



Organic MATTERS

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2017 Farm Tour Season Unprecedented MOA Farm Tour at Prairie Grass Ranch / Manuel Farms by Sam Schmidt, MOA Board Member, Montana Milling

MOA was honored this year to be part of Jody and Crystal Manuel's farm tour in late June, a tour that brought a full menu of agronomics, speakers, entertainment, and of course, great organic food.

The Manuels started the tour with lentil and emmer production with guest speaker Jim Barngrover of Timeless Seeds and Kamut Khorasan Wheat agronomics covered by Wes Gibbs of Integrity Ag Services, who led over 100 participants along the north foothills of the Bear Paw Mountains. Participants and speakers shared questions, findings, and dialog on conditions and stages of the crops. The caravan was then shown the grazing of cover crop cocktail production, and also listened to soil nutrient analysis by Dave Kasper of Kasper Enterprises.

The afternoon tour continued with perennial weed discussions by Ole Norgaard of the Organic Advisory and Education Council and MSU Ag Research Center guests Zach Miller and Pat Carr. The large crowd hovered over a hole revealing bindweed root systems, while the research advocates exposed the systematic approaches to future research and management. Jody Manuel also showcased a new CombCut implement designed to clip weeds and prevent "seeding out" during early crop stages.

The tour then moved to the final area where participants viewed pre- and post-terminated sweet clover

on a rolling hilltop, followed by a roundup and cattle drive of Manuel Farms yearlings to their summer grazing pastures. Mark Smith with the Montana Organic Producers COOP concluded the session with a discussion on organic beef marketing.

If this wasn't a big enough day already, the Manuels' dedication was really showcased at lunch and during the evening by the work of Crystal, daughter Sarah, and guest Chef Claudia from Claudia's Mesa, who prepared two wonderful meals created with Manuel Farms' ingredients. Dinner guests enjoyed live music, a pig raffle, locally produced micro beers using Manuel's raised hops, evening guest speakers Liz Carlisle and Dave Oien of *Lentil Underground*, Bob Quinn of Kamut International, and the recognition of Montana North Central Chapter #1's 30th Anniversary.

The 2017 MOA-sponsored farm tour was a record breaker for attendance, preparation, and support, and a large thank you needs to go first and foremost to Jody and Crystal Manuel, along with all of their family and friends who graciously presented this farm and welcomed guests for the day. Further recognition is due for the support by the Organic Advisory and Education Council, Timeless Seeds, Montana Flour and Grain, Montana Milling, Kamut International, and the Oil Barn. 



Jody Manuel addresses record-breaking farm tour crowd. Photo by Sam Schmidt.



CombCut implement demonstration. Photo by Sam Schmidt.



Yearling cattle drive to summer grazing pastures. Photo by Sam Schmidt.



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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Changes at Montana Organic Assn. by Susan Waters, *Organic Matters*' Editor

New, Exclusively Electronic *Organic Matters*

MOA's quarterly newsletter, *Organic Matters*, has gone exclusively electronic, starting with this issue. We will no longer be printing and mailing *OM* so that we can use the resources to continue to offer strong events and to build new relevant and comprehensive programs.

We have the majority of MOA members' email addresses, but if you haven't submitted yours to MOA, please do so. We will also be calling members to gather the addresses we don't have.

We hope that this is an exciting change for you as well. Feel free to send your comments and suggestions to us so that we can make *Organic Matters* the newsletter that benefits you.

New MOA Contact Information

Please note that MOA has new contact information; physical mailing address, main phone number and main email address. You can find the specifics on the newsletter masthead to the left. Feel free to contact us with any of your comments or concerns. We are here to serve you, our members.

