

Organic Matters

MOA's Summer Farm Tour Coming June 29, 2013

by Nate Brown, MOA Board Member

Save the date for MOA's Summer Farm Tour on Saturday, June 29, starting at 1pm. MOA will be touring three farms in the Bozeman area: C5 Organics, Amaltheia Organic Dairy and MSU's Towne's Harvest.

The tour will start at C5 Organics, 3211 Reese Creek Road, Belgrade, MT 59714. Brian Goldhahn operates C5 Organics and has been Certified Organic since 2004. He raises grass-finished beef, hay and small grains. He will talk about his operation and the marketing of grass-finished beef.

The second stop will be just up the road at Amaltheia Organic Dairy. Amaltheia raises organic dairy goats to make cheese from the milk. They also have pastured, whey-fed pigs and raise vegetables. We will tour the milking parlor and discuss rationing and pastures for the goats, raising pigs outside in Montana, field and

high tunnel vegetable production, and composting to improve soil fertility.

The final stop will be at Towne's Harvest on the Montana State University campus. There we will see their organic vegetable production and hear about the marketing of vegetables. Towne's Harvest is a key component of MSU's Sustainable Foods and Bioenergy Systems where students get hands-on instruction in organic vegetable systems.

Participants can show up at C5 Organics or take the bus from Towne's Harvest, which will transport to all the tour spots. Appetizers will follow after the tour and give attendees a chance to visit.

The tour fee is \$15.00 for adults, \$5.00 for students, and kids are free. RSVPs are encouraged by calling Nate at (406)-579-6439 or emailing him at g.nathanbrown@gmail.com.



Organic Advisory and Education Council Up and Running

by Ole Norgaard, OAEC Board Member

After spending many months creating the structure for the Organic Advisory and Education Council (OAEC), the board is delighted to have begun working to help Montana's organic community.

In late 2012 and early 2013, OAEC sent surveys to Montana's organic grain farmers as well as to organic and homegrown vegetable growers. Thanks to those that took the time to fill out the

survey forms. The survey's purpose is to identify the greatest challenges for each group of organic producers. The complexity of this project has been daunting due to the high number of unique organic operations in Montana. Our goal is to use the data gathered from the surveys to provide direction to researchers regarding the needs of Montana's organic farmers and ranchers.

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

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OAEC *continued from p. 1*

Our next round of surveys will be sent to fruit growers and ranchers, so please consider participating in this survey when the time comes.

In late February, OAEC's board met in Bozeman. Time was spent reviewing our survey projects, planning 2013 goals, setting a budget for the year and creating a workable fundraising plan. The plan includes opportunities for producers, processors, handlers, researchers, consumers, financial institutions, suppliers and other organizations to help move organic research, education and outreach forward.

We were also able to meet with a large group of MSU researchers, staff, and students, and in a roundtable format, we presented preliminary survey report findings. This meeting was very interactive and stimulated a positive, open and healthy discussion. The board was very encouraged by all the positive feedback that it received. We were presented with a research project focusing on non-chemical controls of field bindweed and thistle issues. This project, with

short notice and OAEC's low 2012 research budget, could not be supported at the time, but we were able to align survey participants with MSU staff and anticipate future interaction.

The board recognizes that bringing young people into organic farming is very important, so it has begun working to create opportunities for FFA, 4H and other youth endeavors to receive small grants for organic projects. We believe that with the guidance of local organic operators and some financial support, we can introduce several young people into organic agriculture.

We are very excited to be moving forward and we appreciate the interest and support of all MOA members. As time moves on and different opportunities arise, we hope that you will continue to support our efforts.

Lastly, a special thanks goes to the North Central GOA chapter and Cliff Benjamin for their recent generous support.



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GMOs: What's Next? by Susan Waters, MOA Member

California's Proposition 37, which would require labeling for genetically modified organisms (GMOs), was defeated in the November 2012 election but was viewed by advocates as a major test in the fight against GMOs.

"It was not a referendum on whether the people wanted labeling, but the success of a disinformation campaign costing about \$1 million per day," according to Jeffrey Smith of the Institute for Responsible Technology.

