

Organic MATTERS



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MOA 2016 Conference

Save the Date

It might be a challenge to think about post-harvest so soon, but MOA will give you something to look forward to next fall. Learning new skills, sharing your experience, networking, and great food are just a few of the joys waiting for you at the 14th Annual MOA Conference, December 1-3, 2016, at Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell.

"MOA is happy to bring the conference back to Kalispell this year and we're busy booking speakers and making arrangements," says Heather Estrada, MOA's Conference Committee Chair. "We have some wonderful surprises in the works."

Visit MOA's website at www.montanaorganicassociation.org for the latest information.

Farm Tour Season is Open!

by Andrew Long and Cliff Merriman, MOA Board of Directors

MOA is pleased to announce its two Summer 2016 Farm Tours, which will be held in South Phillips County and in Big Sandy.

The South Phillips County Organic Farm

Tour will take place on June 21, 2016. The four farms that make up this tour are contiguous and representative of organic farming in Phillips County.

Glenn Meisdalen (Sweetgrass Cattle and Grains) has been in the process of

transitioning to organic for about four years. He is very much in the learning stage about what does and does not work. Glenn will grow a variety of crops this year, including: spring and winter wheat, Kamut®, Emmer, purple prairie barley, lentils, garbanzo and alfalfa hay. He also plans on using cover crops for soil building as well as fall/winter grazing for his cattle herd. Glenn is also going to start growing organic crops on some of his irrigated acres this year.

John Meisdalen is a third generation farmer and is located 15 miles south of Malta, Montana. The Meisdalen Farm has been in

existence since 1910 and they have farmed organically since 2007. They are currently raising organic wheat, Emmer, Spelt, Einkorn, Kamut®, and garbanzo beans. They also plant cover crops on all

of their acres, generally using sweet clover or peas.

Glen and Terri Sims have been organic producers since 2009. Their farm focuses on spring wheat production, but also incorporates companion crops, pulse crops and

cover crops. Recent changes to their farming practices include a movement towards minimum tillage and a 1,000 cubic yard composting operation.

Clifford and Anna Merriman (4M Farms) started growing organic when they purchased an organic grain farm in 2012. This farm was originally transitioned to organic in the late 1990s. They grow a variety of crops consisting of Kamut®, spring wheat, winter wheat, flax, millet, lentils, purple prairie barley and garbanzo beans. They use cover crops, companion crops, smother crops and green manure to improve yields, weed control and soil health.

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Farm Tours *continued from p. 1*

Tour participants will meet at 4M Farms at 10:00 am to register and the tour will begin at 10:30 am. Lunch will be provided and a benefit dinner will take place after the tour. There will be horse-drawn hayrides after the tour and before dinner. There is no charge for the tour. If you have any questions, contact Cliff Merriman at (406) 654-4391.

The tour will start at 4M Farm's red and white Quonset hut, 15 miles south of Malta on Content Road. There will be signs along the way.

The second MOA Farm Tour of the season will be at the Quinn Farm & Ranch and The Oil Barn on July 9, 2016, at 9:30 am. Quinn Farm & Ranch is 100% Certified Organic and grows Kamut® khorasan wheat, winter wheat, peas, barley, safflower, clover, alfalfa, and experimental plots of dry land produce, including squash, potatoes, sweet corn, and mountain painted corn. There is also an experimental orchard with many varieties of apples, plums and berry bushes.

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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The Oil Barn is an on-farm oilseed processing facility that specializes in organic high-oleic safflower oil for culinary and cosmetic purposes. The Oil Barn recovers used cooking oil from its customers, processes it, and uses it to fuel farm equipment.

Tours during the event will include: the organic orchard, dry land vegetable plots, rotation and experimental plots, ancient and modern wheat plots, and The Oil Barn's production facility and waste oil processing equipment. We'll also facilitate discussions of marketing organic grain, principles of organic agriculture, and transitioning to organic production. There will also be bread and pizza making demonstrations.

Lunch and supper will be provided, as well as free Kracklin' Kamut snacks. The tour will last until about 5:00 pm, but be sure to stick around because a talent show and barn dance follows. There is no charge for participating in the Quinn Farm Tour. If you have any questions, call 406-378-3105.

The tour will be at the Quinn Farm & Ranch at 333 Kamut Lane, Big Sandy, MT 59520.

Directions from Big Sandy: Turn southeast on Hwy 236 (also called Judith Landing Rd.). Head 12 miles down Hwy 236. At 12 miles make a hard right onto Kamut Ln. Take Kamut Ln about 1/3 mile and turn left up the paved driveway.

