



Organic Matters

Join us for MOA's 10th Anniversary Conference

After ten years of service to the organic community, MOA is proud to be a thriving organization with a strong dedication to its mission and a deep commitment to share knowledge and resources.

As we prepare for our Tenth Anniversary Conference, we're creating an event to celebrate our progress and an interactive forum to share ideas on how to improve organics in the future.

MOA's Conference is a wonderful way to learn about organics and the latest developments in the field. It's an opportunity to network with others who are just beginning, established experts, or somewhere in between. The Conference features delicious organic food, thought-provoking discussions, profitable business networking and fun

entertainment—a perfect gathering to learn, relax, get energized, be inspired and be inspiring.

Please review the pre-conference brochure starting on p. 7 and come join us this year. Deadlines for cost-saving discounts are approaching quickly, so sign up for the Conference and lodging today.

If you're devoted to organics and had a great year, consider the ways

you can help at this year's conference, listed on pages 9-10.

You can also log on to the MOA website at www.montanaorganicassociation.org for the latest Conference information.

Enjoy this issue of the newsletter and we hope to see you at the Conference.



Inside This Issue

- Farm Tour Report 1-2
- 2008 Farm Bill: What Now? .. 3
- Processors' Look at 2012 ... 4
- Understanding GMOs 5
- NOSB Update 6
- MOA Conference 7-11
- Notes From Underground 13
- Calendar of Events..... 15
- Driftwatch 15
- SBA Exporter of the Year 15
- A View from the Chair 16

Montana Organic Association is a 501(c)6 non-profit organization dedicated to advocating and promoting organic agriculture for the highest good of the people, the environment and the State economy.

Organic Matters is published quarterly by the Montana Organic Association. Send queries, suggestions, letters, and requests to: *Organic Matters* Montana Organic Association PO Box 570 Eureka MT 59917 mtorganic@hotmail.com (406) 788-7423

Organic Matters occasionally includes guest articles and opinions. While we review these for relevance to our mission, the opinions in these articles may not reflect the opinions or policy of the Montana Organic Association.

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Farm Tour Report Article and photo by Wes Gibbs, MOA Board Member

"Keeping a consistent supply of organic food for customers is a major challenge for retailers," Dylan Pedersen told participants in MOA's Farm to Market tour. Pedersen is the owner of 2J's Fresh Market in Great Falls.

Pedersen's organic food market was the last stop for the 25 participants in the August tour, which also included visits to two central Montana organic farms and ranches. Overall, tour participants got a first-hand view of their food being produced and marketed at the source.

Pedersen said he is able to purchase a good number of products from Montana producers, such as the package of fresh frozen meat he gave to each tour member from B Bar Beef near Big Timber. Pedersen labels each organic food product and its source country—and its farmer—if he has the producer information.

Before visiting the 2J's Market, the bus carried tour members to the Clay McAlpine Cattle Ranch near Valier

continued on p. 2



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Farm Tour Report *continued from p. 1*

and to Jacob and Courtney Cowgill's Prairie Heritage Farm near Conrad.

Jacob and Courtney first sold most of their produce and turkeys at local Farmer's Markets, but now prefer marketing mostly through CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares. Their growth in CSA shares, from a dozen just three years ago to their current 66 shares, has also increased their workload dramatically. They are assisted by two interns at various times of the year.



From L to R: Courtney and Jacob Cowgill present to tour participants

The Cowgill's say their CSA partners are a great support, often keeping track of the farm's weather forecast and progress on the computer.

"A college course in holistic ranch management changed the way I look at things," said Clay McAlpine to the tour participants. As a result of managing his grasslands and cattle to "mimic buffalo range," Clay has seen improvements in his riparian areas. He also sees beneficial insects and plants moving in, while less desirable pests are diminishing. He is an ardent recorder of range conditions.

Clay is a strong advocate of finishing cattle on grass and uses lush pastures to finish his cattle to 850-1250 lbs. at around 30 months of age. He feels his years of selection have resulted in a herd that is resistant to parasites without chemicals.

Rhad Keel, MOA Board member, thanks the Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program Mini-Grant Program for providing matching funds to help offset some of the cost of the tour. The program provides matching funds for activities involving education, promotion, marketing, travel or other business related expenses that will stimulate expanded agricultural development, economic activity and employment growth.

MOA would also like to thank Tiffany Melby, Value Added Agriculture Coordinator for Bear Paw Development Corporation, for helping MOA apply for and receive funds from the GTA program.

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The 2008 Farm Bill Expired - What Does This Mean and What Do We Do Now?

by Marni Karlin, OTA's Associate Director of Legislative and Legal Affairs

Reprinted with permission from the Organic Trade Association

As you know, we woke up this morning (October 1, 2012) to a world without a Farm Bill - the 2008 Farm Bill expired at midnight. Congress failed to pass a short-term extension of the 2008 Farm Bill, or fully reauthorize the Farm Bill, in time. This puts our nation's food and agriculture policy in limbo. Although the Continuing Resolution which keeps the government funded through the end of March 2013 did include an extension for food stamps and a number of related nutrition programs, nothing else covered by the Farm Bill was extended.