The anti-GMO food movement was uplifted from the effort, which resulted in a huge boost in awareness about GMOs across the country. "California's Prop. 37 campaign was the latest (and greatest) expression of the rising anti-GMO tide in the U.S. that has swelled over the last 2-3 years," says Smith. "Other expressions have included the popularity of the Non-GMO label in grocery stores, the huge number of activists working on GMO issues, the unprecedented GMO coverage in the media and the state legislatures that consider GMO labeling bills. These are all early signs of a coming tipping point of consumer rejection."

As of early April and following the recent passage of H.112, the state of Vermont was poised to become the first in the nation to mandate the labeling of GMOs. This bill would require producers to put labels on raw agricultural, processed and packaged food products that contain GMO ingredients. Similar versions of the bill were introduced in both 2011 and 2012, but were thwarted by Monsanto's threats to sue the state.

In Washington State, activists successfully gathered the needed signatures to submit I-522 (The People's Right to Know Genetically Engineered Food Act) for the 2013 ballot. The initiative will require mandatory labeling of GMOs by July 2015. But, unlike the failed California proposition, Washington's initiative has strong support from organic and conventional farmers and ranchers and the state's Governor is a long-term supporter of both organic agriculture and GMO labeling.

Also by early April, at least 30 states had introduced GMO labeling laws. Connecticut passed a bill out of the Public Health Committee by an overwhelming majority vote of 23-4. Massachusetts has five bills currently pending. A legislative bill recently introduced in Oregon would require that all GMOs be properly

labeled by 2014, and if not, they will be deemed misbranded and its manufacturer held liable for breaking the state's food labeling requirements.

Also introduced in Oregon, is a bill prohibiting the import and sale of genetically modified salmon, the first transgenic animal ever to be preliminarily approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for human consumption. The Institute for Responsible Technology, along with a coalition of thirty consumer, food safety, fishing, environmental, sustainable agriculture, parent, public health and animal health and welfare organizations, representing millions of members, sent a strong statement to the nation's top grocery stores asking them to commit to not sell genetically engineered fish.

Activists in Montana are taking matters into their own hands. Sheree Tompkins stepped up to be the Tipping Point Network coordinator in Montana, part of a network of activists across the country working to educate their communities on the dangers of GMOs. One of the first educational events in Montana this year was a seed swap in Kalispell where Judy Owsowitz, MOA Board Member, was a keynote speaker. "We eventually want to reach out to the other 50-plus Montana members of the Tipping Point Network to educate others in their areas," says Tompkins.

Ultimately, consumers have the last word on the success or failure of GMO foods and the companies that produce or sell them. Since nearly half of the money to defeat California's Prop. 37 came from several multinational food and beverage companies (which also own some of the large organic brands), hundreds of thousands of people are hounding these companies and boycotting their products, even the organic ones.

Consumers hammered many of Whole Food Markets' organic and natural brands— "traitor" brands, as they're called—like Coca-Cola's Honest Tea, General Mills' Muir Glen and Kellogg's Kashi cereals, because their parent companies had contributed millions to defeat Prop 37. This consumer backlash, as well as a viral video showing store employees misinforming consumers, caused Whole Foods to make the decision that its U.S. and Canadian stores will be required to label all genetically engineered (GE) foods in its stores by 2018.

continued on p. 4



The USDA Organic Seal is still the best assurance the product is free of GMOs.

GMOs continued from p. 3

In the meantime, no-GMO activists still have their work cut out for them.

President Obama outraged food activists in late March when he signed the spending bill HR 933 Continuing Resolution into law, which contained a buried rider that critics have dubbed the "Monsanto Protection Act." This rider allows Monsanto to override U.S. federal courts on the issue of planting experimental genetically engineered crops even if those experimental crops are found to be dangerous to health or to cause runaway crop plagues. The U.S. government now has no judicial power to stop them from being planted and harvested.

