one.

“It is a sad day when bipartisan reforms are ripped out of the final farm bill and replaced by giveaways for the one percent,” said Obudzinski. “Given that the Senate-passed farm bill contained broadly supported farm safety net reforms, it is beyond disappointing to see the hyper-partisan language and subsidy handouts of the House-passed bill win the day. We thank Senators Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) for leading this effort in the Senate and are committed to continuing to pursue these reforms going forward.”


With the farm bill finish line finally crossed, NSAC will now be assessing next steps with our over 120 member organizations. We look forward to continuing our work to advance sustainable farm and food policy throughout 2019 and beyond.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is a grassroots alliance that advocates for federal policy reform supporting the long-term social, economic, and environmental sustainability of agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities. 🌱



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Industrial Hemp: ‘Comeback Crop’ Will Benefit Farmers

by [American Farm Bureau Federation](#)

An expert panel outlined the politics, agronomics and economics of industrial hemp at a workshop at the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 100th Annual Convention. Federally outlawed for more than 50 years, industrial hemp is making a comeback.

Rep. James Comer (R-Ky.), a staunch supporter of hemp as an agricultural crop, explained how he helps people understand the difference between hemp and its more infamous cannabis cousin, marijuana.


“Hemp and marijuana are two plants in the same family, the same way that broccoli and cauliflower are in the same plant family,” Comer said.

Ken Anderson, founder and president of Legacy Hemp, the leading U.S. contractor with hemp farmers, strongly advised anyone who is considering growing the crop to first secure a buyer. “There are a lot of opportunities but it can be expensive to start growing hemp,” Anderson said. He credited Farm Bureau’s advocacy with playing a key role in the recognition of industrial hemp as a legitimate farm crop.

Calling industrial hemp “the little engine that could,” Katie Moyer of Kentucky Hemp Works discussed the broad range of hemp varieties and advised farmers to carefully consider which one to cultivate. “The crops are completely different” she said, referring to varieties grown for cannabidiol oil vs. fiber, grain, seed, etc.

The availability of labor should also be carefully considered when thinking about growing hemp, according to Anderson.

“Hemp grown for CBD uses is much more labor-intensive,” he said, referring to those varieties as a horticultural crop while others are agricultural crops. In addition, he recommends farmers starting out with hemp add it to their crop rotation, rather than growing it as their only crop.

The 2014 farm bill gave states the authority to establish hemp pilot programs to study its growth, cultivation and marketing. To date, 35 states have taken advantage of the opportunity. The 2018 farm bill removed hemp from the Controlled Substances Act. This deregulation benefits growers, who may now transport hemp and no longer face barriers related to insurance, banking, and other previous obstacles. 

Montana organic farmers, MSU lead \$2 million grant for perennial weeds

by Jenny Lavey, [MSU News](#)

Researchers at Montana State University are leading a collaborative grant across the four-state Northern Great Plains and Pacific Northwest regions with a multi-pronged attack on what is said to be the chief hardship in organic farming – perennial weeds.


A four-year, \$2 million grant from the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture Organic Research and Extension Initiative has been awarded to Montana State University (MSU).

MSU agriculture faculty will lead a consortium that will work jointly with Montana organic farmers to find control methods for bindweed and creeping thistle. Co-investigators are located at Washington State University, Oregon State University, North Dakota State University and the USDA Agricultural Research Station in Sidney.

For many organic producers across the Northern Great Plains and Pacific Northwest regions, field bindweed and creeping thistle are the most challenging and detrimental weeds in their organic cropping systems – the weeds choke out crops, steal vital nutrients from plants, disrupt fields and reduce profits. So far, there is no magic bullet for their control on organic farms.

For other organic producers, bindweed and creeping thistle infestations have meant taking fields and large acreage out of organic management altogether. In doing so, farmers have been forced to give up their USDA organic certification in favor of herbicides not allowed in organic systems just for some measure of weed control.

The funding will allow statewide experiments at three of MSU’s agricultural research centers and eight statewide organic farms with bindweed and creeping thistle infestations. The farms will mirror the MSU research experiments and farmer cooperators will be active participants and will help researchers collect data on their farms and interpret analyses, according to Patrick Carr, superintendent of MSU’s [Central Agricultural Research Center](#) and principal investigator on the grant.

The research, Carr said, will operate as a multi-faceted approach that includes an array of experiments with livestock grazing, cropping rotations, soil microbiology and tilling tactics. Additionally, the grant includes faculty investigating soil microbial communities and plant genetics. 

Weeding the Organic Garden

by The Cornucopia Institute

The Cornucopia Institute just released a [report](#) on “organic” hydroponics, exposing a rapidly accelerating trend in organic fruit and vegetable production: the shift to growing produce in industrial settings, with nutrients primarily coming from a liquid fertilizer solution, instead of rich fertile soil, as required by federal law.