Crop insurance is also not affected by the Farm Bill's expiration, because the authority for federal crop insurance is in the Federal Crop Insurance Act, not the Farm Bill. Although we were working to include improvements to crop insurance for organic farmers in the Farm Bill - namely removing the surcharge and completing the price election - nothing about the current crop insurance program is affected by the expiration (and of course, whenever Congress does turn to a Farm Bill, we will continue our efforts to make crop insurance more fair for organic farmers).

In addition, some conservation programs, including Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), had their legal authorities extended through 2014 by the 2012 Agricultural Appropriations Act.

But what happens to all of the other programs included in the Farm Bill? If a new Farm Bill is not enacted (or the current Farm Bill is not extended), the Farm Bill commodity programs would revert to permanent law found in the 1938 and 1949 Farm Bills. This generally is an incentive that pushes Congress to get its work done on time - but they are pushing the limit this year. Dairy policy would be the first to revert to permanent law - and that would happen on January 1, 2013, if Congress does not pass an extension or new Farm Bill by then. Grain and other commodities would do so once the 2013 crop year begins. Most people believe that Congress will do something - pass a full Farm Bill or pass a short-term extension of the 2008 Farm Bill - before the end of the year to prevent this from happening.

Moreover, there are a number of programs that have zero funding starting today. This includes the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program, Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative, and Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives, as well as export development programs like MAP and

TASC. All grants, loans, and research projects funded by these programs are on hold until the Farm Bill is extended or reauthorized. This is bad for organic farmers who need access to cost share to be able to be certified, and for research throughout the organic industry. Each of these programs was included for renewed mandatory funding in either the Senate-passed or House Committee-passed bill - so there is political support for each program - but expiration of the Farm Bill calls them all into question, at least in the short term.

So, what happens next? No one really knows, but there are a couple of possible paths forward. One is, the House returns after the elections and brings its Farm Bill to the floor, passes it with amendments, and sends it to conference with the Senate-passed Farm Bill. A final bill is approved by both houses and sent to the President for his signature before the end of the year. Most think the odds of this happening are slim. Congress will be in session for at most five weeks between the election and the end of the year, and Republican House leadership has shown no inclination to bring the bill to the floor. It is hard to see why that would change.

Another possible path is for Congress to return after the elections and pass a short-term extension of the 2008 Farm Bill until a date sometime in 2013. Then, the new Congress that is seated in January 2013 would be tasked with starting the Farm Bill process anew - with both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees writing new bills that would wind their way through committee and floor processes. These new bills would operate under a new budget baseline, which would mean a new calculation of costs and savings associated with the bills. The process would have to start all over again, and new bills must be introduced, marked up in Committee, and voted on in both the Senate and the House.

It continues to be incredibly important for you to hold your Senators and Representatives accountable for failing to pass a Farm Bill. Contact them and let them know you expect them to return from the elections and pass a Farm Bill that includes important organic priorities, including those that ended with the expiration of the Farm Bill last night. Feel free to reach out to me at (202) 403-8511 or mkarlin@ota.com if you have any questions or want help in reaching out to your Members of Congress.

Processors' Look at 2012

David Oien, Timeless Seeds, Inc.

For 2012, the quality of specialty crops (peas, lentils, flax, heirloom cereal grains) was definitely higher than I've seen for a number of years. Yields were not spectacular, but surprisingly strong given the fact that Montana's average growing season precipitation (April-Aug) was less than 7.5" (39% below both 2011 & 2010, and 18% below the 110 year average).

Canadian organic production—which reportedly is average or above—tends to set the open market price for specialty crops, but several factors argue for strong farm gate prices for the coming year regardless of our neighbors to the north:

- a) although annual global demand for organic products has declined from the 20% annual increases experienced over the past couple decades, and in spite of the economic downturn in developed nations, organic demand continues to grow nearly 10% / annum.
- b) there are an increasing number of new innovative products on the shelf (lentil chips; baked goods with pea flour; and teff, hemp, and other specialty seeds used as ingredients) which take advantage of the high protein or other nutritional characteristics of these crops.

- c) the increasing demand for gluten-free ingredients.
- d) the shortage of livestock feed due to the severe drought in the Midwest, which will help maintain relatively high floor price for off-quality specialty grains as well as the screenings that result from processing them.

All these demand factors bode well for farmers wishing to diversify their rotations and their market channels.

Andre' Giles, Montana Flour & Grain

In general, the 2012 crop had average yield and good protein for spring-planted wheat. The test weight was a little below average with a few cases of 53 lb. wheat reported. Surprisingly, some winter wheat had low protein and light test weight. Markets for wheat have been strong in demand and price all fall.

