

Organic MATTERS



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MOA 2016 Conference: The Heartbeat of Organics by Heather Estrada, MOA Conference Committee Chair

You are cordially invited to the 14th Annual Montana Organic Association Conference and Member Meeting, December 1-3, 2016, in Kalispell, Montana.

The conference will be held on the Flathead Valley Community College campus, and will feature presentations from a variety of experts in organic agriculture, including farmers, researchers, policy analysts, and business specialists.

Our keynote speaker, Dr. John Reganold, WSU Regents Professor of Soil Science, is sure to stimulate discussion around sustainability, organic farming, and soil health, and conference attendees will learn about important policy issues from the Organic Trade Association, NOSB, Organic Advisory and Education Council, Montana Department of Agriculture, and MOA's Board.

We will also hear from experts in grain and weed research, seed production, livestock health, and climate change. We are especially excited to be bringing back our Nuggets of Knowledge session this year, with an expanded format that will allow for beginning and seasoned producers to exchange information and farming experiences.

We will be facilitating Organic University for people interested in learning what it takes to become a certified organic producer. We will

also conduct a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Food Safety Training session, complete with a real-life GAP audit of the FVCC Campus Farm.

Our tour choices this year also include a trip to Brown's Meadow Farm and Pete Wade's Montana Better Beef Ranch, accompanied by Joe Snyder, DVM, who will offer his input and perspectives on animal health and livestock care. Another tour option is a visit to MOA Board Member Judy Owsowitz's Terrapin Farm and then on to Whitefish Stage Organic Farm, Flathead Valley's newest organic vegetable operation.

For entertainment this year, we are offering *Turn Here Sweet Corn*, a one-woman play chronicling the life and times of Atina Diffley. The performance will follow our welcome reception, co-hosted this year by the National Young Farmers Coalition. We will also feature silent and live auctions, fantastic organic meals, informative vendors, a live marimba band, and countless networking opportunities, which all adds up to a lot of fun!

The conference is a great opportunity to share experiences and meet others within our organic community. Please check out the conference preview, starting on page 7, and use the enclosed registration form today or register online at www.MontanaOrganicAssociation.org/commerce.htm.

See you at the Conference!

Register Today!

MOA's 14th Annual
Conference

December 1-3, 2016

Flathead Valley
Community College

Kalispell, MT

Conference Preview
Begins on
Page 7



Point / Counterpoint: Organic Check-off Program

Organic Check-off: Point

by Nate Lewis, Organic Trade Association

An Organic Check-off program would generate money for organic to successfully implement, develop, and manage programs needed to grow market share. Well-funded, properly planned, and carefully monitored programs would help educate consumers about organic, distinguish organic from lesser claims, confirm the science behind the environmental and public health benefits of organic, undertake research to solve problems such as invasive pests and weed control, and bring new farmers into organic production through information and technical assistance. Over 1,200 certified organic operations have publically endorsed the check-off, and of these public supporters, 75% are farmers and ranchers.

Funding

The proposal calls for organic certificate holders with yearly organic sales in excess of \$250,000 to be subject

(This) program would generate money for organic to successfully implement, develop, and manage programs needed to grow market share. ~Organic Trade Association

to a mandatory organic check-off assessment, and organic certificate holders with organic sales less than \$250,000 to have the choice of whether to voluntarily be assessed. The check-off fee would apply to the entire supply chain. Organic handlers would pay one-tenth of one percent of Net Organic Sales. The assessment

would be based on total gross sales minus the cost of certified organic goods. Organic producers would also have the option of paying one-tenth of one percent of Producer

Net Profit—income received from organic products less the associated production expenses (such as labor, feed, and fuel) excluding fixed non-cash costs. For example, there would be a \$100 assessment at \$100,000 Net Organic Sales/Producer Net Profit and a \$1,000 assessment at \$1,000,000 Net Organic Sales/Producer Net Profit.

Governance

An industry-governed board, appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture with input from the organic sector, would direct an Organic Check-Off program. This board would be responsible for allocating funds and approving organic research, promotion plans and programs. Producers would hold at least 50 percent of the seats on the board and directly choose their regional representatives. Producers will directly select their regional representatives through a simple nomination and balloting process.

Will producers be adequately represented on the board?

Organic producers will hold least half of the voting seats on the check-off board. Those producers will represent different regions, and will be directly elected by producers in their region. Producers are the backbone of the organic industry, and their needs and interests will not be overlooked or diminished.

Will adequate resources be allocated to research?

At least 50 to 75 percent of the check-off funds have been earmarked specifically for research or for activities that work hand-in-hand with research, such as technical assistance and widespread information dissemination of research findings. Also, because organic producers have identified local and regional research as a critical need, a board sub-committee of regional producer seat holders would be established to recommend to the full board just how those research funds should be spent.

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.

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What are the limits on check-off staff salaries and administrative costs?

A number of common-sense prohibitions are written into the check-off: First, a tight maximum cap of 15 percent of assessments has been established for administrative expenses; second, no check-off dollars could be used for lobbying; third, no check-off dollars could be used to promote individual brands.

Once an organic check-off is established, is there any way to terminate it in the future?

A referendum is required every seven years to decide whether or not to continue the program. The organic check-off has been crafted to be accountable and transparent. If organic stakeholders are not satisfied with the program, they can vote to end it.