Directions from Winifred: Take Hwy 236 from Winifred 53 miles (about 50 miles is gravel and you will cross the PN Bridge). About 3 miles after the paved road begins you'll see a group of mailboxes and you'll take a gradual left onto Kamut Ln. Take Kamut Ln about 1/3 mile and turn left up the paved drive. 

MSU Requests MOA Members' Input on Survey

Montana State University is conducting a survey to collect perceptions and practices of Montana agricultural stakeholders regarding changes in climate, including extreme weather events and their impacts on agriculture. The findings from this survey will allow MSU to better understand perceptions of climate change and its impacts on agricultural systems and to identify effective strategies to deal with changes.

Visit here to participate in the survey:
https://montana.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eldur6IfTfLS3rL 

Growing Montana Farms, One Beer at a Time: Part IV - Brewing

by Heather Estrada, FVCC Agriculture Program Director and Assistant Professor

There has never been so much momentum in Montana's brewing industry. The Montana Brewers Association launched a "Buy Local Beer" campaign in February of this year, and Montana has seven more licensed breweries since we started this four-part series on brewing last summer (with at least five more slated to open in the first half of this year). As we've highlighted in our articles on organic hop production, malting barley, and organic brewing, all of that growth clearly translates into new opportunities for Montana's crop producers and budding brewers.

With any fast-growing industry, there are bound to be many new entrants, some who are experienced brewers and some who have decided to take their home brewing skills to the next level. Since brewing beer involves living, dynamic organisms, quality assurance is always paramount. In order for the craft brewing industry to be successful and keep growing, craft beer must create a reputation not only based on artistry, but also on quality and consistency, attributes that the big brewing companies work hard to maintain. This requires new brewers to have a range of skills, including an understanding of product stability and best practices for quality control in the brewery. To that end, there are a variety of resources available to brewers at conferences and through associations like the Brewers Association (brewersassociation.org) and the Master Brewers Association of Americas (mbaa.com). There are also a number of formal educational programs offered across the nation, granting students Associates and Bachelors degrees in brewing. These are, of course, some of the coolest college classes out there!

Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) is the first school in the Montana University System to offer an education in brewing. Their two-year Brewing Science and Brewery Operations program was launched in Fall 2015 with six students. Once accepted into the program, students gain both theoretical knowledge and practical experience in brewing through coursework based in the classroom and at the newly constructed on-campus brewing facility. Currently in the process of gaining state



Photo by Flathead Valley Community College

and federal licensure, the campus brewery will be billed as a pilot brewery to start, dedicated solely to helping students hone their skills in the creation of craft beer. The campus brewery will give students the opportunity to apply their knowledge of brewing chemistry, microbiology, sensory evaluation, brewery safety and sanitation, and environmental sustainability to the brewing process.

The College began developing their Brewing Science program in Fall 2014, in response to demand from

Montana's thriving brewing industry in need of skilled workers trained in the art and science of brewing, quality assurance protocols, and brewery maintenance. Working with existing faculty and an advisory committee comprised of local brewing and agriculture representatives, the College set about creating a well-rounded

program that prepares students for employment in Montana's brewing industry. Now at the helm of the ship is program director and lead instructor Joe Byers, former Head Brewer at Tamarack Brewing Company in Lakeside, Montana. Joe is currently working with the Master Brewers Association of the Americas in the hopes that the program will become one of the nation's first two-year Associate of Applied Science programs in brewing to be formally recognized by the group.

Students who graduate with their Associate's degree in Brewing Science and Brewery Operations will have plenty of formal training, and through work at the campus brewery and a required internship at an operational brewery, will also have a good understanding of what it takes to work in the industry. While the FVCC brewery will not initially be using certified organic inputs, the brewery is located adjacent to the College's Campus Farm, which is managed according to organic standards. Collaboration between the Agriculture and Brewing departments at FVCC will give agriculture students experience in hop and grain production for specialty markets and give brewing students a range of experiences in micro-malting, brewing with wet hops, and sustainability in the brewery.

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Beer continued from p. 3

Ultimately, this may help create partnerships between Montana's farmers and brewers, and increase the development of new markets in Montana's brewing industry.

It is up to us as producers and consumers to support this burgeoning industry in Montana, and in turn, promote the development of organic agriculture in the state. Consider experimenting with malt barley and hops or investing in local maltsters, hops processing facilities, new breweries, or any other businesses related to brewing. That includes visiting your local brewery for a nice cold beer, organic or otherwise, and letting your local brewer know that you support organics. 