Samuel Schmidt, Montana Milling, Inc

Midwest drought conditions set the stage for shorter feed grain supplies, and for the first time in a while, grains like low protein wheat quickly found a home (mostly out of state). My guess is the feed markets will slow down a bit as demand gets filled and new crop corn arrives, but add what has already moved to what looks to be like a steady food market, and carry over stocks are probably going to get pretty low for organics.



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Understanding GMOs and their Effects by Susan Waters, MOA Member

The GMO issue in the United States has reached a fever pitch and a possible tipping point. But what is all the controversy about and how did we arrive at where we are today? Why is there such conflicting information about GMOs? If we grow organic crops, why do GMOs matter?

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are plants or animals created through the process of genetic engineering (GE). This experimental technology forces DNA from one species into a different species. The resulting GMOs are unstable combinations of plant, animal, bacterial and viral genes that cannot occur in nature or in traditional breeding. This engineering process is outside of the natural evolutionary process.

The GE process itself creates mutations throughout the DNA, which can produce new allergens, toxins and carcinogens. Inserted genes and their proteins can trigger inflammation, which is known to produce digestive disorders, allergies, autoimmune disease, diabetes, cancer, Alzheimer's, kidney disease, thyroid disease and heart attacks. These inflammation-based diseases have skyrocketed since GMO corn and soy were massively introduced in the US in the mid-'90s.

The American Academy of Environmental Medicine's animal studies have concluded that GMOs cause infertility, immune disorders, accelerated aging and complications with cholesterol, insulin and changes in the liver, kidney, spleen and gastrointestinal system and many other maladies.

There are currently two types of GMO crops: herbicide resistant and insecticide releasing.

Most **herbicide resistant GMOs** are genetically altered to be resistant to the spraying of Roundup (Glyphosate) herbicide, which steals nutrients from the plants and soil, leading to nutrient-deficient plants, animals and humans. Roundup can also cause birth defects and other reproductive disorders. Lab animals which ate Roundup Ready® crops developed massive tumors and lost a large amount of offspring. Roundup has also been scientifically linked to infertility, which may be due to disrupted hormones or nutrient deficiency.

Insecticide releasing GMOs are crops that produce an insecticide, such as Monsanto's widely used Bt corn, one of the largest U.S.-produced crops. Genetically engineered Bt corn produces Bt-toxin (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), which breaks open the stomach of certain insects and kills them. Many independent, worldwide studies show that GMOs poke holes in cells, especially in the digestive system, creating intestinal permeability, which experts say leads to

allergies, autism and pre-aging, as well as other disorders such as autoimmune diseases, asthma, cancer, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Scientists warned of the dangers of GMOs but the profit-earning potential of these products outweighed the danger to humans, animals and the environment. Monsanto sells Roundup and most GE seeds and owns the majority of the bioengineering market. The published goal of Monsanto is to replace ALL natural seeds. Scientists against GMOs have

been routinely discredited, fired, threatened and their work destroyed. Independent evidence-based science points to a complete failure of GMO claims and all report serious health ramifications.

According to their own website, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) "is responsible for protecting the public health by assuring the

safety (of) our nation's food supply." But the FDA is largely staffed by former biotech employees and contractors (such as Michael Taylor, Monsanto's attorney before becoming policy chief at the FDA). This is a very obvious conflict of interest where the motivation is profit over safety and health. And in 1992, after reviewing *the biotech industry's own studies*, the FDA determined that GMO foods were no different and didn't need to be studied.

Since 1992, the human population has served as the biotech industry's lab rats without their knowledge. Children are especially vulnerable because of their faster metabolisms and the rapid growth of their cells. They need more nutrition, have sensitivity to small amounts of toxins, and their immune systems are still in development.

In 1998, a massive lawsuit forced 44,000 secret internal memos into the public domain, and they showed overwhelming consensus from the scientists that GMOs were different and dangerous and definitely needed further study and that the FDA had been repeatedly warned. Initial studies showed allergies, toxins, new diseases, and nutritional deficiencies.

Currently, the FDA is still stacked with former biotech employees, doesn't require any studies and doesn't monitor any health issues linked to GMOs.

GMOs are dangerous to humans by ingestion from directly eating the herbicide resistant and insecticide releasing crops (such as vegetables or processed food, unless they're certified organic), or by eating the meat from animals which are fed herbicide resistant and insecticide releasing crops. The large majority of conventional livestock in the U.S. is fed GMO feed.

One of the most worrisome aspects of widespread GMO farming for organic operations is "drift," or contamination of organic fields by GMO seeds and chemical spraying.

continued on p. 6

NOSB Update

Visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org/nosb.htm

At the time of publication, Barry Flamm was attending the meeting of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) in Providence, Rhode Island.

Since this was Barry's last meeting as Chairman of the NOSB, he'll be providing a summary of the meeting and a wrap up as Chairman in the next issue of *Organic Matters*.

For the latest information on NOSB, visit MOA's website at the address above.