Congress held no hearings on this controversial rider and many Democrats in the Committee were unaware of its presence in the Continuing Resolution (CR). Senators Tester, Boxer, Gillibrand, Leahy, Begich and Blumenthal have all spoken out against the rider and offered an amendment to strike the rider from the Senate CR. Despite receiving calls and emails from hundreds of thousands of citizens opposing the industry-driven rider and supporting the amendment to strike it, the amendment was ultimately never voted on. Since President Obama signed HR 933 into law, the Monsanto Protection Act rider will be alive for the six-month duration of the temporary spending bill. Many fear the damage that could be done, even in that short period, and efforts are already underway to protest its continuation.

Currently, the amount of land being used to cultivate GMOs is the highest it has ever been, according to data compiled by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications. The report reveals that an astounding 420 million acres of land in 28 countries are currently growing GM crops. This amount is six percent higher than the roughly 410 million land acres that contained GM crops in 2011.

In the fight against all of these GMO invasions, certified organic is still the gold standard to use to avoid GMOs on our plates. With informed consumers driving up the demand for certified organic, more farmers and ranchers are converting to organic and processors, distributors and retailers are getting more organic products into stores and restaurants.

According to the USDA National Organic Program, 17,750 organic farms and processing facilities in the United States were certified to the USDA organic regulations by the end of 2012. That's approximately a 240 percent increase since NOP's tracking began in 2002. Worldwide, there are now approximately 25,000 certified organic operators across more than 100 countries.

What's happened in the last six months has been a lesson in the power of grassroots advocacy and marketplace pressure. Because of the accumulated support for Prop. 37, activists inspired groups in other states to work together. Boycotting the food companies who sided with the biotech industry sent an ultimatum to those companies and their retailers. Activists and consumers are building political pressure against politicians in state and federal government who support GMOs.

But it's also up to the organic community to continue to educate consumers about the dangers of GMOs and to spread the word that the certified organic label is the very best assurance that the product is free from dangerous chemicals and doesn't contain GMOs.

Working together is the most powerful way to assure that we reach the critical tipping point of GMO rejection.

Sources:

USDA National Organic Program, Frederick Ravid of ProOrganic.org, Organic Consumers Association, Institute for Responsible Technology, Tipping Point Network, NaturalNews.com, Altnet.org, Center for Food Safety, Right to Know GMO.

Helpful Links:

Understanding GMOs and their Effects, *Organic Matters*, Fall 2012, p.5: www.montanaorganicassociation.org/publications.htm (click on Fall 2012 issue)

Tipping Point Network: www.responsibletechnology.org/tpn

Non-GMO Project: www.nongmoproject.org

MOA's No-GMO webpage: www.montanaorganicassociation.org/gmo.htm



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Organics in 4H by Nate Powell-Palm, MOA Member

As a young organic cattle breeder, my scattered breeding schedule resulted in a couple of December calves. One of those calves became the first certified organic steer to compete at the Gallatin County Summer Fair. This calf might very well be a case study for a different type of agricultural education in 4-H.

In the winter of 2011, I was home from Iowa for Christmas when my brother, Ian, decided he would like to take one of my steer calves to the Gallatin County Fair.

Both Ian and I had raised 4-H steers in the past and had fed them certified organic peas and wheat. This time around we decided to stick with a 100% grass diet. The benefits to us were obvious: cheaper feed would mean more profit at the end of the project; all the feed could be obtained within a 20-mile radius of our farm; and, if we could get the steer to make weight, people would likely notice that raising steers in 4-H does not have to be based on a corn-centered, feedlot model.

When he was first weighed in during January 2012 at one year old, the steer clocked in at 975 lbs. By April, Ian had bulked him up to 1050 and with our breath held, he tipped the scale at 1108 at the Fair weigh-in. For much of the project we weren't sure if the hot weather and mild-protein grasses were going to keep him from hitting the 1100 lb minimum by Fair time.

Having made weight by Fair, we spread the word about how our grass-fed steer had kept up with his grain-fed competitors. The project leaders were very supportive and several local media outlets covered the story of *Gallatin County's first certified organic steer*. However, the best news of the project came when the carcass data arrived several weeks after fair. I had assumed that our lean steer would land at the bottom of the carcass competition due to a lack of marbling. But we were pleasantly surprised when he ended up placing right in the middle of the group of 30 steers.

