



Organic Matters

Get Off the Farm For Some Informative Organic Events

Upcoming Farm Tour by Wes Gibbs

Farm and food production tours are a great way for MOA to reach out to members and the public alike. A tour in July or August is being specially planned to give family food buyers a view of organic food production—from the field to their shopping cart.

The preliminary schedule has participants leaving Great Falls at 8 AM to travel to the Clay McAlpine Ranch in Valier, Montana. Over the years Clay has raised a number of crops and grass-fed Black Angus beef, and has developed a pastured pork system renowned throughout Montana. Clay will have participants among his livestock for two hours while discussing key elements of organic animal production. He will discuss animal quality of life and the impact of food production on the land. He will also help food buyers better understand the differences between organic, natural and non-organic food production.

Next, the tour will travel to Jacob and Courtney Cowgill's Prairie Heritage Farm near Conrad. The Cowgills fol-

low the model of small-scale diversified farming that has sustained farms and the people they feed for generations. Tour participants will learn more about heritage and ancient staple crops and



Jacob Cowgill/Prairie Heritage Farm

how they are handled on a small scale. They will also see how local marketing of food, produced by a small-scale organic farm, takes place.

Finally, the tour will visit a place that food buyers are most familiar with—the local market. Dylan Pederesen of 2J'S Fresh Market in Great Falls will help food buyers identify organic products in the store. They will learn what the organic

label means and how they can shop for healthy food without breaking the budget. 2J'S is committed to local sourcing for as many products as possible, and many come from a farm or ranch that you're probably familiar with.

Visit the MOA website, www.montanaorganicassociation.org, as more details firm up on this farm tour and a possible second tour in northwest Montana develops.

Upcoming MOA Conference by Lou Ann Crowley

The MOA Conference Planning Committee is pleased to announce the MOA 2012 Conference, November 30 – December 1, 2012, at the Holiday Inn in Helena. We'll have special events celebrating MOA's 10th Anniversary and are working on a very informative and timely session lineup with organic experts.

We'll also feature a special keynote address by Jeff Moyer, Farm Director at the Rodale Institute and former Chair of National Organic Standards Board.

So, mark your calendars today and check the MOA website at: www.montanaorganicassociation.org for updates.

Inside This Issue

Grain Growers Gone?	2
The Oil Barn	4
OSA Conference Report	6
MOA's New Facebook Page	7
Crop /Rotation Spreadsheet	7
EU/US Equivalence Arr.	8
Legume Inoculants	9
NOSB Update	10
MDA Driftwatch Service	11
Calendar of Events.	12
Call to Action: 2,4-D/Corn	12
Member Benefits	13
MOA Welcomes Intern.	13
A View from the Chair	14

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Where Have All the Organic Grain Growers Gone? by Amy Grisak

Editor's Note: This article is the second of a three-part series. While the market is an important piece of the puzzle, the story doesn't end there. In the next Organic Matters, we'll discuss what techniques several organic farmers use to successfully deal with weed issues, soil erosion and soil fertility. We'll also talk with scientists to see what developments are on the horizon to battle bindweed and other challenges.

From 2009 – 2011, Montana lost nearly 32,000 of the 125,000 acres in organic grain production. While it's an alarming trend, the reasons behind it, from the growers' perspective, are understandable: the tenacious plague of bindweed caused several long-standing organic growers to opt for the last resort of spraying the noxious weeds to gain a handle on their fields; erosion in particularly windswept regions was another key issue; and difficulty in selling wheat in a timely manner rounded out the top reasons for switching to non-organic production methods.

In the second part of this series, we're looking at the marketing aspect of the equation including: what processors are looking for to satisfy customer requests; how growers can meet these needs to have a shorter wait time between harvest and sale; and how the organic market fits in the big picture.

The good news is that the outlook is not bleak. According to the Organic Trade Association's 2012 Organic Industry Survey, "The U.S. organic industry experienced healthy growth during 2011, growing by 9.5% overall to reach slightly more than \$31.4 billion in sales."

It also found that organic food sales make up 4.2% of total food sales, which is a slight increase from 4% in 2010. Within this market, the survey reveals, "The organic food sector grew by \$2.5 billion during 2011, with the fruit and vegetable category contributing just shy of 50% of those new dollars." This is good news, particularly when we're emerging from a severe recession.

The grains and bread category grew the least, yet at 6.4%, it's still respectable progress.

The overall picture looks promising as the OTA reports, "Prospects for 2012 and 2013, as indicated through the 2012 survey results, indicate that organic

food and non-food sales will continue to sustain growth levels of nine percent or higher."