Moving Forward

We anticipate USDA to release a proposed rule on the organic check-off, with an opportunity for public comment, before the end of 2016. Once the check-off structure is finalized, USDA will hold an industry-wide referendum. All certificate holders with revenue above \$250,000 will automatically be eligible to cast a ballot, and small producers and handlers (i.e. <\$250,000/year) who choose to opt-in to the program will also be able to cast a ballot. The check-off will only become established should a majority vote to approve the program. To find additional information on the program, its potential benefits, and for a list of the public supporters of the organic check-off take a look at the webpage: www.groorganic.net. 

Organic Check-off: Counterpoint by Will Fantle, The Cornucopia Institute

The Organic Trade Association has been boldly asserting to farmers that their organic check-off proposal “will help secure our future.” Questions swirling around the program’s marketing and research plans, as well as its complex implementation, cast doubt on this claim.

Many farmers are familiar with check-off programs from commodities they may have grown or raised in the past (almonds, eggs, pork, raisins, dairy, etc.). Almost uniformly, farmers have viewed check-offs as a tax on their income, and from which they have seen little benefit. Any corresponding sales increases from promotion of a particular commodity typically accrue to processors and marketers, not farmers.

Any corresponding sales increases from promotion of a particular commodity typically accrue to processors and marketers, not farmers. ~The Cornucopia Institute

This is one reason why so many organizations with organic farmer members have been actively opposing this organic check-off. Such groups as the Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association, the Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, OFARM, the Northeast Organic Farming Association chapters from Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, and The Cornucopia Institute see the “processor assessments” passed down to their farmer members.

The OTA has proposed exempting producers from the check-off who annually gross less than \$250,000. Those under this threshold would have to submit, at least annually, financial documentation to the USDA. Who will verify this? How is inventory treated? How do fluctuating commodity prices impact this (such as organic corn now selling for \$10 less/bushel than last year)?

For those grossing more than \$250,000, assessments would be based on net profits – a very complex question for family farmers, especially diverse commodity producers. This new approach proposed by OTA differs from other check-offs that assess on volume. Labor costs and land rental fees are just two of the many factors coloring that calculation. And many family farmers grow, process and store on-farm inputs. How will the value of these, without sales receipts, be calculated? Again, who will verify the accuracy of the information for fairness or cheating? How open are farmers’ books to inspection?

One shining light used to support the organic check-off has been the need for more research. Nobody in the organic community disputes this need. Yet this proposal sets a starting point of only 12.6% of check-off dollars for research (about half of the total set aside


for discretionary use), hardly making research seem like a priority.

Another shining light has been fixed on promotion of organics. Other commodity campaigns have

used generic advertising to try and boost consumer consumption. Crafting an organic-specific message could prove very difficult. The standard to which such messaging is held is: Would the Secretary of Agriculture say this? And in the eyes of the federal government, organic agriculture and food is a process claim – not a content, food safety or food quality claim.

continued on p. 4

Have You Met Your Farmer?



Meet Matt and Jacy Rothschiller of Gallatin Valley Botanical in Bozeman.

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Organic Check-off *continued from p. 3*

Richard Mathews spent more than eleven years providing oversight to similar check-off programs at the USDA. “You can also be assured,” explains Mathews, “that the USDA will not allow any promotional or information program, project, or activity that can be viewed as disparaging to conventionally produced products ... So those who think they are going to be able to sing the praises of organic as compared to conventional had better begin rethinking their position.”

Governance of the proposed organic check-off board is another concern. Organic farmers hold approximately 60% of all organic certificates. OTAs’ proposal sets 15 voting members of the check-off board, and one at-large non-voting member. Six board seats are mandated for producers/ranchers. One seat is for a voluntarily assessed entity (not necessarily a producer). This means that less than half of the seats on the board will be farmers, and that’s not fair.


Finally, for an organic check-off to be established, the USDA would hold a referendum requiring a two-thirds affirmative vote for passage. All organic certificate holders must have a voice. Certified operations should not have to request a ballot to participate. Nor – as proposed – should they have to commit to being in the check-off program for seven years even if their gross income would otherwise eliminate their participation.

The No Organic Check-off coalition has gathered 1772 signatures on its petition opposing the proposal. To sign or stay abreast of developments, visit <http://noorganiccheckoff.com/>. 🌱



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Upcoming Funding Opportunities

- Western SARE:
 - Professional Development Program: November 2
 - Farmer/Rancher Grants: December 7
 - Professional + Producer Grants: December 7
- Simply Organic 1% Fund: October 31
- Specialty Crop Research Initiative: November 15
- Extension Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program: November 17
- Western IPM Center: December 9
- Clif Bar Family Foundation: 1st of October, February, and June
- Organic Farming Research Foundation: February 2017
- Patagonia: April 30, 2017

Stop GE Wheat by Green America

Green America recently launched a campaign to prevent the introduction of genetically engineered (GE) wheat. Back in the early 2000s the biotechnology industry attempted to introduce GE wheat but that effort was rejected by consumers, brands, and farmers. Now, the biotech industry is working to introduce GE wheat again, with a number of companies developing and field testing herbicide-tolerant varieties. Our campaign aims to protect the integrity of US wheat and prevent further corporate control over what and how food is grown. Wheat is different from the major GE crops that are already in use in that the vast majority of it is grown as a direct food source for human consumption, worldwide it is responsible for 20 percent of human calories.