Ian did a great job bringing the steer to market weight and he was rewarded by the high price the steer fetched at the 4-H auction. Since the fair, several project leaders have met to draft a new steer project that would be geared specifically towards grass-fed steers.

Ultimately, the goal is to develop a hybrid grass-fed, certified organic steer project which would co-exist under the same leadership as the conventional steer project. The only difference between the two projects would be the workshops and rules tailored specifically to grass-fed beef production.

By showing grass-fed organic steers alongside the conventional steers, I believe that the education needed to raise grass-fed beef will be offered to a larger group of youths.

Most youth in the 4-H steer program come from non-organic agriculture backgrounds. For many of these kids, the terms "organic" and "grass-fed" are synonymous with misconceptions such as "organics means you're too lazy to vaccinate." By creating a program that will exist side-by-side with the conventional steer program, the leaders of this project hope to normalize organics and bring about significant education on topics related to grass-fed beef production.

In the 4-H beef project, steers are the common denominator for every member. By showing grass-fed organic steers alongside the conventional steers, I believe that the education needed to raise grass-fed beef will be offered to a larger group of youths. By giving kids an early chance to engage in the niche markets associated with organics and grass-fed beef production, a greater understanding of the benefits of organics will be had by a much larger pool of participants. And through this expanded understanding, a stronger, more locally-oriented beef industry will be fostered.



Words to Live By

Deciphering And Defining Food Labeling

by Colter Pedersen

If knowledge is power, as the saying goes, then a lack of understanding leaves people vulnerable. And as more and more evidence proves that the food we eat has profound effects on our health, transparency and ease of understanding food labels is quickly becoming a priority.

As a grocery manager for 2J's Fresh Market in Great Falls, I have experienced first hand the confusion consumers often come across with labeling. And with so many different terms getting tossed around in many different contexts, it's easy to understand their uncertainty. Luckily, most labels are meant to inform the consumer (though unfortunately, a few are meant to mislead them). So with the goal of empowering consumers to make well-informed decisions in mind, lets briefly define and describe some key food labeling terms and designations, starting with the gold standard.

Certified Organic

Organic food is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations.

- Organic meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones.
- Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation.
- Before a product can be labeled "organic," a Government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards.
- Companies that handle or process organic food before it gets to your local supermarket or restaurant must be certified too.
- It is important to recognize that organic certification addresses the process involved in producing and handling a product. Organic certification is a process claim, not a product claim, and uses three different designations: 100% Organic, Organic, and Made with Organic Ingredients.

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GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms)

Plants or animals created through the gene splicing techniques of biotechnology (also called genetic engineering, or GE). This experimental technology merges DNA from different species, creating unstable combinations of plant, animal, bacterial and viral genes that cannot occur in nature or in traditional crossbreeding.

- Most developed nations do not consider GMOs to be safe.
- While the U.S. has relatively lax regulations, many countries, including Australia, Japan and all of the European Union have significant restrictions or outright bans on the production and sales of GMOs.

Natural

As required by the USDA, meat, poultry, and egg products labeled as “natural” must be minimally processed and contain no artificial ingredients.

- However, the natural label does not include any standards regarding farm practices and only applies to processing of meat and egg products. There are no standards or regulations for the labeling of natural food products if they do not contain meat or eggs.

“To keep the body in good health is a duty, otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear.”

~Buddha



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MOA Out and About

by Daryl Lassila, MOA Board Chair

Look Who's at the Producers' Fair

This past February, MOA was invited to participate in the Local Producers' Fair at the Good Earth Market in Billings. MOA's volunteers handed out literature and educated hundreds of customers about certified organics. The MOA volunteers managed to compete for attention, even when so many great food samples were offered at vendors' tables.

The Producers' Fair is a chance for customers to meet the growers and producers of the numerous local products available in the store. This bi-annual event hosted 26 local vendors, promoting everything from organic produce and meat to makers of organic health and home products. A hearty thanks goes to the Good Earth Market for this opportunity to spread the word about certified organics in Montana.