Finding the right market can be more challenging than many of the typical growing hazards. Handling everything Mother Nature throws at you is one thing; negotiating contracts is another.

Bob Boettcher, a retired grower out of Big Sandy has grown everything from wheat to sunflowers. Bob broke into organic production in 1986 (long before it was considered acceptable in mainstream agriculture), and is not opposed to thinking outside the box.

He says, "Farmers like to produce, but they don't like to get into the habit of marketing and finding markets. They need to be encouraged to do a lot more than just planting and harvesting."

During his time farming, Boettcher ran into the common situation of being dinged when it came time to sample the wheat's protein content and when finding insurance to cover some of his more unusual

organic crops. Through his trials and tribulations, he's confident the key is to match the product and the need, and understands that marketing is as important as growing.

"The producer has the responsibility to find out what the consumers want," says Sam Schmidt of Montana Milling in Great Falls. They handle various grains and their customers are primarily those in the baking industry.

There are several ways to find the right buyer for the product. A grower who has a solid working relationship with a processor talks at the beginning of the season to learn the needs of the processor's customers to give them an idea of what and how much to grow. Sometimes there are contracts signed in advance of the season; oftentimes there are not. However, as the season progresses, processors have a better idea of what's on the market and what is needed to fulfill their orders.

"It would be our right to make the contract (to buy the grain) and not sell it," says Schmidt, "but that's a gamble we're not willing to make. There are too many variables. Every year we can pre-contract (before harvest) if our customers are willing to pre-

The organic food sector grew by \$2.5 billion during 2011. The grains and bread category grew the least, yet at 6.4%, it's still respectable progress.



Jacob Cowgil/Prairie Heritage Farm

contract.” This gives the grower an idea of the end price per bushel.

“We have a very close relationship with our customers. They give us an indication for a whole year on what their needs are and we try to lock it up after the harvest as quickly as we can,” he says. This is usually within four to six months post-

harvest. “The price finds its level after the harvest. It’s no different than any other commodity,” he says. “The price discovery of organic (grain) every year is hard. It’s seeing what customers are willing to pay, and how much there is on the market.”

Schmidt notes, “In my opinion, we have not seen a big drop in production. Our volume has stayed steady to increased.”

There was a shakeup in 2008 when the high wheat prices, both non-organic and organic product, hit the market and slowed down the buying from the end customers. But that was the beginning of the recession and the market settled closer to the ten-year average in the subsequent years.

The reality remains that there are growers holding onto grain longer than economically desirable. Schmidt says there could be a couple of reasons for it. “They believe the price is wrong,” he says. “It’s their livelihood and they have every right (to secure the proper price).”

Sam says the second reason might be because, “It’s low protein winter wheat that’s still sitting in the bin. It’s the easiest grain to raise. Anything that’s the easiest to raise is the hardest to get rid of.” He notes the entire Midwest, including Oklahoma and Texas, can only grow winter wheat so there’s a problem with an overabundance on the market. “Producers need to raise what is needed and not what is easiest to raise,” he says. “High protein wheat pretty much goes to the bread industry and bread, by far, is our biggest industry. High protein wheat is our biggest commodity.”

Mark Bruckner, who has 3400 acres in organic production near Malta, found the same situation when

it comes to low protein wheat. “Low protein wheat is really hard to sell,” he says. “People are going to have to grow more things. I’ve been trying to raise more Kamut® (Khorasan wheat), and get away from spring wheat.”

By contracting to grow Kamut® Khorasan wheat, Bruckner knows he has a guaranteed end market. And since he has a solid relationship with Montana Flour and Grain in Fort Benton, he has a viable outlet for his rye. His focus is finding the crops he’s good at growing and concentrate on those. “Any kind of industry that’s growing is going to have some downturns,” he says, but he doesn’t view it as a long-term detriment to the industry.

Andre Giles of Montana Flour and Grain concurs, “I don’t think the trend is nearly as bad as it suggests. The market for high protein wheat is as high as it’s ever been. One thing I would stress is Kamut® (Khorasan wheat). It’s really growing a lot.” And he also reminds organic growers not to be overly concerned if they’re not producing the same quantities as their conventional neighbors. Although prices on non-organic wheat have risen over the past few years, there is still a great need for organic grain with a potentially healthy pay off.



Kamut International

There’s no question losing 32,000 acres is disturbing for anyone involved in the organic industry. The good news is the current trends are positive, and by diversifying their crops, organic growers can find the combination that works for them.