Recent incidents where unapproved GE wheat contaminated a number of US wheat fields, resulted in several countries temporarily banning US wheat imports, show the strong international opposition to GE wheat and potential market backlash. The introduction of GE wheat poses a serious risk to the integrity of the US wheat market and puts international exports at risk, which account for nearly 50% of the market. Organic farms are particularly at risk for contamination and impacts of pesticide drift. Due to growing pesticide resistance, companies are turning towards stronger pesticides with higher tendency to drift to nearby fields as potential options for herbicide-tolerant GE wheat.

Over 30,000 concerned citizens have already signed a petition saying they do not want GE wheat in their food. The campaign will be working in partnership with a number of organizations to reach farmers, businesses, and policy makers.

“We’re proud to be working with Green America on this important initiative and we were one of the first organizations to sign the petition,” states MOA member Tara Blyth of Kamut International. “We hope that you join the Stop GE Wheat Campaign by signing too.”

Learn more and sign petition at www.stopGEwheat.org.

International Monsanto Tribunal by Organic Consumers Association

In mid-October, the People’s Assembly and the International Monsanto Tribunal took place in The Hague, Netherlands. Thousands of people, including distinguished judges and lawyers, people who have been harmed by Monsanto’s products, and concerned citizens from all over the world, convened to participate in self-organizing workshops, to discuss films and ideas, and to hear testimony from 30 witnesses and experts traveling to The Hague from five continents. The Tribunal was a show of international solidarity for a regenerative food and agriculture system—the antithesis of Monsanto’s toxic, degenerative model.

Citizens’ Tribunals are not mock trials. They have a long history of bringing justice to issues where governments either act corruptly or fail to act. It is the legal right of citizens to ensure the carriage of justice, when governments do not.

The Tribunal will be based on the “Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights” adopted by the United Nations in 2011. It will be an international court of lawyers and judges that will assess the potential criminal liability of Monsanto for damages inflicted on human health and the environment.

The court will also rely on the Rome Statute that created the International Criminal Court in The Hague in 2002, and it will consider whether to reform international criminal law to include crimes against the environment, or ecocide, as a prosecutable criminal offense. The International Criminal Court, established in 2002 in The Hague, has determined that prosecuting ecocide as a criminal offense is the only way to guarantee the rights of humans to a healthy environment and the right of nature to be protected.

While the Tribunal can’t impose penalties, its final verdicts will serve as the foundation for future legal cases against not only Monsanto, but also Bayer, Syngenta, Dow and others. The panel of judges will issue their advisory opinions on the six terms of reference within a month or so, after they’ve had sufficient time to weigh the testimony they will hear during the two-day Tribunal.





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Montana Organic Association's 14th Annual Conference and Member Meeting

Conference Preview



December 1-3, 2016
Flathead Valley Community College
Kalispell, MT

The Heartbeat of Organics:
Stimulating the Pulse of our Producers,
Consumers and Policymakers

The United Nations declared 2016 the “International Year of Pulses,” and in honor of the role of pulses in organic crop and livestock production, this year’s MOA conference theme is “The Heartbeat of Organics: Stimulating the Pulse of our Producers, Consumers, and Policymakers.”

Our 14th Annual Conference will be held December 1-3, 2016, at Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) in Kalispell, Montana, and will be full of energetic speakers, lively discussion, and useful information for producers and consumers alike. Sprinkled in will be lots of great organic food, a variety of entertainment, and social and networking opportunities.

We have an amazing agenda this year, with speakers who are leaders in their fields speaking about the vital issues surrounding organics. There are sessions covering a wide variety of organic subjects, including animal vaccines; funding opportunities; soil health; feeding the world; mobile high tunnels; brewing opportunities; wildlife; Nuggets of Knowledge Exchange; Farm Link; the seed movement; grazing cover crops; weed termination; OAEC Update; and crop insurance.

This year, we will also be offering Organic University; Kids’ University; Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) training; and the annual MOA member meeting.

The Conference Tours encourage participants to get out in the fields and see how area farms and ranches operate. There are three tour offerings this year: a GAP Audit of the FVCC Farm; Browns Meadow Farm / Montana Better Beef; and Terrapin Farm / Whitefish Stage Organic Farm.

Two evening social events are planned, including

Thursday night’s social for all, which is co-hosted by the National Farmer’s Coalition. For entertainment, we are offering a one-woman play, *Turn Here Sweet Corn*, Atina Diffley’s compelling account of her life as a Minnesota organic farmer. You’ll also get to shake out that classroom haze and dance with the Tropical Montana Marimba Ensemble. And what MOA Conference would be complete without the live and silent auctions and the best organic food from the farms and ranches of Montana?

Before the conference, please don’t forget to submit your nominations for the MOA Board of Director Elections, and to nominate your organic hero for the “Lifetime of Service” or the “Leadership in Organics” awards. We are also accepting food donations for our meals and items for the live and silent auctions. If you can, please donate to our Scholarship Fund so that we can give financial breaks to those who would like to attend but cannot afford to.