This is the last installment of a four part series. Heather is also MOA's BOD Executive Committee Advisor.

Funding for Organic Farming and Ranching

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is making grant funding available for several of its programs. To find information on how to apply to these programs, please visit:

- New Market Opportunities for U.S. Food and Agricultural Products
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/content/stakeholder-announcement-usda-makes-grant-funding-available-support-new-market-opportunities>
- Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/content/stakeholder-announcement-62-million-grant-funding-available-assist-specialty-crop-industry>
- Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP)
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/content/usda-offers-webinars-local-food-systems-grant-applicants-26-million-now-available-grant>

The USDA also announced its intent to assist organic farmers with the cost of establishing up to 20,000 acres of new conservation buffers and other practices on and near farms that produce organic crops. The financial assistance is available from the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. Visit www.fsa.usda.gov/organic to learn more about how FSA can help organic farmers. 



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National Organic Program's Proposed Rule Changes

Submit Your Comments Today and Be Heard

The National Organic Program (NOP) announced in April that it will propose amending the organic livestock and poultry production requirements.

The proposed regulation, which is based on recommendations from the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), is an effort to achieve consistency in organic livestock practices. It covers a range of topics including health care practices and living conditions for organic animals. To see the proposed rule go to: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2016-08023.pdf>

Highlights of the proposed rule:

- It sets forth separate living condition standards for mammals

(e.g., cattle, sheep, and pigs) and poultry.

- It specifies which physical alterations are allowed and prohibited in organic livestock and poultry production.
- It establishes minimum indoor and outdoor space requirements for poultry.
- It specifies required practices when transporting organic livestock for sale or slaughter, and clarifies organic slaughter practices.
- It adds multiple new definitions, including "stocking density," "soil," and "outdoors."

The Proposed Rule will be open for a 60-day comment period. Read the full rule to get information about how to

submit your comments by going to: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2016-08023.pdf>

If you send in comments or would like your comments included in MOA's comments to the National Organic Coalition, Organic Trade Association and the National Sustainable Agriculture Association, please send your comments to one of MOA's National Policy Representatives: Doug Crabtree (Doug@VilicusFarms.com), Nate Brown (g.nathanbrown@gmail.com) or Cliff Merriman (merrimancrifford@gmail.com). 



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Organic News

Montana Small Business Person of the Year



Greg Thayer, MOA member and president and CEO of Great Falls-based Montana Milling Inc., has been named the Montana Small Business

Person of the Year. A family-based company started by Greg Thayer's father Gene, Montana Milling is a one-stop shop for organic and conventional grains, according to the nomination made by Jason Nitschke of the Great Falls Development Authority, who is also a Small Business Development Center regional

director. "Montana Milling is the number one buyer (estimated at 80 percent) of organics produced in Montana, buying from 100 producers and selling to roughly 210 customers in the United States and Canada," the nomination said. "It buys from the producer and then cleans, blends and supplies to the baking industry. The company also produces specialty blends to meet customer specifications and offers custom packaging and delivery." (From *Great Falls Tribune*, by Peter Johnson, March 17, 2016.)

Review Study Comparing Organic to Conventional

The review study, "Organic Agriculture in the 21st Century," is featured as the cover story for February issue of the journal *Nature Plants* and was authored by John Reganold, WSU regents