Amy Grisak is a freelance writer in Great Falls specializing in gardening and agricultural-related topics. Read more about Amy and explore her work at www.amygrisak.com.

The Oil Barn by Andrew Long

For many, the issues of increased dependence on foreign oil and the volatility of fuel prices raise a lot of questions about our current energy situation. Is there a more sustainable way to fuel my equipment? How can I avoid the unpredictability of current fuel prices? What would happen if our foreign supply of oil were suddenly cut off? What kind of long-term impact will petroleum-based fuels have on our economy and environment? Questions like these led one Montana farmer to seek out alternatives to the current situation and create a system that could prove beneficial to farmers all across the state.

For several years, Bob Quinn has had a vision of self-sufficiency and sustainability for his 3500-acre farm outside of Big Sandy in North Central Montana. Six years ago he had an idea that would enable him to grow the fuel needed for his farming operations and allow him to turn fuel costs into a profit center. While this project is still underway, several avenues have opened up that have allowed Bob to create a new enterprise for his farm as well as additional value for businesses throughout Montana.

The original idea was to extract oil from oilseeds grown on the farm and use it for the production of

biodiesel. That biodiesel would then be used to power the equipment that originally planted and harvested the oilseeds as well as the rest of his crops. Although a great idea in theory, the complexity, cost and labor required to produce quality biodiesel was more than anticipated and the idea was abandoned.

Having heard of engines that could run off of straight vegetable oil (SVO), Bob decided to investigate this possibility and found a German company by the name of Elsbett that specializes in SVO-powered engines and engine modification for SVO. After learning the promising possibilities that Elsbett boasted, Bob decided to follow in the path of SVO and purchased an inexpensive oil press from China. However, after numerous attempts by Bob and all of his neighbors to get the press running correctly, he never was able to get more than one gallon of burnt oil out of the machine. Undeterred by those results, Bob eventually sold that press and bought a new one from Germany to take its place and has successfully been producing his own oil for several years now.

Because of the change from biodiesel to SVO, the oilseed grown has changed from camelina to hi-oleic safflower because it is better suited for SVO.

Utilizing the equipment and expertise from Elsbett, Bob was able to modify his own tractor to run off of

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his farm-grown safflower oil. After completing the conversion, several gallons of farm-grown vegetable oil was run through his tractor with very promising results, and thus was born the objective to fuel all farm equipment off of home-grown vegetable oil in the form of SVO.

Inherent in Bob's character as a true innovator, throughout this project he continuously shared his idea with those he interacted with (which were many), spreading word throughout the state and beyond. With the passage of time, several businesses in Montana expressed interest in using a locally-produced, high quality oil. Starting with Botanie Soap (a Missoula-based maker of organic soap), the demand increased until oil production became more work than one already-busy person could manage and the decision to hire a full time employee was made.

At the same time, Bob realized that if he wanted to expand the business to restaurants and food stores in Montana, he would need a place where food grade oil could be produced. Having an unused barn on his homestead, and being one to preserve the history of his farm, the barn became a food grade facility and thus The Oil Barn was born.



Photo by Andrew Long

In the fall of 2011, Bob hired me as head of all oil operations. Having recently graduated from an MBA program at BYU in Utah and looking for an entrepreneurial experience, I was excited to accept the offer. The first steps were to create a separate business entity, to complete all of the requirements to be a food grade oil producer and to apply for a separate organic handler certificate through the Montana Department of Agriculture. Immediately after accomplishing these goals, a new wave of demand was generated as restaurants, health food and grocery stores and other organizations in Montana wanted a locally produced, high-quality product.

It turns out that hi-oleic safflower oil is the best for high temperature cooking, so there is a good demand for it. The Oil Barn now supplies the University of Montana in the Farm to College program as well as health food stores in Missoula and Billings.

A good market for the mash by-product of the oil crushing has been found locally where the mash is sold as a high-protein feed supplement for cattle.

From the interest of local restaurants, starting in Big Sandy, the idea was to first rent the oil to restaurants,

continued on p. 12

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T i m e l e s s F o o d



OSA Conference Report

by Jacob Cowgill, Prairie Heritage Farm

In the worst snow storm of what was an otherwise mild winter, over 300 people turned out for the Organic Seed Alliance (OSA) 6th Organic Seed Growers Conference held in Port Townsend, Washington. Two hundred additional people tuned into the conference by way of the live webinar.