And if you’re interested in sponsoring the event or becoming a vendor at the conference, MOA has many affordable options.

The Conference preview begins here, and includes the full conference agenda, how to register, information on the conference venue, preferred-rate hotel information, and all the extras to help you plan your informative and enjoyable MOA Conference experience.

Sign up today and we’ll see you in Kalispell!

~MOA 2016 Conference Committee: Heather Estrada (Chair), Linda Benjamin, Julian Cunningham, Patti Gregerson, John Larmoyeaux, Jamie Lockman, Judy Owsowitz, Tessa Peters, Seth Swanson, MonaRae Tuhy

2016 Conference Agenda

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2016

7:00 am - 8:00 am: Registration and Breakfast

8:00 am - 12:00 pm: ORGANIC UNIVERSITY (OU)

Pre-registration is required.

The Basics of Organic Production, facilitated by organic industry experts

8:00 am - 12:00 pm: GAP TRAINING

Pre-registration is required.

Fresh produce farmers will have access to help developing their on-farm food safety GAP plans. Facilitated by Jonda Crosby.

9:45 am - 10:00 am: Coffee Break

12:00 pm - 1:15 pm: Lunch

1:15-1:30 pm: Load Vehicles for Tours (meet outside of Arts & Technology Building)

1:30 pm - 5:00 pm:

MOA ORGANIC TOURS *Pre-registration is required and space is limited.*

Tour 1: Browns Meadow Farm/Montana Better

Beef: Join owner/operator Pete Wade at his certified organic grass fed beef operation just west of Kalispell. Dr. Joseph Snyder, DVM will join the tour to provide input and answer questions about livestock health.

Tour 2: Terrapin Farm/Whitefish Stage Organic

Farm: MOA founder Judy Owsowitz will provide a tour of her farm, and participants will also have the chance to visit the Flathead Valley's newest organic vegetable operation.

Tour 3: GAP Audit at the FVCC Campus Farm: Join us at the FVCC Campus Farm for a real-life audit. This is a great opportunity to see how the process works and how to implement changes to your operation.

5:15 pm - 6:30 pm: MOA/National Young Farmer's Coalition Social Hour

Everyone is encouraged to attend our social, which will be co-hosted by the NYFC. The hour will feature heavy hors d'oeuvres, a no host bar, and a pre-conference welcome from the MOA Board.

6:30 pm - 8:30 pm: Turn Here Sweet Corn: Actress Patty Thiel performs a one-woman play based on Atina Diffley's life as a Minnesota organic farmer.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2016

7:00 am - 8:00 am: Registration and Breakfast

8:00 am - 8:15 am: Welcome: Doug Crabtree, MOA Board Chairman, Vilicus Farms

8:15 am - 9:15 am: Organic Policy Update: Nate Brown will provide an update on the new GMO labeling law, organic grain imports, and other policies affecting organic farmers in Montana.

9:15 am - 9:30 am: Break and Vendor Appreciation

9:30 am - 10:45 am: CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Session 1: Vaccinology - The Theory, Use and Misuse of Vaccines and Vaccination: Dr. Joseph Snyder, DVM

Session 2: Growing Your Organic Business - Training, Technical Assistance and Funding Opportunities: Angie Nelson, Montana Department of Agriculture and Joe Willauer, Food and Agriculture Development Center Network

11:00 am - 12:00 pm: Organic Agriculture Can Play a Significant Role in Feeding the World: Keynote Speaker Dr. John Reganold, Washington State University

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm: Lunch

1:00 pm - 1:30 pm: Student Poster Presentations and Vendor Appreciation

1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

KIDS' UNIVERSITY (KU) *Pre-registration is required. Runs concurrently with Conference.*

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm: CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Session 1: Cool-season Vegetables Under Plastic--What We've Learned from Mobile High Tunnels: Dr. Mac Burgess, Sustainable Bioenergy and Food Systems, MSU

Session 2: My Journey in Organic Farming Research: Where I've Come From and Where I am Headed: Dr. Patrick Carr, Central Ag Research Center, MSU

2:30 -2:45 pm: Break and Vendor Appreciation

2:45 pm - 3:45 pm: CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Session 1: Challenges and Opportunities for Organic Brewing in Montana: Moderator: Joe Byers, Director

FVCC Brewing Science / Organic Hops: Steve Ashworth, Rockin Lazy A Organic Farm / Organic Malting: Matthias Haaben, Gambrinus Malting / Organic Brewing: Brian Smith or Tim Chisman, Blackfoot River Brewing

Session 2: Farmers and Wildlife: Strategies and Opportunities for Producers: Tim Manley, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

3:45 pm - 4:00 pm Break and Vendor Appreciation

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm: Plenary Session: Nuggets of Knowledge Exchange

5:00 pm – 6:30 pm: Social and Reception

6:30 pm – 7:30 pm: Dinner

7:30 pm – 9:30 pm: Presentation of MOA Annual Awards, Live Auction and Music by the Tropical Montana Marimba Ensemble

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2016

7:30 am – 8:00 am: Breakfast

8:00 am – 8:15 am: Announcements and Updates

8:15 am – 9:30 am: CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Session 1: Accessing Montana's Resources with Farm Link: Annie Heuscher, Program Director for Community Food and Agriculture Coalition