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Mountain Front Market

GMOs continued from p. 5

According to the Grocery Manufacturing Association, an estimated 75-80% of processed food in the U.S. contains genetically engineered foods. And the Environmental Working Group reports that Americans eat more than their body weight in GMOs every year.

Genetically engineered salmon and many other food products will be introduced to the market shortly, without any ability to distinguish these products from their natural counterparts.

A poll by Thompson Reuters shows that 93% of Americans believe GE foods should be labeled. That's the idea behind the proposed California Right to Know ballot initiative, or Proposition 37. The California Right to Know proposal is simple: require labeling of genetically engineered foods and food ingredients and prohibit genetically modified foods from being advertised as "natural."

But the chemical and mega-food industries (as of October 20, 2012) have spent \$37 million to cloud the labeling issue with misinformation such as the subsequent hike in the cost of food, questionable "benefits" of GMOs and the stigmatizing of technological advancement, as well as the tactic of unnecessarily scaring consumers.

Outside of the U.S., scientific studies results showing the downside of GMOs have triggered calls for a ban on imports and a total overhaul of the safety regime for genetically modified crops and food. GMO crops are now banned or severely restricted in nearly 50 countries but continue to be widely produced and distributed, unlabeled, in the U.S. and Canada and many unsuspecting countries.

Despite biotech industry promises, none of the GMO traits currently on the market offer increased yield, drought tolerance, enhanced nutrition, or any other consumer benefit.

Meanwhile, a growing body of evidence connects GMOs with health problems, environmental damage and violation of farmers' and consumers' rights.

Distinguished MOA Lifetime Member, Barry Flamm's first act as the USDA National Organic Program's National Organics Standards Board Chairman was to form a GMO ad hoc committee from members of its diverse committees. As their first item of business, the 15 members of this committee came to a consensus and sent USDA's Agricultural Secretary Tom Vilsack a strong letter of "extreme concern about the impact that continued deregulation of new genetically engineered crops has had on our community of organic farmers, handlers and consumers." This letter, which asked for an open dialog, was never answered by Vilsack, which was a surprise and disappointment to Flamm. (Former Iowa Governor Vilsack was recipient of the Governor of the Year Award by the Biotechnology Industry Organization and he now holds one of several

continued on p. 14



10TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND MEMBER MEETING

Reviewing the Decade and Planning for the Millennium

NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 1, 2012

Holiday Inn, Helena, MT

Be Inspired, Be Inspiring

www.montanaorganicassociation.org

Montana Organic Association's 2012 Pre-Conference Brochure

Introduction by Lou Ann Crowley, MOA 2012 Conference Chair

There's a lot to celebrate on this tenth anniversary and we have designed a Conference to remember!

We start with a pre-conference event on Thursday night, November 29, which includes a social hour and the screening of the documentary, *In Organic We Trust*, "which explores the content beneath the label and the truth behind the marketing."

On Friday, we call on some of our long time members to take a look back at where we've come from and what we've accomplished. Then we'll take an educated guess at what the future may hold with MOA members and guest speakers: Jeff Moyer, Farm Manager at the Rodale Institute; Gary Zimmer, world renown consultant on farming practices; and Atina Diffley, organic educator and speaker. One of our strongest advocates, Ron De Yong, Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture, will be our speaker at lunch. The afternoon focuses on the nuts and

bolts of what it takes to stay competitive in today's markets. We cap off the day with great fun and organic food, keynote speaker, Jeff Moyer and our world famous auctions.

Saturday starts bright and early with a panel that gives us the inside scoop on being an Inspector. From there we hear about the Organic Trade Association's push to create a Check-off Program for Organics. Saturday's lunch includes our Member Meeting where we get to hear how the organization is doing and elect members to the Board who will steer the organization over the next year. We finish off the afternoon with a session on Bees and Other Pollinators, Marketing Organic Products and Soil Balancing from Gardens to Grain Fields, then wrap things up for another year.

There's something for everyone, so sign up today and come to the Conference.

Be inspired, be inspiring.

Conference Agenda

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2012

7:00 pm: Social Hour and screening of the documentary, *In Organic We Trust*

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2012

8:00 am - 9:00 am: Complimentary Breakfast and Registration

9:00 am - 9:15 am: Conference Opening

9:15 am - 10:15 am: Retrospective on Montana Organic Association's Ten Year History
Roundtable discussion with MOA members

10:15 am - 10:30 am: Break

10:30 am - 12:00 pm: Planning for the Millennium
Panel discussion on challenges and opportunities for organic growers with Gary Zimmer, Jeff Moyer, Atina Duffley and MOA members

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm: Lunch
Guest speaker, Ron de Yong, Director, Montana Department of Agriculture

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm: Session 1: Retailers' Panel
Discussion on buying and selling organic products

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm: Session 2: Montana State University Panel
Update on MSU programs and topics