The theme for this year's conference was "Strengthening Community Seed Systems," and the agenda was packed with keynote addresses, presentations, and numerous breakout sessions. A few of the sessions I chose to attend included: Introduction to Organic On-Farm Plant Breeding; Organic Wheat Breeding; Harvesting and Seed Cleaning for Small- to Mid-Scale Farms; Organic Corn Breeding; and Hybrids vs. Open Pollinated Varieties: How Do They Fit Into an Evolutionary Seed System?

I want to briefly mention the first breakout session I attended, Introduction to Organic On-Farm Plant Breeding, because it (pun alert) planted the seed in me that we can be empowered to rebuild and fortify our own on-farm and community seed systems. The session was presented by Dr. John Navazio. He told the story of a farmer who had, after extensive searching and trialing, found an open-pollinated carrot variety that fit his system. The seed company then stopped producing the seed and he was left without access to the variety. This motivated him to produce his own seed of this variety. He selected and adapted it and maintained it, becoming the sole source of the seed for his operation. Dr. Navazio then continued with a general overview of what to consider when growing and developing a variety for seed, such as what traits to evaluate and what traits to consider for organic production. Breeding in a nutshell, he said, includes choosing the right crop, learning the reproductive biology, establishing breeding goals, conducting trials, indentifying useful variation and fixing important traits in a population. He gave a general overview of each of these points and told the story of two other farmers who developed their own varieties on their farms.

While at the conference, a handful of Montana farmers and gardeners met with others who have developed a cooperative seed growers' network. Our seed system is becoming more and more consolidated in the hands of fewer and fewer companies who tie up valuable genetic resources and control more of our seed supply. And it has been said that whoever controls our seed supply controls our food supply.



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Inspired by the conference, we have begun to take steps to empower ourselves. We've begun a conversation about how we, as growers, can build and develop a local seed supply through a network of farmers and gardeners.

Our intention is to discover those plant varieties that grow well here and improve upon them, adapting them to our local conditions. We intend to grow, preserve and develop locally resilient and locally relevant seeds in the face of a changing climate and an ever more consolidated seed industry. Certified or not, we are committed to organic practices and recognizing the needs of organic farmers and gardeners.

We will encourage, share with, and mentor each other, and commit to growing open-pollinated seed crops, putting responsibility and ownership of locally resilient vegetables and grains in our own hands. While the work is important, we will enjoy the process and revel in the cultivation of these tiny life forms.

If anybody is interested in learning more, please contact me (see below).

Video of select conference proceedings can be viewed at the extension.org website at: www.extension.org/pages/61925/organic-seed-growers-conference-2012-selected-live-broadcasts.

The conference agenda and the official proceedings can be found at: www.seedalliance.org/organic-seed-growers-conference/2012_Seed_Growers_Conference/.

Jacob Cowgill owns and operates Prairie Heritage Farm outside of Conrad, Montana with his wife, Courtney, and 18-month old daughter, Willa. They grow organic vegetables, raise heritage turkeys on pasture, and grow a variety of ancient and heritage grains and seeds. He can be reached at (406) 396-1261 or by email at: jacobmontana@yahoo.com. More information on their farm can be found at www.PrairieHeritageFarm.com.

MOA's New Facebook Page

Don't worry, you can log on to the new MOA Facebook page without losing your soul! MOA Intern Kate Sheridan has built an information-packed web page that you can access without being a Facebook member.

Visit www.facebook.com/montanaorganic.

Or if you are a Facebook member, "Like" the page to get updates via your news feed and to comment on the articles.

Crop and Rotation Econ Spreadsheets

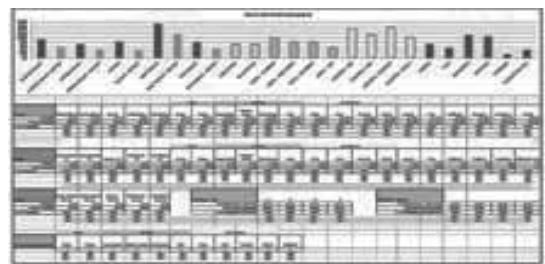
By Chad Lee, Business Development Officer, MDA

How do economic returns from organic systems compare with those from non-organic systems? What is the economic cost or benefit from including plow-down in a rotation? The Montana Department of Agriculture's interactive spreadsheets help farmers answer questions like these, assist them in considering all planting options and help them explore diverse rotations. The on-line spreadsheets allow farmers to compare the profitability of numerous crops and up to eight crop rotations. The spreadsheets and a guide can be downloaded from <http://agr.mt.gov/business/cropandrotationtools.asp>.