Session 2: Impacts and Management of Field Bindweed in Organic Systems: Dr. Zach Miller, Western Ag Research Center, MSU and **Ruminating in Organic Small Grain Systems - Lessons from Grazing Organic Crops for Cover Crop and Weed Termination:** Fabian Menalled, Extension Professor and Cropland Weed Specialist, MSU

Session 3: Montana's Seed Movement is Strong and Growing: Kiki Hubbard, Organic Seed Alliance; Karl Sutton, Triple Divide Organic Seeds

9:30 am – 9:45 am: Break and Vendor Appreciation

9:45 am - 10:45 am: CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Session 1: How Important is Soil Health?: Dr. John Reganold, Washington State University

Session 2: Vaccinology: The Theory, Use and Misuse of Vaccines and Vaccination: Dr. Joseph Snyder, DVM

11:00 am – 11:30 am: Organic Advisory Education Council (OAEC) Update: Ole Norgaard, OAEC

11:30 am – 12:15 pm: MOA Business Meeting

12:15 pm – 12:30 pm: MOA Board Elections

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm: Lunch

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm: CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Session 1: Evaluating Crop Insurance for Organic and Specialty Crop Operations: Dr. Eric Belasco, Department of Agricultural Economics and Economics, MSU

Session 2: Fitting Pulse Crops into Your Rotation: David Oien, Timeless Seeds

Session 3: Agriculture in a Changing Climate: Steve Thompson/Kelsey Jensco

2:35 pm – 3:15 pm: Closing Keynote - Keeping the Montana Organic Heartbeat Strong: Bob Quinn, Kamut International

3:15 pm - 3:30 pm: Closing Remarks

Agenda is subject to change.

Visit www.montanaorganiccassociation.org for the latest information.

Call for Student Posters

The Montana Organic Association is accepting abstracts for the Student Research Poster Competition.

Graduate and undergraduate students engaged in organic agriculture research are encouraged to participate in the Montana Organic Association's first ever poster competition. This event promotes and encourages students to communicate their research to their peers as well as network with a wider organic community. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three posters presented at the conference.

- Presenters must be a full or part-time student studying in the field of organic agriculture.
- Presenters must also register to be a conference attendee.
- Presenters must be present at the student poster session (Friday December 2, 12:30pm) in order to be eligible for the competition.
- All presenters must agree to share their research electronically.

Abstracts should be approximately 200 words in length and must be submitted by email to Heather Estrada at hstrada@fvcc.edu by November 10, 2016.

Session Highlights

GAP Training and On-Farm Audit with Jonda Crosby

Thursday, December 1, 8:00 am - 1:45 pm

This pre-MOA conference workshop is designed for farmers and is a great opportunity to learn about Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) on-farm food safety and the recent Federal regulations regarding the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). If you have been thinking about how you may be required to comply to the new food safety rule, or wonder if in fact you are exempt from the new rules, how you might get ahead of the food safety requirements coming down the pike, and are wondering what you are doing or not doing right now to protect your fresh farm products as they move onto your customers tables –this is a great workshop for you to attend.

2nd Annual Nuggets of Knowledge Exchange Friday, December 2, 4:00 - 5:00 pm

Back by popular demand, Nuggets of Knowledge gives conference attendees a chance to share their experiences on the farm and find out about the successes, challenges, and innovations of other organic farmers in the community. The session will feature an open, moderated floor where anyone can share their ideas or ask for new ones. After the success of last year's session, we have made this an hour-long plenary session that leads right into our social hour before dinner. Once again, we expect this to be a valuable and informative session, if not lively!

Seed Session with Kiki Hubbard

Saturday, December 3, 8:00 am - 9:15 am

Seed represents profound potential for improving our food and agricultural systems. It is the beginning of our food production system, and impacts each part of that system. Developing seed that is adapted to organic production practices and varying climates and environmental conditions is especially important to the success and growth of the organic sector. Organic Seed Alliance is working collaboratively with Triple Divide Organic Seeds, the first organic seed cooperative in Montana, to expand organic seed production and crop improvement in the state. This workshop will provide a summary of results from a 2016 seed needs survey that targeted specialty crop producers in Montana. The findings help to inform organic plant breeding and seed production needs for Montana's organic vegetable growers. We'll share how these findings are being put to use through a variety trial network of growers in the state and on-farm plant breeding projects. Montana's organic community will also learn how they can participate in building a regional and resilient seed system in the state that is responsive to the needs of Montana's organic growers.

Registration

Please fill it out the enclosed registration form and send it in by November 25, 2016 for the best rates and to guarantee meals. If you'd prefer to register and pay online, you can do so at www.MontanaOrganicAssociation.org/commerce.htm.

Conference Venue

This year's conference will be held in the Arts & Technology building at Flathead Valley Community College, 777 Grandview Drive, Kalispell, MT 59901.

Preferred Rate Lodging

MOA has a block of rooms reserved at the SpringHill Suites Kalispell with the MOA discount of \$95.00 + applicable taxes. Please declare you are a MOA member at the time of booking. **You must make reservations by Nov. 26, 2016 for the discount rate.** Pets are allowed at no additional cost, however, you must sign a waiver stating you will not leave them unattended in the room.