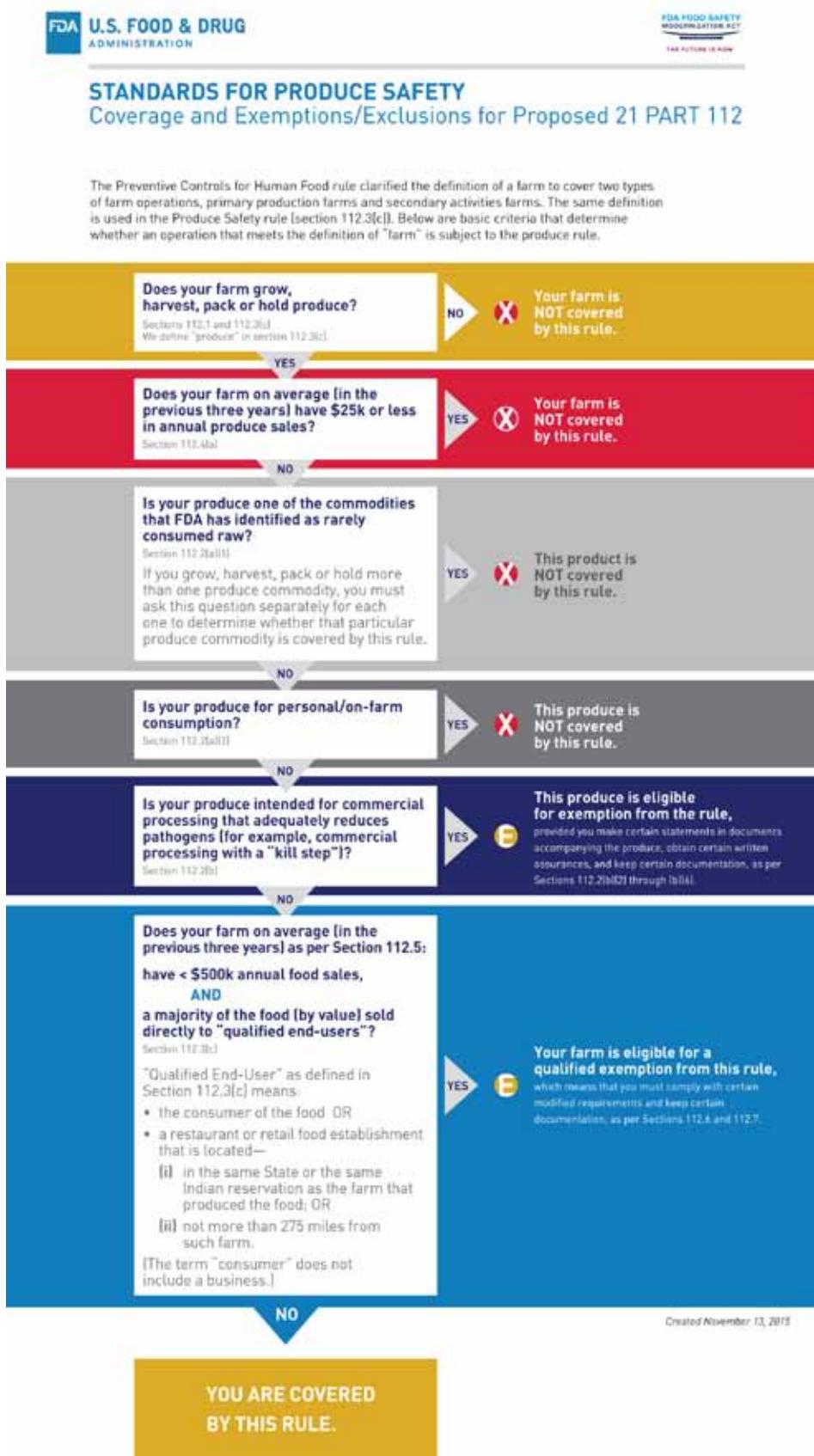
professor of soil science and agroecology and doctoral candidate Jonathan Wachter. It is the first such study to analyze 40 years of science comparing organic and conventional agriculture across the four goals of sustainability identified by the National Academy of Sciences: productivity, economics, environment, and community well being. Overall, organic farms tend to store more soil carbon, have better soil quality, and reduce soil erosion. Organic agriculture also creates less soil and water pollution and lower greenhouse gas emissions. And it's more energy efficient because it doesn't rely on synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. It is also associated with greater biodiversity of plants, animals, insects and

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An advertisement for Quality Foods Distributing (QFD). The top half features the QFD logo (green stylized letters with a yellow leaf icon) and the text "Quality Foods Distributing". Below this, a large white box contains the text "Proud to connect Montana's organic growers and producers with discerning customers throughout the Northern Rockies." and "With over 40 years experience in food distribution, we can help your Montana business grow with integrity." At the bottom of this box is the website "qfdistributing.com | 406-551-2231". The background of the ad shows a scenic view of the Northern Rockies with a green tractor in the foreground. In the bottom right corner is a circular logo with the text "MARKET DAY Produce". The bottom of the ad has a teal banner with the text "Bringing natural, organic, and local products to the Northern Rockies.".

Who is Exempt From the Food Safety Modernization Act?

by Jonda Crosby, MOA Board of Directors



The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), signed into law in January 2011, authorizes the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to take a preventive approach to food safety. This new approach includes the authority to establish first-time food safety requirements for farms producing fruits and vegetables. Please note that the finalized rule took affect on January 26, 2016, and compliance will be required within four years for operations that fall within the rule.

So who will be impacted by the new rule? As always with a new regulation, there are many little details that everyone needs to understand to know if they are covered by the rule or not. Not all farms will be subject to the new Produce Rule; some will be exempt from all requirements. The chart included with this article diagrams who is exempt and why.