Default assumptions and rotations are set for conventional management systems. However, organic farmers can easily adjust yields, prices and input costs to be appropriate for organic crops. The spreadsheet makes use of drop-down boxes for making changes to crop type, crop sequence and field operations that comprise rotation modeling. Crop options allow selection of green manure (pea plowdown). The economic return after direct cost (per acre), direct labor and fuel consumption are calculated for individual crops and average return after direct cost is calculated for rotations. Charts are automatically generated for rotations, including a crop comparison chart that allows farmers to perform sensitivity analysis using graphical buttons to adjust yields and prices and see the economic impact in real-time.

Beyond being used for financial comparison and planning, the spreadsheets may have other uses. The process of designing crop rotations may help farmers to think through agronomic as well as production constraints. The spreadsheets might be used as a tool to help communicate with landlords to develop reasonable and fair rental agreements. Similarly, the spreadsheets could be used in the process of negotiating crop prices in instances where relationship-based marketing exists.

Contact Chad Lee (chlee@mt.gov or 444-0132) to get help using the spreadsheets. Suggestions for improvement are always welcome.



EU /U.S. Equivalence Arrangement

by Barbara Haumann, Organic Trade Association

Reprinted with permission from the Winter 2012 edition of The Organic Report published by the Organic Trade Association.

On Feb. 15 at BioFach 2012 in Nuremberg, Germany, officials from the United States and the European Union (EU) signed an historic arrangement between the world's two largest markets for organic food to recognize each other's organic standards as equivalent.

Under the agreement, the EU and United States will work together to promote strong organic programs, protect organic standards, enhance cooperation, and facilitate trade in organic products. Signing the agreement were Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Dacian Cioloș. Officials noted the arrangement will expand market access for organic producers and companies by reducing duplicative requirements and certification costs on both sides of the ocean while continuing to protect organic integrity.

"This monumental agreement will further create jobs in the already growing and healthy organic sector, spark additional market growth, and be mutually beneficial to farmers both in the United States and European Union as well as to consumers who choose organic products," said Christine Bushway, Executive Director and CEO of the U.S.-based Organic Trade Association (OTA), adding, "Equivalence with the EU will be an historic game changer."

As a result, certified organic products as of June 1 can move freely between the United States and EU borders provided they meet the terms of the new arrangement. Under the agreement, the EU will recognize USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) as equivalent to the EU Organic Program and allow products produced and certified as meeting NOP standards to be marketed as organic in the EU. Likewise, the United States will allow European products produced and certified under the EU Organic Program to be marketed as organic in the United States.

The agreement will allow access to each other's markets provided (1) antibiotics were not administered to animals for products entering the United States, and (2) antibiotics were not used to control fire blight in apples and pears for products entering the European Union. To facilitate trade, the EU and United States have agreed to promote electronic certification of import transaction certificates.

The arrangement is limited to organic products of U.S.

or EU origin produced, processed or packaged within these jurisdictions. Additionally, both programs have agreed to exchange information on animal welfare, and on methods to avoid contamination of organic products from genetically modified organisms. General country labeling requirements must still be met.

"On behalf of the U.S. organic industry, OTA extends its sincere appreciation to the U.S. Foreign Agricultural Service, National Organic Program, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and OTA's EU-U.S. Equivalence Task Force for all their efforts in maintaining and expanding foreign export markets for USDA certified organic products globally. The results are mutually beneficial arrangements with our major trading partners that uphold the integrity of food grown and labeled as organic," Bushway said.

Prior to this agreement, the EU was identified by the U.S. organic food and farming sector as its largest untapped export opportunity. The EU market for organic food and beverages in 2009-2010 was approximately \$26 billion, while the U.S. market totaled \$26.7 billion. Although the U.S. organic sector is creating jobs at four times the national rate, it has operated largely in an environment rife with trade barriers, with the exception of trade with Canada. Up until now, the costs of dual certification and minor standards variances have curtailed or discouraged investment in the development of export markets for U.S. organic food and farming,

"Eliminating the distraction of multi-standard organic certification will strengthen the application of organic standards nationwide. As a result of this agreement, we expect that more than 800 CCOF farmers and processors will see a reduction in their overall fees and complexity of certification. I cannot wait to tell this to our farming and processing clients who have been managing multiple certification programs for years. These dedicated individuals can now turn their attention to managing their operations and producing more organic goods instead of chasing paperwork for overlapping standards," said Jake Lewin, Chief Certification Officer for California Certified Organic Farmers.