2:00 pm - 2:15 pm: Break

2:15 pm - 3:00 pm: Updates from the Field
MDA's DriftWatch™ Program
Organic Advisory and Education Council
Barry Flamm, retiring NOSB Chair
Montana Organic Advisory Council
Liz Carlisle, Coordinator - Center for Diversified Farming Systems, UC Berkeley
Montana Seed School

3:00 pm - 5:00 pm: Session 1: Livestock Pasture and Soil Restoration

Gary Zimmer, author of *The Biological Farmer*

3:00 pm - 5:00 pm: Session 2: Organic Seed Alliance
Fighting to Protect the Integrity of Organic Seed

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm: Social Hour

6:00 pm - 9:00 pm: Montana Organic Dinner
Keynote Speaker, Jeff Moyer, Rodale Institute
Awards Ceremony, Live Auction and music

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2012

7:30 am - 8:30 am: Complimentary Breakfast

8:30 am - 9:45 am: Inspectors' Panel
Learn how your Inspector approaches certification

9:45 am - 10:00 am: Break

10:00 am - 11:45 am: Organic Trade Association
Developing a Research and Promotion Check-off Program for organics

11:45 am - 1:15 pm: Lunch and Member Meeting with Board of Directors Elections
Close of Silent Auction and Winter Table Raffle

1:15 pm - 2:15 pm: Bees and Other Pollinators
Anna Crabtree-Jones of Vilicus Farms and Peter Husby, NRCS

2:15 pm - 3:15 pm: Marketing Organic
Atina Duffley

3:15 pm - 4:30 pm: Soil Balancing from Gardens to Grain Fields with Gary Zimmer

4:30 pm: Conference Wrap Up

.....

Hotel and Lodging

MOA has reserved a block of rooms at the Holiday Inn, 22 North Last Chance Gulch, Helen, Montana, 59601. Phone 1-888-465-4329 (or 406-443-2200) for reservations. Please book your room early to ensure your MOA room discount and be sure to mention that you're with MOA.

Registration

Please use the registration form on p. 11. **Be sure to send in your registration by November 23.**

Conference agenda and details subject to change

Sampling of Speaker Bios

Atina Diffley is an organic consultant with Organic Farming Works LLC, an educator, public speaker, and author of the 2012 memoir, *Turn Here Sweet Corn: Organic Farming Works*. From 1985 to 2008, she and her husband Martin ran the Gardens of Eagan, one of the first certified organic produce farms in the Midwest.

Jeff Moyer is the Farm Director at the Rodale Institute and an expert in organic crop production systems including weed management, cover crops, crop rotations, equipment modification and use and facilities design. He is a past chair of the National Organic Standards Board. Jeff authored the book, *Organic No-Till Farming*.

Gary Zimmer is a farmer, agri-businessman, author and educator. He evaluates farming practices as a consultant, on his family's farm and as president of Midwestern BioAg. The Zimmer family's Otter Creek Organic Farms (1,000 acres including an organic dairy) utilize the ideas Gary has gleaned over a lifetime spent studying agriculture.

Other Conference Activities

Live and Silent Auctions: helps raise funds for MOA projects and provides a delightful variety of goods and services for our attendees to choose from.

Winter Table Raffle: win food supplies for a month, dinner for four or for a special celebration.

Business Opportunities Available

Put your business or organization up front and center at the Conference. **For vendor, sponsor or advertising opportunities at this event**, please contact Daryl Lassila at (406) 788-7423.

Conference Scholarships Available

If financial limitations may keep you from attending the conference, a limited number of scholarships are available. Please contact Wes Henthorne at (406) 932-4197 or email wes@bbarbt.com to explore scholarship or work/trade opportunities.

Seeking Awards Nominations

The MOA Awards Committee is seeking your nominations for two awards to be presented at the Annual Conference in Billings.

The "Lifetime of Service" award will go to an organic producer, handler, retailer, researcher, service provider (or other) who has demonstrated a long-term commitment to organic agriculture in Montana. Previous recipients are: Robert Boettcher (2005), Barry Flamm (2006), Bob Quinn (2007), David Oien (2008), Jim Barngrover (2009), Laughing Water (2010) and Steve and Cindy Baril (2011).

A "Leadership in Organics" award will go 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. Previous recipients are: Margaret Scoles (2005), Jon Tester (2006), Jonda Crosby (2007), Mikel & Nancy Lund (2008) Jon & Amy Kvaalen (2009), Andre' Giles (2010) and Nancy Matheson (2011).

Written nominations may be submitted by MOA members no later than November 15, 2012, by email or regular mail to:

Judy Owsowitz
6505 Farm to Market Rd, Whitefish MT 59937
(406) 862-6362
terrapin@aboutmontana.net

Please provide the following information with your nominations:

- Nominee's Name, Address, Phone and Email
- Describe the nominee's connection to organic agriculture (50 words or less)
- Why the nominee should receive the award

Current and immediate past members of the MOA Board of Directors and members of the Awards Committee cannot be considered for these awards. It is preferred, but not required, that nominees be members of MOA. Please include your contact information as well.