The Size of 4% at the Co-op

And in March, MOA was the recipient of the Community Food Co-op's 4% Day Grant Event at their store in Bozeman. MOA set up an information table at the event and took advantage of a great opportunity to educate the Co-op's customers about organics and spread the word about MOA. Some had never heard of us, but a lot thanked us for promoting organics.

The Co-op established the 4% Day Grant program in 2001. Four percent of the Co-op's sales on the fourth Friday of each month is given to an organization, group, individual or project whose efforts are in line with their mission. That single digit number of 4% tallied up to over \$1800, plus we got 100% of the praise from customers and 100% of the public relations. That's a total contribution to MOA that we can't thank the Co-op enough for.



Wes Henthorne, Nate Brown and Chaz Holt at the Community Food Co-op.
Photo by Tara Blyth.

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MOA Member Profile: Todd and Rebecca Ulizio of Ten Lakes Farm

by Wes Gibbs, MOA Board Member

Todd and Rebecca Ulizio took to heart the saying they love: "Be the change you want to see in the world." Soon after meeting in 2007, the couple started from scratch to develop their organic vegetable farm—Ten Lakes Farm—about five miles south of Eureka, Montana.

"Our current food system is broken in so many ways, but all we're really empowered to do is lead by example," said Rebecca. "We believe in a food system based on human and environmental health."

Todd and Rebecca share a passion for farming and being outdoors. Rebecca has an Agro-ecology background, while Todd grew up on a vegetable farm and has an education in Wildlife Biology. Now nearly six years later, with about nine acres under full-scale production, the Ulizio's believe in working hard, but for them working smart has also been important.

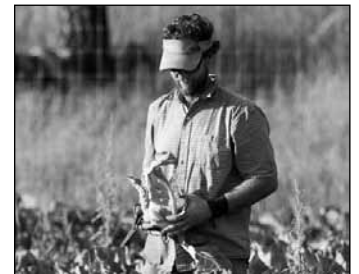
"Vegetable farming in Montana is hard no matter what," said Todd. "But being smart about how we do things and making the process more efficient has really been the difference between success and burn-out. We've tried to put systems in place for each facet of the farm so that over time we get more efficient. We try to stay on top of best practices."

The Ulizios use a greenhouse, hoop houses and various high tunnels to extend their growing season. They will also count on the help of four apprentices during the 2013 season.

About three-quarters of their production is sold through CSA shares. The remainder is marketed through two farmers markets, two restaurants and occasional wholesale accounts.

Reflecting on their experience, Todd and Rebecca recognize they have successfully faced challenges common to all farmers. "In a lot of ways, the growing of the food has been the easy part. Building infrastructure, dealing with volatile weather and managing our stress has been much more difficult," said Rebecca.

Visitors are welcome to Ten Lakes Farm. The website is www.tenlakesfarm.com, where contact information can be found.



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Barngrover Joins Timeless Seeds

Jim Barngrover, MOA member and the 2009 MOA Lifetime of Service award winner, has joined the staff of Timeless Seeds, Inc. of Conrad. Jim's duties will include grower communications, organic production contracting, procurement and sales of bulk organic commodities.

"We have found that the market for Timeless products, especially our organic lentils and feed grains, has increased dramatically in recent years," according to Jim. "There are tremendous opportunities for organic growers to diversify their rotations with profitable soil-building pulse crops that can be sold into both food and feed markets."

"My job will be to match acres to markets and to build long-term relationships with both growers and buyers, which will enhance the organic industry in Montana."

Organic Matters Ad Rates

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

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

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Five Years at NOSB by Barry Flamm

Visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org/nosb.htm

Shortly after returning from a biodiversity conservation assignment in the Xian, China area in the summer of 2007, I received a call from MOA. There was a vacancy on the National Organic Standards Board and MOA wanted to nominate me for it. MOA would submit a letter of recommendation and I obtained others from Senator Tester, the former Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, Staff Director of the President's Council on Environmental Quality and a Deputy Chief of the Forest Service. In January 2008, I was notified I had been appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture to an Environmental seat on the Board to serve a five-year term beginning in late January. Soon I was appointed Policy Vice Chair, followed by being made Policy Chair – a position I held until I was elected Board Chair in the fall of 2011, with a term that lasted through January, 2013.