SpringHill Suites Kalispell is located at 250 Old Reserve Drive, Kalispell, Montana 59901. Their phone is (406) 314-6600 and their website is <http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/fcash-springhill-suites-kalispell/>.

Call for Donations

If you had a good year and would like to help out, we are in need of organic food donations as ingredients for our amazing conference meals. We are also looking for food and general items for our silent and live auctions. We could also use cash donations for the Sharon Lindquist Scholarship Fund to allow those in need to attend the conference. Donation guidelines are online at <http://goo.gl/ImI5yK> or phone John at (406) 879-9301. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Sponsor/Vendor Opportunities Available

Get your business up front and center by becoming a MOA Conference Sponsor or Vendor. We have lots of options available to fit most business' and organizations' needs. Register by November 1 to assure your maximum exposure in MOA's communications and press for the conference. Visit <http://goo.gl/ykSsUw> or phone Susan at (406) 274-4869 to find out more and sign up today.

Montana Organic Association's 14th Annual Conference

The Heartbeat of Organics: Stimulating the Pulse of our Producers, Consumers & Policymakers

December 1-3, 2016, Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell, Montana

Participant Registration Form (Please register early so we know how many meals we need to order)

Name _____

(If registering an organization, please fill out a form for each participant)

Farm or Organization _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Fax _____ Email _____

MOA Conference Registration

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

Early registration for conference and meals for Non-Members \$140..... \$ _____

(Includes a one year complimentary Individual membership to MOA)

Early registration for conference @ Student Rate \$65..... \$ _____

Organic University \$10..... \$ _____

GAP Training (please enter "0" on line at far right if attending) \$ 0..... \$ _____

Late Registration after November 25 (add \$10 per person) \$10..... \$ _____

(Meals cannot be guaranteed for very late registrants)

Food Preferences: Omnivore _____ Vegetarian _____ Vegan _____ Gluten – free _____	I'd like to donate an item(s) to the raffle/auction. Item description: _____ _____ _____ Visit http://tinyurl.com/jz6ztdk for donation guidelines. Questions? Call John (406) 879-9301	Sharon Lindquist Scholarship Fund to those in need..... \$ _____ MOA Memberships Individual \$30..... \$ _____ Household \$50..... \$ _____ Farm/Ranch/Business \$75.. \$ _____ Organic Business.....\$250. \$ _____ Other Membership..... \$ _____ Tours & Kids' U Reg Forms ----->
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Payment (by check to "MOA" or online at www.MontanaOrganicAssociation.org/commerce.htm)

Check here ___ if paid online (email or mail form in to MOA) **TOTAL \$** _____

Please note: Refunds are not available for cancellations made after November 25, 2016.

Please contact us to explore scholarship opportunities.

Return this form to: MOA Conference, c/o FVCC Agriculture Program, Flathead Valley Community College, 777 Grandview Drive, Kalispell, MT 59901

OR Email filled out form to: fvccpatti@gmail.com Questions? Call Patti at (406) 471-3452

For more conference information, visit: www.montanaorganicassociation.org

Montana Organic Association 14th Annual Conference

Thursday, December 1, 2016, FVCC, Kalispell, MT

Farm Tours Registration Form

*Number of participants is limited and sign ups are on a first come basis. No late registrations, please.
MOA will provide transportation. Tours will leave the A&T Building at 1:30 PM and return by 5:00 PM.*

Name _____

Farm or Organization _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Day Phone _____ **Evening Phone** _____ **Email** _____

Check one (no charge for tours) and return form to address below:

_____ **Tour 1: Browns Meadow Farm / Montana Better Beef**

_____ **Tour 2: Terrapin Farm / Whitefish Stage Organic Farm**

_____ **Tour 3: GAP Audit at FVCC Farm**

Montana Organic Association 14th Annual Conference

Friday, December 2, 2016, FVCC, Kalispell, MT

Kids' University Registration Form

This signed parent permission form must be returned in order for each child to participate in kid's university.

Participant's Name: _____ **Age:** _____

Participant's signature: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Phone Number Parent/Guardian can be reached during the conference: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Are there any special instructions, medical or otherwise, regarding the participant that we need to be aware of?

Please include \$5 per child (\$20 family max).....TOTAL AMOUNT INCLUDED: \$ _____

The parent and/or guardian and the participant hereby releases the Montana Organic Association, their officers, members, or anyone connected with this conference from all claims, demands, actions, or liabilities of any kind whatsoever of my representative, children, or employees by reason of injury, loss or damage suffered by me or my property, or them because of any condition whatsoever.

Return this form & check to: MOA, c/o FVCC Agriculture Program, Flathead Valley Community College, 777 Grandview Drive, Kalispell, MT 59901

OR Email form: fvccpatti@gmail.com Pay online: www.montanaorganicassociation.org/commerce.htm

Call for Awards Nominations

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

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: Barry Flamm (2006), Bob Quinn (2007), David Oien (2008), Jim Barngrover (2009), Laughing Water (2010), Steve and Cindy Baril (2011), Russ Salisbury & Elsie Tuss (2012), Judy Owsowitz (2013), Becky Weed (2014), and Wes Henthorne (2015).