Added Lynn Clarkson, president of Clarkson Grain Co. Inc., "This is welcome news for the U.S. organic grain industry, which will see its products more easily traded and welcomed in the burgeoning EU market. Organic grains are a vital part of organic offerings, and crucial to global trade."

More details about this historic agreement are available on OTA's website at www.ota.com/GlobalMarkets/US-EU-Organic-Equivalence-Arrangement.html.

Status of Legume Inoculants

by Doug Crabtree, Montana Dept. of Ag.

There have been several changes to the corporate ownership of manufacturers, product names, ingredients, processing methods and registration status of legume inoculants. As you prepare for the 2012 seeding season, it is likely that the inoculant that you have used in the past is no longer available. The following is some information that may help you in selecting inoculant products for your organic legume crops.

The (previous) manufacturer of Nitragin® Gold and NitraStik™-C inoculants, EMD Crop Bioscience, Inc., is no longer in business. The new company, Novozymes (www.bioag.novozymes.com) no longer makes the NitraStik™ products.

At least two other companies, Becker Underwood, LTD (www.beckerunderwood.com) and INTX Microbials, LLC (<http://intxllc.com>), manufacture inoculants that may be used with legume crops grown in Montana. Each of these companies offers a variety of inoculant products and formulations. It is beyond the scope of this article to name or recommend individual products. There are several products that are acceptable for use in organic systems. However, there are also numerous inoculants that are NOT acceptable for organic production. Once you determine a product that you would like to use, you should verify its status with your certifying agent.

Legume inoculants are preparations of rhizobium bacteria and carriers. When soil is inoculated with the proper strain of rhizobium, the bacteria form a symbiotic relationship with legume-plant roots. The rhizobia convert atmospheric nitrogen to a plant-available form, which is used by the plant. The plant, in turn, provides nutrients to the bacteria. There are three types of inoculant products, based on the type of carrier added to the bacteria: granular, liquid and peat-based.

Granular inoculants have the bacteria encapsulated in a clay (or similar material) granule. These inoculants must be applied separate from the seed and require specialized equipment.

Liquid inoculants are suspensions of bacteria in water. These inoculants are generally not recommended for use in Montana, as our dry soils and climate tend to evaporate the (water) carrier before the bacteria can attach to the seed.

Peat-based inoculants feature a peat carrier, impregnated with the rhizobium bacteria. These are the most common form of inoculant. They are blended directly with legume seed and applied through the drill, planter or air seeder. Often a "sticking agent" is added to help the product adhere to the seed.

There are three primary concerns for organic growers wishing to use inoculants. First, some of the rhizobium bacteria are created through genetic engineering, which is prohibited for use in organic production. Some inoculant products include synthetic substances

used as coating materials or sticking agents. These synthetic substances are prohibited for use in organic production.

Finally, peat-based inoculants use peat, which is (usually) sterilized by use of radiation.

While, the use of irradiation is prohibited in organic production, the use of sterilized peat

as part of an inoculant product, is allowed, at least by most organic certifiers.

In the past, several inoculant products were registered with the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) and "listed" as allowed. This listing made it convenient to determine products that were acceptable for use in organic production. Very few of the currently-available inoculants are OMRI-listed. So, organic producers must verify the acceptability of products with their certifier BEFORE using the product.

Please understand that it is the responsibility of each producer to specify all products (including inoculants) used in organic crop production in their Organic System Plan; to maintain documentation (including labels, invoices, GMO disclosures, and MSDS sheets) for all products; and to make such documentation available for review at your annual inspection. If you have any questions about the use of inoculants, please contact your certifier.

Organic producers must verify the acceptability of products with their certifier BEFORE using the product

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NOSB Update by Barry Flamm

Visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org/nosb.htm

Most NOSB work is done by the standing committees: Certification, Accreditation and Compliance Committee; Crops Committee; Handling Committee; Livestock Committee; Materials Committee; and the Policy Development Committee. In the fall 2010, the Policy and Procedures Manual was amended to allow the Board Chair to establish an Ad Hoc Committee of Board Members to develop policy and guidance on specific issues that involve multiple standing committees' jurisdictions, or for issues or tasks that are very large and require additional resources to complete. Probably nothing fits this description better than the GE/GMO issue, as illustrated by the numerous public requests this past year for the Board to take collective action. I think it is correct to say all Board Members are concerned about the effects of GMOs on organics, but there was not agreement on the approach the Board should take. Therefore, upon being elected Chair, I decided to establish a GMO Ad Hoc committee with representatives from each of the standing

(NOSB established) a
GMO ad hoc committee with
representatives from each of
the standing committees

committees, nominated by the standing committee chair. I also added a member-at-large for a committee total of seven, representing the diverse interests and expertise of the Board. Zea Sonnabend was appointed Chair of the GMO Ad Hoc Committee and was given short-term and long-term goals, the elaboration of which will be discussed at the Spring Board Meeting.