At the time of my appointment, the National Organic Program's (NOP) staff numbered seven, with a budget of \$1.5 million. In November 2008, President Obama was elected and change happened. Tom Vilsack was appointed Secretary of Agriculture and Dr. Kathleen Merrigan as Deputy Secretary. Dr. Merrigan was one of the authors of the Organic Food Production Act, which guides all of organics, and she also established the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB).

Miles McEvoy, head of the Washington State organic program, was selected to head the NOP as a Deputy Administrator in the Agricultural Marketing Service. By 2010, the NOP's budget was \$6.967 million and the staff had grown to 31. The Secretary also established an Organic Coordinator for USDA with a coordinating committee consisting of reps from USDA Agencies that have a role to play in organics. Organic food production was the fastest growing sector of U.S. agriculture and it had finally gained respect in the Department.

During my tenure as Chair of the Policy Development Committee (PDC), the committee reviewed and strengthened the Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM), which guides the Board's operations. Important proposals for changes originate from the public and all proposed changes and additions are done with their participation and voted on at the public meetings.

In my view, one of the most important changes the PDC directed was the revamping of the "Sunset" procedures being followed by the Board and ordered by the NOP. The "Organic Food Production Act of 1990" requires that any agriculture product sold or labeled

as organic shall have been produced and handled without the use of synthetic chemicals except as otherwise provided in this Act. The "otherwise" is further defined as requiring the Secretary to establish a National List of approved and prohibited substances. The Act then provides stringent guidelines for determining which synthetics may be allowed and which natural substances should be prohibited. This is where the NOSB comes in, because the National List established by the Secretary is based upon a proposed list or amendments to the National List developed by the NOSB, giving the Board considerable power and lots of work.

The Act also has a "Sunset Provision" that no exemption or prohibition in the National List shall be valid unless the NOSB has reviewed them within five years of being adopted and within each five years thereafter. Many of us believed that the Act and the integrity of organics required a rigorous review of the materials up for sunset. For this reason, the PDC proposed a revision of the PPM Sunset Procedures to direct a re-review of the substances' effect on human health, environment, biodiversity, consistency with organic farming and handling. Also to be considered were alternative practices or more suitable materials available to make the material unnecessary.

The Board is also charged with advising the Secretary on any other aspects of implementing the Act. Thus, the Board is involved in everything organic.

Space is limited here, but to show you the breadth and width of the topics covered during my tenure and all the hard work the Board and public were involved in, please visit the MOA NOSB website at: www.montanaorganicassociation.org/nosb.htm to read some of the topics considered at Board Meetings during my five-year term.

Organics faces many challenges. GMOs are a serious threat to organic agriculture. Maintaining high standards is vital and consumer trust is essential. Some funding for NOP, organic research and other important programs may be lost. Other labels such as "natural" will continue to try to erode "organic," confusing consumers and cutting into the organic market. The people of MOA are a model of what organics is about.

Stay strong and continue to be an example for the rest.

It was an honor to serve you and the entire organic community on the NOSB.

Editor's Note: MOA cannot thank Barry enough for his years of tireless work to keep the integrity in organics, not just on an international and national level, but also right here in Montana. Good luck with all your future endeavors, Barry.

Join MOA on Facebook

Three cheers to Casey Bailey and his volunteers for hosting such an informative and successful MOA Facebook page. MOA reached 1,142 people in the last week in March and has over 160 Facebook "likes."

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


Calendar of Events

www.montanaorganicassociation.org/events.htm


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A Victory for Organics

A little known fact is that apples and pears produced organically can be sprayed with antibiotics to minimize crop loss associated with fire blight. Concerned about the overuse of these sprays, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) informed growers the practice would be forbidden after 2014. Due to pressure from the organic apple and pear industry, the date was to be pushed back to 2016.