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: Jon Tester (2006), Jonda Crosby (2007), Mikel & Nancy Lund (2008), Jon & Amy Kvaalen (2009), Andre’ Giles (2010), Nancy Matheson (2011), Dave & Dee Turner (2012), Jeff Schahczenski (2013), Daryl and Linda Lassila (2014), and Ole Norgaard (2015).

Written nominations may be submitted by MOA members no later than November 15, 2016, by email or regular mail to: Judy Owsowitz, 6505 Farm to Market Rd, Whitefish MT 59937, phone (406) 862-6362, email terrarin@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

It is preferred that nominees be members of MOA, but Board Members cannot be nominated. Please include your contact information.

The Awards will be presented at the Conference on Friday, December 2, at 7:30 pm at Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell, MT.

Nominations and Notice of Director Elections

The direction of this organization is only as strong as its Leadership. MOA welcomes energetic, committed dynamic leaders to join us to ensure the continued success of MOA.

For 2017, MOA Board of Directors has one director stepping down and five incumbents seeking re-election.

The Board of Directors election will take place during the MOA Conference Annual Business Meeting at 12:15 pm Saturday, December 3, in the Arts & Technology Building at Flathead Valley Community College, 777 Grandview Drive, Kalispell, MT 59901.

The terms that Directors serve are three years in length and Directors can be re-elected. 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 are 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.

Directors seeking re-election, or anyone interested in serving as a new Director, needs to contact the MOA Nominations and Election Committee, at g.nathanbrown@gmail.com or sam@montanamilling.com. **All 2017 Director nominations must be submitted by one day prior to the Annual Business Meeting.**

Organic News from OSA

Mega-mergers’ Threat to Seeds

Last September, Bayer announced it will purchase Monsanto for more than \$56 billion, creating the world’s largest supplier in seeds and agricultural chemicals. DuPont and Dow, and ChemChina and Syngenta, have also announced agreements to merge. If the Department of Justice allows these mergers, three corporations will sell nearly 60% of the world’s seed. This level of concentration will lead to fewer seed options for farmers, less crop diversity in our fields, and a tighter corporate grip on our seed and food supply. OSA has partnered with Seed Matters on a letter addressed to the DOJ asking for immediate action to stop these mega-mergers.

Reports Describe Plant Breeding Priorities

Organic Seed Alliance and Cornell University have each released a report that details plant breeding priorities for organic agriculture in the Pacific Northwest and Northeast, respectively. The assessments are a result of surveys and regional working groups that gathered input from organic farmers, organic seed and food distributors, and public and private plant breeders. The two reports provide recommendations to inform plant-breeding efforts by ranking crops and traits most important to organic farmers. Visit <http://seedalliance.org>.



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Transitioning to Organic Certification by Betsy Rakola, USDA Organic Policy Advisor

More and more farmers are entering the organic market. Just last year, the number of certified operations in the U.S. grew by almost 12 percent – more than double the growth rate of 2014. So how do farmers, ranchers, and food processors make the transition to organic? We talked to one farming family about their experience, learning how they used USDA programs to help with the transition process.

Conner Voss got his family farm certified organic in 2015. Diggin' Roots Farm is a diversified fruit, vegetable, and livestock operation in Molalla, Oregon, midway between Portland and Salem. "We sell our product direct – through a CSA, at a local farmers market, and direct to restaurants – and our customers kept asking about our growing practices," said Conner. "We wholeheartedly believe in the practices and philosophy of organic production, and certification offers a quick and easy starting place for our conversations with our community. Beyond that, being certified is a way for our small farm to actively engage in the larger organic movement by helping define and shape what organic is."

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs provided Diggin' Roots with financial assistance for conservation practices during the transition to organic. "Through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program's Organic Initiative, we established nitrogen-fixing cover crop mixes, developed a nutrient budget for using organic fertilizers, and built a high tunnel. Our current contract includes extensive perennial plantings for buffers and beneficial insects. NRCS has really helped us fine tune our fertility and address a broad range of conservation concerns on our farm," said Conner. "In addition, we use the Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Organic Certification Cost Share program to defray the cost of organic certification. It can cover up to 75 percent of our certification fees each year. Our first year of certification cost us about \$300, which ended up being less than .5 percent of our gross sales- well worth it for the time it saved us in communicating our growing practices."

USDA's strategic plan set out a goal of helping farms like Diggin' Roots obtain organic certification, and Secretary Vilsack issued guidance to all USDA agencies affirming the department-wide commitment to the organic sector. AMS and NRCS have taken the lead on creating new education and outreach tools aimed at making certification more accessible,

continued on p. 18

Where Do You Get Your Organic News?

Organic Matters informally surveyed some MOA members about where they get their organic news. We asked them which organizations they followed and for the specific publications they read to keep up-to-date.

The answer, by far, was MOA and *Organic Matters*! Of course, they knew we were the ones asking, so their answers might be a little biased. We appreciate it, nonetheless.