The Spring Board Meeting will be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico May 22-25. To improve decision making and overall meeting efficiency, the Board's Executive Committee agreed to a revision in the typical NOSB meeting format. The major change is that presentations of public comments will be grouped by subject areas: all persons wishing to comment must sign up in advance per instructions in the

Federal Register notice signing up for one comment period to address one committee's proposal or proposals, or if they have comments pertaining to more than one committee or comments on subjects not on the agenda, they should sign up for the open public comment period on the first day.

For example, on Wednesday morning, the Compli-



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ance, Accreditation and Certification Committee (CACC) will present committee proposals and summarize written public comments that were received during the comment period. This will be followed by oral comments from the public that have signed up to comment on CACC proposals. The committee modifies their proposal as necessary. If more time is needed for consideration, further action can be postponed until Friday morning. If additional time is not needed, the Board will vote on the proposal. Recent Board Meeting agendas had Committee proposals being presented on the second day, public comments rather randomly presented on the first and third day and voting on the fourth and last day. This arrangement often made it difficult to remember and weigh the pro and con arguments for a given proposal. We hope the new approach will make for the best possible decisions in a more efficient way.

The meeting agenda topics can be seen on the NOSB website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nosb>. I believe of special interest to MOA members will be: proposals on GMOs by the Ad Hoc and Livestock committees; Materials Committee research priorities framework; CACC proposals on review criteria for Material Review Organizations; and Crops Committee recommendation on handling list 3 inerts.

A reminder: this is my last year on the NOSB Board and my position as one of the three Environmental/Resource Conservation Members is the only vacancy for 2013. Please give it some thought!

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. My phone number is 406-883-2858, or you can email me at barryexplorer@yahoo.com.

MDA Driftwatch Service

The Montana Department of Agriculture is implementing a new service to producers of sensitive crops and pesticide aerial and ground applicators. This service called "DriftWatch" will be implemented for the 2012 growing season. It's a website produced by Purdue University where sensitive crops can be registered and then viewed by, but not limited to, pesticide applicators (both aerial and ground) to see where the sensitive crops are located. By becoming aware of the location, they can take measures to avoid and possibly eliminate any potential of pesticide drift onto these crops.

Visit the MDA website at www.agr.mt.gov. For further information, contact Lynn Knight at lknight@mt.gov or 406-444-5471 or Doug Crabtree at dcrabtree@mt.gov or 406-444-9421.

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The Oil Barn *continued from p. 5*

then recover the used oil and clean it up so as to be ready for use as SVO. In this way, the old debate of food versus fuel is avoided as the hi-oleic safflower oil is used as both.

With this vision and the production of food grade oil well under way, there only remained the last piece of the circle to be put in place. To accomplish this goal, in March of 2012, The Oil Barn hired John Mason out of Missoula to work full time on setting up a waste oil processing facility. As a recent graduate of the University of Montana and being naturally mechanical, John has been involved in creating biodiesel, SVO fuel and SVO compatible engine modifications for over eight years and brings great expertise to the project.

It is hoped that by the time of dedication and open house for the Oil Barn on July 21, 2012, in Big Sandy, everything will be in place for a model that could be duplicated throughout the state.

For more information about the Oil Barn and the Open House, contact Andrew Long at 406-378-2106.



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Calendar of Events

www.montanaorganicassociation.org/events.htm

NOP/NOSB Meeting

The Spring Board meeting will be May 21-24 in Old Town Albuquerque, NM.

The Xerces Society is holding two Pollinator Conservation Planning Short Courses in MT:

Bridger, MT, June 12, 2012

Great Falls, MT, June 14, 2012

Visit www.xerces.org/events for more information.

Oil Barn Dedication and Open House

July 21, 2012

Kamut International, 325 Kamut Lane, Big Sandy, MT 59520 . For more information, phone Andrew Long at (406) 378-2106.