Thanks to thousands of submitted comments, the NOSB was convinced not to extend the allowance of the antibiotic tetracycline beyond 2014 for organic apple and pear production. This decision is a victory for the organic standards and advances efforts to preserve the continued effectiveness of antibiotics. Antibiotics are not allowed in the production of any other organic food, including organic poultry and livestock.

The vote came after extended public testimony where some apple and pear growers testified about concerns that they may not have adequate alternatives to prevent fire blight disease that could arise in their orchards. But, as scientists discussed at the meeting, a range of orchard management practices, as well as a substitute for the use of tetracycline, will be available this year.

Source: Center for Food Safety

NOSB Conflict of Interest Letter

On March 29, 2013, Miles McEvoy, Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program, sent a memorandum to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) providing guidelines to NOSB members about recognizing and reporting conflicts of interest and appearance concerns. He sums up his concerns in the letter's conclusion:

"The organic community has voiced great interest in establishing clear definitions and procedures related to conflict of interest, particularly with respect to NOSB operations. Upfront identification of appearance concerns is a critical part of each NOSB member's role. Effective from the date of this memorandum, if an NOSB member fails to disclose having a conflict of interest and votes on the item where a conflict exists, and that conflict of interest is later revealed, it may lead to a reconsideration of the impacted vote by the NOP. As such, the NOP strongly encourages NOSB members to adequately assess any potential conflicts, and to discuss scenarios with the NOP as needed."

To read the entire letter containing the guidelines, visit: www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5103313

NOP's 'Sound and Sensible'

The National Organic Program (NOP) has initiated a new program to reduce paperwork and other burdensome aspects of organic certification while maintaining high standards, ensuring compliance and protecting organic integrity.

This 'Sound and Sensible' initiative involves identifying and removing barriers to certification, streamlining the certification process, focusing enforcement on egregious violations and correcting small issues before they become larger ones.

The five principles of Sound and Sensible are:

- **Efficient Processes:** Eliminate bureaucratic processes that do not contribute to organic integrity.
- **Streamlined Recordkeeping:** Ensure that required records support organic integrity and are not a barrier for farms and businesses to maintain organic compliance.
- **Practical Plans:** Support simple Organic System Plans that clearly capture organic practices.
- **Fair, Focused Enforcement:** Focus enforcement on willful, egregious violators; handle minor violations in a way that leads to compliance; and publicize how enforcement protects the organic market.
- **Integrity First:** Focus on factors that impact organic integrity the most, building consumer confidence that organic products meet defined standards from farm to market.



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Join MOA Today!

Each membership level delivers a quarterly newsletter devoted to sharing the latest news and information about the association and the organic industry, discounts to MOA events, special mailings on legislative alerts and events, and the networking and educational opportunities presented by joining others who share interest and experience in the field of organics.

Other member benefits include eligibility for a Workman's Comp premium discount, safety training and other services to assist you in your organic endeavors.

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

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

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A View from the Chair

As I ponder searching for something to write about, all I can think about is the work waiting for me. 200-plus tires to check, has to be at least 400 grease zerks to find, oil to check, batteries to fight, duckfoot shovels to change, seed to clean, seed to find. Ah yes, the good ol' organic seed search. For those of us in the organic growing business, that is one of the most challenging and repetitious paper chases.

Anyway, back to my "to do" list – finish my paperwork for certification, stop by the tax accountant office – yep, I owe tax. I'm still hauling grain out and fertilizer in for the new crop.

As broadcaster Paul Harvey should have said, "And an organic farmer was made."

All of this going on and I still answer the phone for MOA. The MOA board had their annual face-to-face meeting in January. The new board

members fit right in and had terrific ideas and unbelievable energy. I look for MOA to continue growing and providing great educational opportunities.

All of you are as busy as myself, whether you are farming, haying, gardening, calving, milking, trimming fruit trees or trimming sheep, grinding grain to flour, or selling the goods to the public. If you make your living with organic, you should be a member of the Montana Organic Association. You could volunteer to help out, send in a donation or make an investment in the Organic Advisory and Education Council.

"And then, an organic community was made."

Be safe.

Daryl Lassila, MOA Board Chairman