Volunteers Wanted

A variety of work is available for you if you'd like to share your time. Meet some amazing people and hear the latest about organics. Contact Lou Ann Crowley at (406) 721-4331 to find out about the opportunities available.

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Notice of Director Elections

Three vacant positions on MOA's Board of Directors will be filled at the annual business meeting at 12:45 PM on December 1, 2012, at the Holiday Inn in Helena, Montana.

The terms that Directors serve are three years in length and Directors can be reelected. The Board of Directors usually meets in person two times each year and as needed by conference calls. Other volunteer committee work will also be expected.

Directors will be reimbursed for travel and communications expenses if they choose. Since MOA is not in a position to provide monetary compensation for Board work, Directors will receive board experience advising a growing, statewide organic organization.

If you are motivated to work toward strengthening and promoting organics in Montana and are interested in serving on the Board of Directors, please contact Judy Owsowitz at (406) 862-6362.

Nominations will also be accepted from the floor prior to the election.

Call for Donations

The MOA Conference Committee has done its best to keep conference costs down to make the 2012 Conference available for all. To do this, we also need to ask for your help. If you've had a good year and are in a position to share the wealth, please consider these ways to help:

FOOD – We're looking for quality organic food for meal ingredients and snacks. If you'd like to donate food items, contact Daryl Lassila at (406) 788-7423.

AUCTION ITEMS – We'll be conducting auctions as fundraisers to offset costs. We're also looking for some novel and unique door prizes. If you have an item to offer, contact Linda Lassila at (406) 452-0565. We'll have a vote and a prize for the most interesting auction item or door prize at the event.

SCHOLARSHIPS – Many people have inquired about scholarships so that they can attend the Conference. If you'd like to help someone with a desire to attend, contact Wes Henthorne at (406) 932-4197 or email wes@bbarbt.com.

Thanks in advance for your generosity.

Montana Organic Association 10th Anniversary Conference

Reviewing the Decade and Planning for the Millennium

November 29 - December 1, 2012

Historic Holiday Inn, 22 N. Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT

Participant Registration Form

(please register early so we know how many meals we need to order)

Name(s) _____

Farm or Organization _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Fax _____ Email _____

Conference Registration

Early registration for conference and meals for Members..... X \$110. \$ _____

Early registration for conference and meals for Non-Members X \$125. \$ _____

Early registration for Saturday only X \$60... \$ _____

Early registration for conference @ Student Rate/per day X \$35... \$ _____

Late Registration after November 23, (add \$10 per person) X \$10... \$ _____

(Meals cannot be guaranteed for very late registrants)

Food Preferences: Omnivore _____ Vegetarian _____ Vegan _____	I'd like to donate an item(s) to the raffle/auction Item description: _____ _____
For questions regarding donations contact: Linda Lassila at 406-452-0565	

MOA Membership

Individual..... \$30..... \$ _____

Household..... \$50..... \$ _____

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If financial limitations may keep you from attending, a limited number of scholarships are available based on merit and need. Please contact us to explore scholarship opportunities.

Scholarship Fund

Please consider a donation to the Scholarship Fund to assist those in need \$ _____

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Please note: Refunds are not available for cancellations made after November 23, 2012

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Notes from Underground

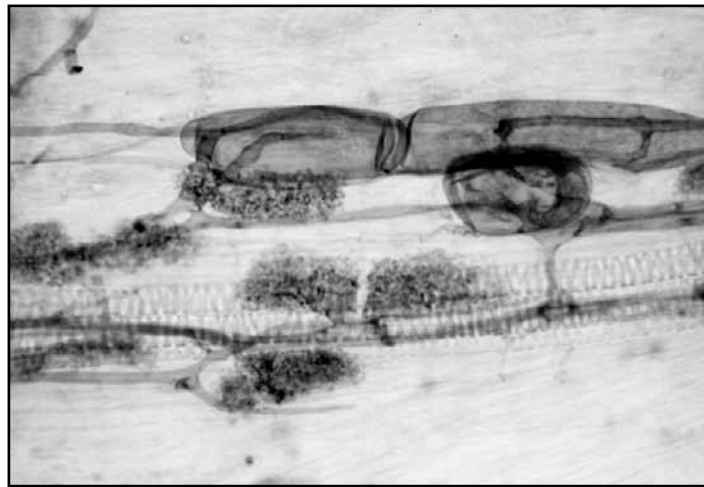
by Cathy Zabinski, Associate Professor, MSU

Nutrient management is one of the most important aspects of farming, and organic and sustainable farming practices underscore the importance of managing soil organic matter through crop rotations and organic amendments. Practices that enhance soil organic matter inputs and decomposition are part of providing good habitats for soil organisms. Some of the soil organisms are especially important for plant nutrition, such as nitrogen fixing bacteria and mycorrhizal fungi.