In a nutshell, you are exempt if:

- You do not grow, harvest, pack or hold produce.
- Your produce is all for home or on-farm consumption.
- You do not grow any produce that is normally eaten raw – examples include, potatoes, beets, dry beans and lentils, sweet corn, pumpkins and squash.
- Your farm sells \$25,000 or less in annual gross produce sales (three year average).
- If your farm's produce is all sold to a commercial processing facility where there is a "kill" step – in other words, the produce is cooked, canned, or processing in a way that is intended to kill pathogens.

- Your farm has less than \$500,000 annual food sales (this includes all food crops—produce, grains, milk, eggs and hay –yes, hay) AND a “majority” is sold to consumers, restaurants or retail food establishment THAT IS in the SAME State, or Indian Reservation as the farm is, OR not more than 275 miles from your farm.

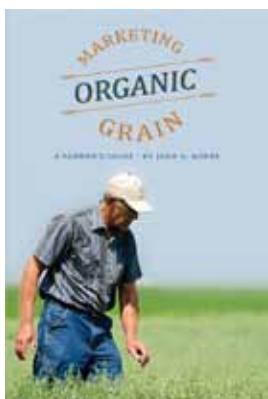
Two important resources for more information are:
 FDA FAQ's: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm247559.htm>
 NSAC website: <http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/new-food-safety-rules/>

If you are a produce farmer (and even if you are exempt), it is important to understand the rules because they will continually evolve. It is also important to follow the progress of this rule as it changes over time. The Tester-Hagan amendments that were added to the rule to create the exemptions for smaller farmers selling local are already being discussed and questions have been raised as to their merit under the purpose of the rule. 

Book: *Marketing Organic Grain*

John Bobbe has written and published *Marketing Organic Grain: A Farmer's Guide*. In this short readable book, John gives organic farmers what they need to successfully market grain. He discusses the basics of matching crops to markets, developing the right marketing contracts, protecting organic standards, and building the market power needed in today's concentrated organic markets. *Marketing Organic Grain: A Farmer's Guide* belongs on the desk of every organic grain farmer. This book is available online at www.MarketingOrganicGrain.com and mosesorganic.net.

“How I wish John’s book had been in print when I transitioned from an organic dairy operation to a certified organic grain and hay operation during the drought of 1988,” states Dave Campbell of Lilly Lake Organic Farm in Illinois. “The book covers a variety of topics, such as the importance of organic standards, as well as addressing the actual nuts and bolts of contracting organic grains.” 



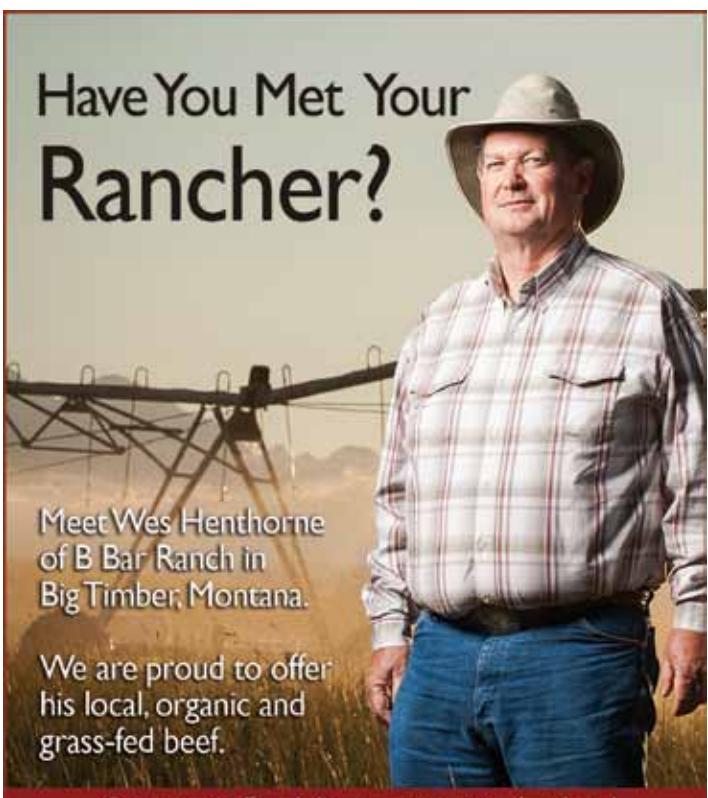


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Maintaining USDA Compliance in an Organic System: Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation

by Joyce Trevithick, Area Agronomist, Natural Resource Conservation Service

As the Area Agronomist for the Great Falls Natural Resource Conservation Area, a portion of my job is to work with the Highly Erodible Land program and the HEL compliance program. The Food Security Act of 1985 established the National Food Security Act Manual (NFSAM), which sets forth the purposes and objectives of the Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC). I work with producers and field offices to assist producers who are USDA participants to maintain conservation compliance. The last few years have seen the number of organic producers increase while also bringing about an increase in compliance issues.