SARE 2011 Producer Research & Education Grant Farm Tour - Organic Control of Perennial Weeds With Vinegar & Biologicals

July 24, 2012, 11am -2 pm (lunch at noon)

Tour of Bob Herdegan's ranch south of Chinook, 4220 Birdtail Road.

For more information, visit www.sare.org or contact Jess Alger at (406) 799-3528.

MOA Farm Tour

Date TBD - Late July/Early Aug

Visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org/events.htm for details.

Mark your calendar for MOA's upcoming conference November 30 - December 1, 2012 at the Holiday Inn in Helena. Visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org for updates.

Call to Action: GE 2,4-D/Corn

Ask Senators Max Baucus (202-224-2651) and Jon Tester (202-224-2644) to weigh in on genetically engineered (GE) 2,4-D tolerant corn. Say you want them to contact USDA Secretary Vilsack to tell him that this new generation of GE crops designed to survive repeated spraying of the herbicide 2,4-D is a bad idea. Allowing this GE corn trait on the market will drive up use of an antiquated, dangerous herbicide that is associated with cancer, reproductive toxicity and endocrine disruption. Furthermore, GE corn continues to impact the genetic integrity of organic seeds and crops, adding more costs and risks for organic producers.

More Great Content on the Web

Visit MOA's website at www.montanaorganicassociation.org for extended content, including information on GMOs, financial assistance, Worker's Safety, the latest news affecting organics and more.

Organic Matters Ad Rates

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

MOA Membership Benefits

MOA has restructured its membership levels and has eliminated the Living Lightly membership category. Here are the new membership levels (available when you sign up now or renew your current membership) and you'll find one to suit your needs.

Individual . . . \$30

Household . . . \$50 (includes 2 memberships)

Farm/Ranch/Business . . . \$75 (5% discount on newsletter ads and 40-word online directory listing with your logo and link to your website)

Organic Business . . . \$250 (10% discount on newsletter ads and 100-word online directory listing with your logo and link to your website)

Lifetime . . . \$750

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 and the annual conference, 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.

Use the sign up form on the right or visit our website at www.montanaorganicassociation.org/joinus.htm. Join today and support organics!

MOA Welcomes New Intern

Kate Sheridan is a second year graduate student in the Environmental Studies program. She is focusing on urban agriculture, particularly microlivestock, for her thesis, while simultaneously developing connections to the agricultural community in Montana. She spent last summer working at Orchard Gardens for Garden City Harvest and interned at Foothill Farm in St. Ignatius. Her academic adviser, Neva Hassanein, introduced her to the AERO community and helped her forge a connection with CFAC for her thesis research.



Kate is excited to bring her skills to MOA. "Working with MOA is an invaluable opportunity for me to gain a deeper understanding of organic farming in Montana, learn from farmers and people working within the food movement, and build on my communication and outreach skills."

Please sign me up as a MOA Member!

Name: _____

Farm or Business: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Membership Levels: (effective May 1, 2011)

- Individual.....\$30
- Family.....\$50 (includes two memberships)
- Farm/Ranch/Business....\$75 (includes a 5% discount on newsletter ads and an online directory listing)
- 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

Here I am with the Easter weekend fishing report from the banks of the Missouri River. With about five inches of heavy, wet snow across the fields, I took a day off. (Who knew that by the time this newsletter heads out for mailing, we would have such a warm up?)

Over the past few months, I have been to various events representing MOA, and it looks to be a busy Spring. Most recently, I spoke on a panel with Senator Max Baucus about the new Farm Bill, if indeed we get a new one. The word is, they want to get the bill out this month.

One area of interest to everyone is the beginning farmer. No matter what size, what the product, the question is, "How is the beginning producer going to get started financially?"

Many ideas came from the attendees, but Senator Baucus states there will only be room for one good idea in the proposed Farm Bill. Baucus suggested that all farm and ranch groups get together and

make one mutual agreed upon proposal. What a great idea! A statewide, 100%-represented think tank, a "get 'er done" group. Not to be confused with Democrat, Republican, Tea, Decaf, with or without cream, but with any and all producers, beginning and retiring.

Another topic talked about was the school lunch program and all the budget cuts. What will be left to feed the kids? Another concern: why is the culinary program being taken away? By not educating students on cooking with good and healthy options, their options are narrowed to eat fast food.

The Super Bowl came and went and the Final Four made their mark. I don't remember the score of the game or even who won. But, I do remember and know that organic is still in demand and that organic gives a choice, not only for the consumers, but to the growers as well.

Be safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daryl', written in a cursive style.

Daryl Lassila, MOA Board Chairman