Mycorrhizae are partnerships between fungi and plants, often beneficial for both the fungus and the host plant. This partnership has evolved multiple times throughout evolutionary history, and the two most common types are ectomycorrhizae and arbuscular mycorrhizae. Ectomycorrhizae involve the mushroom-forming fungi from the Basidiomycete group and woody host plants. Ectomycorrhizae are common in forests and while not all mushrooms are mycorrhizal, those that are benefit by accessing carbon from both decomposing organic matter and from their host plant. In turn, they form a sheath of hyphae (fungal filaments), which encase the fine tree roots and deliver nutrients to the host plant by extending into the soil and forming a network inside the host plant roots.

Arbuscular mycorrhizae (AM) are partnerships between a group of fungi that don't form mushrooms, but instead just single spores or a small cluster of spores at the end of a hypha in the soil. The host plants for arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi are almost all of the grasses and flowering plants, along with a few woody plants like willows and maples and oaks. Some families of plants almost never form mycorrhizae, such as plants from the mustard family, including cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, radish, canola and others. And some families have unique mycorrhizae, like orchids and Ericaceae plants, which includes heather and blueberries.

As with ectomycorrhizal fungi, AM fungi grow both inside the root and throughout the soil matrix. The biggest advantage for the host plant to forming mycorrhizae is enhanced phosphorus uptake. Phosphorus does not move in the soil solution like nitrates do, so instead of just taking up water to access more nitrogen, plants have to extend their root systems to forage for phosphorus, which is often stuck to the side of soil particles. Mycorrhizal hyphae are about the width of a strand of hair and can access parts of the soil that even fine roots can't access. In soils with low phosphorus levels, mycorrhizae can increase the uptake of phosphorus, which can result in a larger



Mycorrhizae photo by Rebecca Bunn, MSU

or healthier plant. In soils where phosphorus is plentiful, mycorrhizal plants may be smaller, as the plant is able to easily access phosphorus without the help of the fungal partner, and the carbon that goes to the fungus is a poor investment. In conventional agriculture with an emphasis on fertilizer inputs to meet crop nutrient needs, mycorrhizae are usually ignored.

Besides affecting plant nutrition, mycorrhizal fungi are an important contributor to overall soil health. The hyphae increase aggregation of soil particles, especially for the creation of small aggregates. And the hyphae and spores are a food source for other soil organisms.

So how do you encourage mycorrhizal fungi in agricultural soils? The same way that you encourage most things pertaining to soil biota; by managing your crop rotations and soil organic matter. Because mycorrhizal fungi colonize plant roots either from germinating hyphal spores or from hyphae that are present in the soil, tillage that disrupts hyphal networks will reduce mycorrhizal colonization. So will leaving a field fallow or growing crops from the mustard family. Commercial sources of mycorrhizal fungi are available, but the diversity of species present in commercial sources is usually lower than what you will find in your own fields. The best way to encourage mycorrhizal colonization is to grow plants in your fields that form mycorrhizae. And while mycorrhizae are an important part of the soil biota, they are not a silver bullet.

GMOs continued from p. 6

high-level USDA positions which are occupied by people with biotech industry ties.) “The GMO issue is not going to go away by ignoring the Board that has legal responsibilities to advise the Secretary on matters effecting organic food production,” says Flamm.

One of the most worrisome aspects of widespread GMO farming for organic operations is “drift,” or contamination of organic fields by GMO seeds and chemical spraying. Contaminated fields can also be a target for biotech industry lawsuits claiming “patent infringement.” Another challenge to organic farmers is the availability and assurance of GMO-free seeds.

Consumers assume all organic is GMO-free, but until residue testing is widespread, no one knows how much GMO drift and contamination has taken place. According to Flamm, “Certified organic is the current gold standard and with it there is assurance that farmers don’t use pesticides and herbicides, but until specific residue testing is used, we don’t know for sure.”

There are signs of hope about the outcome of the GMO fight. Educating the public about the truth of GMOs and other dangerous additives has been the first step toward empowering consumers. Getting GMOs labeled is within reach through California’s Proposition 37, with several other states following suit. We are also reaching a tipping point of consumer rejection, such as with recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH), where companies have voluntarily pledged not to use it due to consumer rejection and lost sales.

There is also hope about recovering our health. Many ranchers and human health specialists have been able to improve animal and human health by removing all GMOs from their diets. Human and animal health problems have been improved in some studies, taking several days to up to two years after all GMOs have been removed.

Ultimately, we vote at the polls and with our dollars by the purchases we make. As soon as we, as consumers, are aware of the dangers of GMOs and which products contain them, we can create a consumer tipping point to reject them.

Primary sources for this article and helpful links:
Institute for Responsible Technology’s Genetic Roulette
<http://geneticroulettetmovie.com/>

Institute for Responsible Technology
<http://www.responsibletechnology.org>

GMO Talking Points: Non-GMO Project Toolkit
<http://www.nongmoproject.org/take-action/communicationstoolkit/>

MOA’s No-GMO webpage at:
<http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org/gmo.htm>

GMO MYTHS

GMOs are needed to feed the world.