The Food Security Act of 1985 assigned specific responsibilities to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in the administration of the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation. This includes making Highly Erodible Land (HEL) determinations and Wetland (WC) determinations on land owned and/or operated by a **USDA program**

participant. Any land, owned or operated by a USDA participant, which was cropped at the time of the Food Security Act, had an HELC determination completed by NRCS between 1986 and 1992 and a written conservation plan. Any land which has since been broken from native sod is required to have an HELC determination completed and a conservation plan approved by NRCS prior to certifying a crop at the Farm Service Agency.

There are several factors brought into HELC determinations. These are factors which a producer does not have much control over. The soil erodibility index is one factor used to determine whether a soil map unit is highly erodible. The potential erodibility (PE) of a soil takes into consideration the climate and the susceptibility of the soil to wind erosion. Another factor is the Soil Loss Tolerance (T) of that particular soil. The (T) factor is the maximum amount of soil loss in tons per acre per year that can be tolerated and still permit a high level of crop productivity to be

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sustained economically and indefinitely. This number ranges from 1-5, with most of central Montana soils being 2, 3 or 5T soils. The lower the number the more fragile that soil is. This number can be found on the soil survey of every county in Montana.

The Potential Erodibility (PE) is then divided by the soil loss tolerance (T) of the soil map unit. If that number is greater than 8 the land is considered to be Highly Erodible (HEL). If it is less than 8 then the soil is considered Non-Highly Erodible (NHEL). Soil loss of the conservation system on an HEL field broke out after 1985 must be less than the soil loss tolerance (T) of the predominant soil on that field or (2T) 2 times T if previously cropped (before 1985).

The original plans on cropland were written between 1985 and 1992, after the Food Security Act. NRCS used the current cropping system on the ground at that time to determine the erosion rate of the system. This was still mostly strip/fallow systems before no-till became common. The strips were 20 -30 rods wide and were developed throughout the 1900's to minimize wind erosion in eastern Montana. Tillage was common and for years farmers controlled wind erosion with the use of narrow strips. As chemical weed control became prevalent, Montana saw more

"block" farming where standing stubble and residue on the soil surface helped to minimize the effect of the wind.

A Highly Erodible Land determination does **not** mean the land cannot be farmed. It just means a producer must be farming in such a way that wind erosion is reduced to a "tolerable" level. If a field loses the top soil, yield and profitability will be reduced. The topsoil holds most of the soil organic matter, moisture and nutrients, creating habitat for soil biology to flourish and roots to grow.

The NFSAM Part 510.11 states:

C. Filing Form AD-1026

- (1) *Persons who request benefits on land that they own or operate that is subject to HELC and WC provisions are required to file Form AD-1026 certification at the FSA county office.*
- (2) *This form also serves as a person's certification of applying a conservation plan and/or use of a conservation system as well as compliance with the wetland provisions.*

As the above states, producers who receive benefits from USDA must be applying a conservation system which meets HELC compliance. **If found out of compliance** with the Highly Erodible Land program, a producer may lose their USDA benefits. This includes any CRP, Disaster payments, Farm Operating Loans, EQIP, CSP, RMA (crop insurance) and other benefits included under USDA programs.

"A conservation system designed to meet the HELC requirements is a combination of one or more conservation measures or management practices. An approved HELC conservation plan is a document that describes the application and maintenance of an approved conservation system." (NFSAM, 512 (A))

It is more challenging to maintain HELC compliance when the fields are being tilled as in organic systems but there are practices that can be used to minimize wind erosion. The strip cropping system we were familiar with before no-till is one of the most successful ways. In our organic systems, the strips are still a viable solution to the conservation compliance issue. HELC determinations are made on a field-by-field basis. If a field has 33% HEL soils or 50+ acres of HEL soils then the entire field is considered HEL and must have a conservation system in place which meets HELC requirements if the producer is receiving USDA benefits.