In addition to the report, Cornucopia also published a [mobile-friendly, companion buyers guide](#), lifting the veil on the brands that clandestinely market hydroponic production as organic. Hydroponic produce is explicitly prohibited from being labeled as organic in Canada, Mexico, and most other developed countries. The European Union recently voted to close a loophole that was permitting a few northern EU states to label hydroponics as “organic.” Many countries where growers are prohibited from marketing hydroponic produce as organic, such as Holland, are major exporters to the U.S.

“With hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of venture and equity capital being invested in industrial-scale greenhouses the size of football

fields, parking lots filled with thousands of containers with drip irrigation, or ‘vertical farms’ in cities, consumers and wholesale buyers need a way to discern which certified organic fruits and vegetables are truly nutrient-dense and produced according to the law,” said Mark A. Kastel, Executive Director of [The Cornucopia Institute](#), a Wisconsin-based farm policy research group.

Currently there are no federal or state regulations requiring labeling or signage in grocery stores to differentiate conventional or organic hydroponic products from those grown using traditional farming practices, in soil.

There are currently no standards in the USDA organic regulations specifying how hydroponic or aquaponic producers should operate, according to Cornucopia. “Some of the largest third-party organic certification agents, hired by corporate agribusinesses, are literally just making up the rules on their own,” Kastel said. In contrast, many other organic certifiers read the law and interpret it the same way Cornucopia does: Congress included a prerequisite in the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA), passed in 1990, requiring careful soil stewardship, maintaining or improving fertility, be in place before a farm’s produce could qualify for organic status.



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In 2010, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), an expert body of organic industry stakeholders charged by Congress with advising the USDA Secretary on implementing OFPA, clearly stated that soil-less, hydroponic production was in conflict with the foundational concepts underpinning the organic label.

According to documents obtained by Cornucopia through the Freedom of Information Act, the largest organic certifier in the country, California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), publicly disagreed with the NOSB-recommended prohibition and then made a quiet deal with the USDA to start certifying hydroponics. Other certifiers, attracted by big dollars changing hands, have since followed suit.

The largest hydroponic brands in the country, like giant berry producer Driscoll's and Wholesum Harvest, with massive greenhouses of tomatoes in the desert Southwest and Mexico, say nothing about their production practices on their cases or product labels.

The Center for Food Safety has filed a [legal action](#) demanding the USDA prohibit hydroponic operations from organic certification. The action was endorsed by Cornucopia, the Organic Farmers Association, PCC Community Markets, and other stakeholder groups. 🌱

News and Resources

National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard Established by USDA

USDA has announced the [National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard](#) for foods that are or may be bioengineered. The Standard defines bioengineered foods. Regulated entities have several disclosure options: text, symbol, electronic or digital link, and/or text message. Additional options are available to small food manufacturers or for small packages. The implementation date of the Standard is January 1, 2020, or January 1, 2021, for small food manufacturers. The mandatory compliance date is January 1, 2022. Source: NCAT ATTRA

Farm Financing Course Offered Free Online

Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) partnered with Western Technical College to create a series of free online webinars, [Fearless Farm Finances](#), designed to help farmers develop the systems and knowledge they need to understand and manage their farms' finances. The webinar series covers subjects ranging from goal-setting and

recordkeeping systems to developing statements of income and cash flow for bankers and tax purposes.

Grazing Lands Project Funding Available

The Montana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) is accepting applications for mini-grants and demonstration projects for 2019. The mini-grants will provide funding for educational events throughout the year and support partners and organizations with an interest in the conservation, education, and awareness of grazing lands and natural resources in Montana. Mini-grant funding requests are limited to a minimum of \$50 and a maximum of \$1,000. There is no application deadline. Submissions will be considered year-round by the Montana GLCI steering committee.

Demonstration project applications are due February 18, 2019. The current focus is on innovative projects addressing grazing management, soil and rangeland health, concentrated animal feeding operations/ animal feeding operations, and noxious weeds on private Montana grazing lands. Applications will be accepted from groups of individuals, non-governmental organizations, and state or local units of government.

Get more information about both the mini-grant and demonstration project funding opportunities, including application requirements and forms, at www.mtglci.org.

Rats and Mice and Voles, Oh My! - New Tip Sheet on Vertebrate IPM

A new publication by NCAT Agriculture Specialist Martin Guerená, "[Rats, Mice, and Voles: Vertebrate IPM Tip Sheet](#)," tackles management of these common and damaging pests. The free, four-page publication focuses on proper identification of pest species in order to achieve more effective control. The publication discusses several different control strategies that can be used together, including habitat modification, exclusion, baiting, and trapping. The publication also addresses which control methods are acceptable for organic production. Source: NCAT ATTRA

New Video: Improving Soil Through Cover Crops

Like many farmers, Jeff Frey sees the soil as his livelihood, so he does what he can to protect and improve this vital resource beneath his feet. "I remember one afternoon we had a thunderstorm that

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Jess Alger Awarded Timeless Excellence Award by Jim Barngrover and Dave Oien, Timeless Seeds

Timeless Seeds has named MOA Board Member and grower, Jess Alger, the recipient of their Jim Sims Award of Excellence for 2019. Previous recipients were Jody and Crystal Manuel in 2017, and Daryl and Linda Lassila in 2016.