GMOs increase crop yield.

GMO crops reduce the use of herbicides and insecticides and have less weeds.

GMO crops increase farmer profit.

GMOs increase US exports.

GMOs are safer to eat, more nutritious and have no health consequences.

GMOs are just an extension of natural breeding, and have no risks different from naturally bred crops.

GMOs benefit the environment.

GMO FACTS

We already have 1-1/2 times the amount of food to feed the world. Distribution is the issue.

No difference – in fact, GMOs reduce average yields by 79% and organic crops are more resistant to drought. GMOs kill beneficial bacteria in soil and strip soil of nutrients.

More total chemicals have to be used and severe superweeds result; some so big they ruin equipment and have to be axed down.

All factors taken into consideration, it’s an economic wash.

Have lost exports, especially corn, since nearly 50 countries have severely restricted or banned GMOs.

Inflammatory diseases and reproductive disorders have skyrocketed since GMOs have been introduced and the chemicals used have been detected in most city dwellers, pregnant women and newborn babies.

Can be toxic, allergenic or less nutritious than their natural counterparts

GMOs can disrupt the ecosystem, damage vulnerable wild plant and animal populations and harm biodiversity. GMOs are laboratory-made and, once released, harmful GMOs can contaminate organic crops and cannot be recalled from the environment.

Calendar of Events

www.montanaorganicassociation.org/events.htm

MOA's Tenth Anniversary Conference

November 29 - December 1, 2012

Holiday Inn in Helena

See pre-conference brochure on pages 7-11.

Visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org for updates.

Understanding Organic Agriculture

2012 Webinar Series by USDA NRCS,

Dec 11, 2012, 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. EST ~ 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. PST

Community Supported Agriculture - Presented by Sarah Brown, Organic Conservation Specialist, Oregon Tilth & NRCS West NTSC

For more info, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/crops/organic>

SBA Exporter of the Year

Andre' Giles of Montana Flour & Grains in Fort Benton was recently named Montana's Small Business Exporter of the Year by the SBA. Many in the MOA community are familiar with Andre's in-depth understanding of the grain markets.

The Exporter of the Year Award by the Small Business Administration recognizes a company which has increased exports, sales and profits and provides key employment to a small Montana community.

Montana Flour & Grains not only employs people from Fort Benton but also provides a diversified grain market to organic farmers throughout Montana.

MF&G has an exclusive agreement to be the U.S. supplier of KAMUT® brand khorasan wheat to the US, the Far East and to a growing European market.

DriftWatch™

DriftWatch™ is a tool to help protect pesticide-sensitive crops and habitats from the drift that sometimes occurs during spray operations. Visit www.driftwatch.org.

Organic Matters Ad Rates

See www.montanaorganicassociation.org/omadrates.htm for details or call Wes Gibbs at (406) 622-3401.

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, 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.

The business level categories offer discounts on advertising in our print publications and an online directory listing on the MOA website. The Lifetime Membership gives you permanent access, listings, discounts and the satisfaction that you're supporting the farmers, ranchers, processors, distributors, retailers, students and researchers who make organic food available and accessible.

Join today and support organics!

Please sign me up as a MOA Member!

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- Individual.....\$30
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- Organic Business.....\$250 (includes a 10% discount on newsletter ads and an online directory listing)
- Lifetime.....\$750

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A View from the Chair

What a long dry summer. I am so very thankful for the rain that started in October.

I want to take this opportunity to remind everyone about the fast approaching Tenth Anniversary MOA Conference. This year, we are bringing quality speakers from several professional organizations and the ever popular MOSES Conference in Wisconsin, but you only have to drive as far as Helena. I would also like to remind all about the upcoming election for MOA board members. MOA's success depends on its many volunteer board directors and members. In my opinion, more people need to step up and help guide MOA forward. Enough said.

The political election debates are going strong, soon to be finally over. From local to state to national elections, the vote results have the potential to change views about organic and the way one produces organics. One big unknown came from not passing the Farm Bill. All I see are the farmers or farm groups talking about it. I am far, far from an expert on this topic, but the lack of a Farm Bill

affects way more than just farmers. The lack of a Farm Bill will impact your banker, fuel supplier and machinery dealer and eventually the consumer. What will happen to those thousands of people who will need to buy food for themselves or for their kids using the food stamp program? How much will this affect the school lunch program? Maybe we should change the name to the "Food Bill."

GMOs are on the ballot, GMOs are in the movies, GMOs are finally getting a lot of attention. Even "organic" has been compared to being healthy or not, more expensive or not, or tasty or not. I don't need a laboratory test to tell me if a food is good tasting. There are tests showing the bad and good about GMO. Everyone has their opinion and everyone should have their freedom of choice.

Hope to see you at the conference in Helena.

Be safe.

Daryl Lassila, MOA Board Chairman