The other most common organic resources were:

Cornucopia Institute
Montana Department of Agriculture
National Organic Program
National Organic Coalition
National Organic Standards Board
Organic Trade Association

Also highly recommended were:

American Association for the Advancement of Science
ACRES USA
Ag Week
Agree NewsFeed
Berkeley Food Institute
Beyond Pesticides
Capital Press News
Conservation Biology Journal
Dalhousie University Organic Friends' E-zine
Diversified Farming Systems List-serv
Eco-Farm Newsletter
Ecological Society of America Journal
Google News
Holistic Management International
International Foundation for Organic Agriculture
Mercaris Price Service
Milling and Baking News
Organic and Non-GMO report
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Organic Seed Alliance and their newsletter
Prairie Star
Progressive Farmer Magazine
Rodale Institute
Traders Dispatch
USDA Price Report
Wild Farm Alliance

They also got their news from customers, grain buyers, Casey Bailey (really - 2 people do), their organic inspector, other producers and organic conferences.

This was by no means a scientific survey; just a way to share some great organic resources. Thanks to those who participated: Jess Alger, Casey Bailey, Liz Carlisle, Barry Flamm, Andre Giles, Clain Jones, Kamut International Staff, Daryl Lassila, Ole Norgaard, and Dave Oien.

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Organic Transition *continued* from p. 15

attainable, and affordable for small and beginning farmers. Recently, AMS developed a number of tools to help producers understand how to make the transition to organic certification. The Sound & Sensible Certification tools provide videos, fact sheets, and training curricula on organic agriculture, and the Organic Educational Toolkit provides webinars, posters, brochures, and in-depth guides to USDA programs for organic farmers, ranchers, and food processors. NRCS also developed a number of conservation tools, publishing an Organic Farming Handbook and hosting over 30 webinars on organic agriculture.


USDA's National Institute of Food & Agriculture, USDA's Risk Management Agency, and the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program have also

funded numerous tools to help producers understand how to transition from conventional to organic production. Below are a few highlights:

- *Organic Transition: A Business Planner for Farmers, Ranchers, and Food Entrepreneurs* (University of Minnesota)
- *Making the Transition to Organic: Ten Farm Profiles* (University of Minnesota)
- Organic Transition Course – 15-hour online course from the Rodale Institute
- *Farm Transitions: Valuing Sustainable Practices—Organic Certification* (Land Stewardship Project)

Conner sums it up like this:

"Farming is my intersection between purpose, family, and place. Growing food that makes people smile is my privilege. It is incredibly encouraging that the USDA is recognizing the value of

our nation's organic farms. We feel fortunate to have been provided this assistance and actively promote these programs to our peers." 

Calendar of Events

There are lots of interesting and informative events planned for this fall and the coming winter. Please visit our website at www.MontanaOrganicAssociation.org/events.htm for a full list of events from MOA and our organic colleagues.

Join MOA on Facebook

If you haven't logged on yet, visit www.facebook.com/montanaorganic. Full of MOA event photos, organic news and informative comments, it's also an entertaining page to visit.

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MOA Chairman Doug Crabtree Elected to OTA Board

Doug and his wife Anna own and operate Vilicus Farms, a 5,000-acre certified organic dry-land farm growing 12 to 15 grain, pulse, broadleaf and oilseed crops annually. Having started the farm "from scratch," they share a passion for beginning farmers. Doug has been an active member of the Farmers Advisory Council and regular participant in the Organic Trade Association's (OTA) Policy Conference and Hill Visits. Prior to launching the farm, Doug managed the State of Montana's Organic Certification Program. During his tenure as a certifier, he presided over the National Association of State Organic Programs. Doug has worked as an organic inspector, agricultural researcher and farm manager. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Organic Farming Research Foundation and is Chair of the Montana Organic Association. (From OTA's *Newsflash*, August 24, 2016.) 

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.

See www.montanaorganicassociation.org/omadrates.htm for details or call Seth Swanson at (406) 258-4205.

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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)

Please fill out this form,
make check payable to MOA and mail to:
MOA, PO Box 570, Eureka, MT 59917
(406) 297-7588



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(406) 297-7588
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A View From the Chair

Fall is upon us here in (north-central) Montana. We have had our “killing” frost, and most of the greens have faded to brown. Most recently we have been inundated with nearly two inches of rain and snow flurries. The extreme and excessive wetness has put a temporary halt to our harvest and seeding operations. Like many of you, we eagerly await the return of sunshine to wrap up our fieldwork before winter arrives.

We are less than a month from the MOA conference. I know I am excited about the agenda and opportunities to learn, share, network and renew friendships with our organic community! We return to Kalispell and the campus of the Flathead Community College for

this year’s conference. Conference Committee Chair, Heather Estrada, has grown a tremendous program at FVCC. Highlights of the conference include tours of the campus farm and sharing scrumptious organic food produced on the farm and by other MOA members and prepared on-site. For new and prospective organic growers, the annual Organic University will provide intensive instruction on how to practice organic farming in Montana. A series of workshops and a farm tour will focus on implementation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for organic growers. In addition to serious learning, the conference will also include fun and entertainment, including a social co-hosted by the National Young Farmers Coalition, the annual MOA Awards ceremony

and a live, one-woman play. We look forward to hearing from our keynote speaker, Dr. John Reganold, who will share his insights and research demonstrating that organic farming is the best (only?) way to “feed the world” and heal ecosystems and rural communities. On behalf of your Board of Directors, I invite ALL MOA members, organic food and farming supporters, and those interested in exploring the great opportunities offered by organic agriculture, to join us in Kalispell, December 1 – 3, for a great conference.

I look forward to seeing YOU there!

Doug Crabtree, MOA Board Chairman