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Highly Erodible Land *continued from p. 11*

The unsheltered distance across a field makes a huge difference in the erosion rate within a field. The erosion tools used by NRCS take into account the distance across a field in the prevailing wind direction at the most erosive periods of the year (typically Nov-Feb in north central Montana). The longer this distance is the more likely soil particles are to begin moving. Shorter distances with vegetation breaking up the wind force will limit the amount of soil being lost to wind erosion. If a tilled field has only 200 – 300 feet of unsheltered distance, there is much less chance of excessive wind erosion than a field that has 1000 of unsheltered distance. Wider equipment encourages farmers to have wider strips, but producers need to consider the cover on their fields and their tillage practices.

Another issue to consider is the smoothness of a field. The smoother the field the easier it is for wind to pick of soil particles and carry them across the field. Consider the difference between the look of a field after a cultivator with spikes goes through it and

a disk. The disk will leave it smoother with smaller soil aggregate. This is particularly risky going into the winter.

Residue on the surface will limit soil erosion. Dead or living residue helps keep soil in place when we are dealing with wind and water erosion. A cover crop can be planted at any time to help hold soil in place and also reduce weed competition. Having residue on the surface going into the winter erosive period will help a producer maintain compliance with USDA programs.

If you have concerns feel free to come into your local NRCS field office and talk to one of the conservationists there. You can also email me at joyce.trevithick@mt.usda.gov. I am always glad to work with producers and help them maintain compliance. 

Joyce Trevithick, in addition to being the NRCS Area Agronomist, is a MOA member with degrees from Montana State University in Agronomy, Animal Science and Crop Science.



Loss of soil by wind erosion during winter months reduces the ability of our soils to provide nutrients to the growing crop. This producer spread 7000#/acre of straw on this field prior to planting in April to try to stop the soil loss. Photo taken in May of 2014 by Joyce Trevithick.

Organic News continued from p. 7
microbes as well as genetic diversity. Biodiversity increases the services that nature provides like pollination and improves the ability of farming systems to adapt to changing conditions.

Food Companies to Label GMOs

ConAgra has joined the list of food companies announcing they will begin rolling out labeling on foods that contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs). This announcement follows on the heels of General Mills, Mars and Kellogg to also label for GMOs. In January, Campbell Soup made the first announcement to do so. In March, Vermont's Attorney General outlined the state's enforcement plan for Act 120 requiring labeling food produced with genetic engineering and prohibiting labeling or advertising GE foods as natural. Act 120 goes into effect on July 1. The plan allows a six-month "safe harbor" for foods distributed before July 1, and offered for retail sale through December 31. Beginning Jan. 1, 2017, all products must be properly labeled regardless of when they were distributed. (From Organic Trade Association)

Senate Rejects the Dark Act, But Beware, It's Likely to Be Back, Again

On March 16, 2016, the Deny Americans the Right to Know (DARK) Act failed to garner enough votes for cloture by a vote of 49-48, effectively defeating the bill. The bill introduced by Senator Roberts (R-KS) faced bipartisan rejection. The bill would have preempted the genetically engineered food labeling laws in Vermont, Connecticut, Maine and

Alaska. In its place it would have put a voluntary labeling scheme that relies primarily on QR codes, websites and call in numbers to inform consumers about the presence of GMOs.

"The defeat of the DARK Act is a major victory for the food movement and America's right to know," said Andrew Kimbrell, Executive Director of the Center for Food Safety. "It also is an important victory for Democracy over the attempt of corporate interests to keep Americans in the Dark about the foods they buy and feed their families." Kimbrell concluded.

By an overwhelming margin, American voters say consumers should have the right to know if their food is genetically modified, with 89 percent in support of mandatory GE labeling, according to a new national poll. Nearly the same number of consumers would like to see the labels in an easy to read format, not via a barcode or other technology. More than 30 states introduced legislation to require GE labeling in 2013 and 2014, with laws recently passed in Vermont, Connecticut and Maine. (From Center for Food Safety)

Hemp Coming Back to U.S.

The Farm Bill section authorizing hemp research pilot projects leaves open questions with respect to what those pilot programs should look like, as well as the respective roles of USDA and Federal agencies that have jurisdiction over controlled substances. Specific questions remain about the legal uses of industrial hemp, including its use in food and pharmaceutical products. The USDA is working with its Federal interagency colleagues to develop a shared interpretation on the

parameters of what is, and is not, permissible under Section 7606. The USDA will issue guidance regarding industrial hemp production once that work is completed. Organic certification of industrial hemp production at this time is premature and could be misleading to certified organic operations, given that the legality of the various uses of this product has not yet been determined. Until USDA guidance regarding industrial hemp production under the Farm Bill is completed, NOP-accredited certifying agents may not certify the domestic production of industrial hemp. (From NOP)