Jess Alger was awarded for his nearly three decades of experimentation with and implementation of leguminous cover crops and the production of certified organic pulse crops on his integrated 100% certified organic crop and livestock operation in Stanford. Jess was one of the early growers of Timeless Seeds' George Black Medic, as well as numerous varieties of peas and lentils, including the Toni winter lentil, a variety developed by Dr. Sims at Montana State University and named after his wife. In 2018 Jess had one of the top producers of Timeless' trademarked Black Beluga Lentils.

According to Jim Barngrover, Timeless' Grower Liaison, "Jess has demonstrated creativity, determination, dedication, and perseverance in incorporating both pulse crops and cover crops into his rotation, and has been a valued Timeless grower for well over 20 years."

Timeless will donate \$1000 in Alger's name to the Organic Advisory and Education Council to help support its important work in supporting research and education specific to Montana's organic farming community.

Following Dr. Jim Sims' death in December of 2016, Timeless established the annual Jim Sims Memorial Award of Excellence to recognize a Timeless grower who puts into practice the cropping systems Sims envisioned and introduced to the Timeless founders and Montana agriculture in the 1970's and 80's. 🌱

washed mud out into the road and I could actually see some of my freshly planted soybeans in with the mud," says Frey, who raises grains on 700 acres in Lancaster County, Penn. "I've been no-tilling for a long time but at that point I knew that what I was doing was not adequate." [In this new video](#), see how Frey's experience prompted him to begin planting cover crops and how, after seeing the benefits, he partnered with a Penn State professor on a SARE-funded project to convince other farmers they should do the same. Source: NCAT ATTRA

Your Newsletter, Your Stories

Do you have a story or topic idea for *Organic Matters*? We are always looking for MOA members' input. Send your story ideas, people you want to hear from, and topics you want to know more about to Susan Waters, *Organic Matters*' editor, at moa@montanaorganicassociation.org. The newsletter committee will review your ideas and consider them for a newsletter article in an upcoming issue.

MOA on Facebook

Join the organic discussions on MOA's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/montanaorganic>.

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, call Susan Waters at (406) 542-9211 or email her at: moa@montanaorganicassociation.org.

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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A View From the Chair

I am honored to address you, MOA members. I thank my fellow Board members for their confidence in me to serve another year as President. The Board enjoyed a productive retreat in Helena in early January. I want to share a few outcomes from the meeting.

The Board elected its officers: myself as Chair; Becky Weed, Vice President; Heather Estrada, Treasurer; and Mona-Rae Tuhy, Secretary. Also serving on the Executive Committee are Gary Iverson, member at large and Sam Schimdt. Additional members of the 2019 Board of Directors are Cliff Merriman, Jess Alger, Judy Owsowitz and John Porterfield. I want to thank former Board members Nate Brown, Jennifer Swanson and Jamie Ryan-Lockman for their service and dedication.

Perhaps the most exciting news from the Board meeting is that MOA is going to have an Executive Director! I am extremely happy to announce that Jamie Ryan-Lockman has accepted our offer to become MOA's first ED. Having served on the Board and as Conference Committee Chair for the past two years, Jamie is uniquely experienced to guide our association in this major step of growth and capacity. I am fully confident that Jamie will represent MOA well and be an excellent spokesperson for all of Montana's organic community. Please join me in congratulating her on the new position.

The 16th annual MOA conference, held this past December, was a resounding success. I am

pleased to report record attendance of nearly 300 and record revenue generated for MOA. Many thanks to Jamie Ryan-Lockman, Chair, all of the Conference Committee members, donors, sponsors and volunteers for making this happen for MOA. Thank you to all who attended and participated in the conference.

We are already looking forward to an even better conference in 2019. The venue will be a beautiful, nearly-new facility in Bozeman, *The Commons*. Mark your calendars for December 4 – 7, 2019 and plan to join us for an unparalleled opportunity to learn, connect, have fun and enjoy awesome Montana-grown organic food.

MOA members volunteer their time and energy to committees to grow organic agriculture in Montana. The best way to maximize the value of

your MOA membership is to roll up your sleeves and participate. PLEASE contact us if YOU would like to join.

I look forward to serving and working with you in 2019. Please contact me, any MOA Board member or our (new) Executive Director, if you have ideas or energy to share. Together we will grow MOA and organic agriculture for the highest good of the people, the environment and the state's economy.

Doug Crabtree
MOA Board Chairman

MOA 2019 Board Members

Doug Crabtree - Chairman
Becky Weed - Vice President
Heather Estrada - Treasurer
Mona-Rae Tuhy - Secretary
Gary Iverson - Member at Large
Sam Schmidt - Parliamentarian
Cliff Merriman
Jess Alger
Judy Owsowitz
John Porterfield

MOA 2019 Committees and Chairs

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