USDA Renews Seven Substances after Sunset Review

USDA published a Federal Register notice, effective Sept. 12, 2016, that renews five synthetic and two non-synthetic substances for continued use in organic food production. USDA's National Organic Program has accepted NOSB's recommendation to renew the seven substances, thus completing their 2016 Sunset Review and keeping them on the National List. Substances include ferric phosphate (for use as a slug or snail bait), hydrogen chloride (in seed preparations for delinting cotton seed for planting), activated charcoal (only from vegetative sources, for use as a filtering aid), peracetic acid/peroxyacetic acid (for use in wash and/or rinse water, for use as a sanitizer on food contact surfaces), sodium acid pyrophosphate (for use as a leavening agent), L-malic acid (non-synthetic), and microorganisms (non-synthetic, any food-grade bacteria, fungi, and other microorganisms). (From Organic Trade Association) 

View from the Chair continued from back page

We need to better reflect nature on our farms, truly build soil, integrate livestock with crops, include perennials in our rotations, limit reliance on imported products and “close the loops” of nutrient cycles. By improving organic farming systems, we will demonstrate that food can be produced efficiently, without harm to the environment and farming can restore soil while absorbing carbon released by other human activities.

I wish you all success in the 2016 growing season and encourage you to promote organic agriculture as a practical response to Climate Change. 



Doug Crabtree, MOA Board Chairman

Calendar of Events

www.montanaorganicassociation.org/events.htm

Organic Matters Ad Rates

Ad prices and dimensions:

1 page ad --- \$110 (Size: 7-1/2W x 10H")

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

1/2 page ad --- \$65 (Size: 7-1/2W x 5H") -OR-
(3-1/2" W x 10"H")

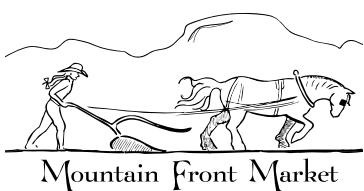
1/4 page ad -- \$40 (Size: 3-1/2W x 4-1/2"H)

Business card ad --- \$30 (Size: 3-1/2W x 2H")

***If you are a Farm/Ranch Business level member, you will receive a 5% discount on your ad. If you are an Organic Business or Lifetime member, you will receive a 10% discount on your ad. All ads must be print ready. See www.montanaorganicassociation.org/omadrates.htm for details or call Seth Swanson at (406) 258-4205.

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11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

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501 Main Ave. N., Choteau, MT
Owner: Jill Owen

Join MOA Today!

Each membership level delivers a quarterly newsletter devoted to sharing the latest news and information about the association and the organic industry, discounts to MOA events, special mailings on legislative alerts and events, a MOA member vote, and the networking and educational opportunities presented by joining others who share interest and experience in the field of organics. Other member benefits include eligibility for a Workman's Comp premium discount, safety training and other services to assist you in your organic endeavors.

Please sign me up as a MOA Member!

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Annual Membership Levels:

- Individual.....\$30
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- 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:
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A View From the Chair

by Doug Crabtree, Vilicus Farms

There is no feeling quite so satisfying to a dryland farmer than to wake up to rain. I experienced that joy this morning. As a farmer, I have to be an optimist. We have been dutifully preparing to seed and have been counting on a return of precipitation that has mostly missed our area for the past two years. So, today's rain has renewed my optimism for this season.

With restored optimism for this season, I turn my attention to a longer-term concern, Climate Change. The increasing impacts of this man-made calamity are the greatest threat to humanity that our species has faced. Significant changes in consumption and

lifestyle will be necessary to stem the rise in temperatures.

So, what does Climate Change have to do with organic farming? Organic is part of the solution! Organic farming is more resilient, in the face of weather variability, than other forms of agriculture. Organic farming avoids the climate-altering practices of other forms of agriculture. The "productivity" of non-organic farming systems is due primarily to reliance on petroleum-based inputs (fertilizers and pesticides). Organic farming is energy-efficient, producing more net calories—food energy per unit of energy used in its production.

The solution to Climate Change is to live within our means, in terms

of energy. The greenhouse gasses emitted by the burning of fossil fuels are a symptom of excess consumption, or living beyond our means. The planetary filtration systems are overtaxed by our emissions. Extreme weather events are warning signs from nature to curb our gluttony.

As a system of farming that relies primarily on current energy derived from the sun, organic agriculture is closely aligned with renewable energy systems. We are to food production what solar panels and wind turbines are to energy generation.

Our challenge is to continue to improve organic farming systems.

continued on p. 15