MOA 2017 Committee Chairs and Contractors

Board Committee Chairs:

Linda Benjamin - Conference
Cliff Merriman - Farm Tours
Sam Schmidt - Newsletter/Communications
Nate Brown - Policy
Heather Estrada - Fundraising

Membership Contractor:

Patti Gregerson - (406) 333-1054

Web, Publications and Communications Contractor:

Susan Waters - (406) 274-4869

Board Member and Contractor contact information can be found anytime at <http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org/contactus.htm> or call MOA's main number or email our main address. We would love to hear from you. 🌱

Organic Advisory and Education Council's Organic Principles Review (OPR)

MSU / Fort Ellis Research Station, Bozeman MT

Article and Photo by Sam Schmidt, OAEC Board Member, Montana Milling

The originally-scheduled and rain-postponed June 13 OPR event stormed forward on June 23 after some much-needed weather systems moved across Montana. Program changes did not prevent host Fabian Menalled from presenting the five-year study of field production at the Ft Ellis Research Center, covering tillage, no-till, and no-till grazing. OAEC and MSU Extension guests, along with MSU faculty, staff, and students, viewed and discussed individual plots on the research farm, made comparisons of different practices, and heard discussions on: cover crop termination with sheep by Devon Ragen; greenhouse gas emissions by Rick Engel; climate

change impacts by Tim Seipel; beneficial insects by Subodh Adhikari; weed management in organic systems by Zach Miller; and the future of organic research by Pat Carr.



The program then moved to the MSU campus in the afternoon, where discussions continued on the topics of: climate change by Brad Bauer of MSU Extension and Chris Christiansen of Montana Farmers

Union; Montana organic agriculture by Georgana Webster of the MT Dept of Ag; perennial weed management research by Fabian Menalled; and weed suppression in organic systems by Wes Henthorne.

Guests were then treated to a parkside lunch prepared by Wes Henthorne and the B Bar Ranch of Big Timber, and an overview by Mac Burgess on MSU's Sustainable Food and Bioenergy Program.

This was OAEC's first collaborative OPR with MSU Extension, and would like to thank all MSU faculty and staff for their support and ongoing programs. 🌱

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MOA Annual Financial Report by Heather Estrada, MOA Board Treasurer

MOA members, supporters and friends,

With the close of the 2016 fiscal year, it is time for the Montana Organic Association to report our financial condition to our members. We officially closed our books on December 31, 2016, and completed MOA's tax report and 1099 forms for our contractors in January. MOA received confirmation from the IRS that we are in full compliance as a non-profit for 2016. We also renewed our status as a non-profit in Montana with the Secretary of State's office.

As the new treasurer of MOA, I'd like to acknowledge our outgoing treasurer, Jonda Crosby, for all of her past efforts, and for helping to make the transition process run smoothly. Thank you, Jonda!

As you can see from the table BELOW, we continued to generate income in the 2016 year, due to the success of our annual conference, farm tours, and member support. You may recall that in 2015 we changed our membership fee structure, creating a lifetime membership offering. The dedicated MOA members who elected to become lifetime members in 2015 gave us a substantial boost that year. Also in 2015, MOA received a notable donation from the Montana Ag and Safety Bureau which fell into our donations category.

Notable in our 2016 expenses, event costs were reduced by \$11,000 thanks to the generous support of Flathead Valley Community College in providing a low-cost venue for the 2016 Annual MOA Conference. Communication and outreach costs increased, as we

restructured the scope of work for our contractors. In an effort to reduce communication costs in the future, we have elected to offer only electronic delivery of our newsletter, rather than by hard copy in the mail.

We are still in the process of updating our membership database and communications systems, and consolidating our contractor duties to streamline our efforts. Susan Waters (Communications) and Patti Gregerson (Membership and Event Support) are working effectively and efficiently to support the organization and we are thankful for their contributions! With these two on board, we will continue our work to combine the membership data with our outreach information so that we can communicate with our membership more seamlessly.

Today and historically, the Montana Organic Association runs a lean operation. We focus on providing our members with education and outreach, representation for Montana's organic farming industry at the state and federal levels, and networking opportunities, at the lowest possible cost.

Please let us know if you have any suggestions or comments--we are happy to hear from you and appreciate the opportunity to represent our constituents.

Kind regards,

Heather Estrada, MOA Board Treasurer

MOA Income and Expenses					
	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Income					
Advertising and Sales	1,805	843	2,950	1,342	120
Events	46,148	51,841	46,972	41,292	23,320
Membership	5,654	11,744	7,125	6,885	8,775
Grants, Donations	750	3,781	2,115	1,560	2,130
Lindquist Memorial Scholarship	500	610			
TOTAL	54,857	68,818	59,162	51,079	34,345
Expenses					
Administration	2,811	3,443	2,852	3,728	3,385
Membership Services	2,028	2,430	1,096	11,170	8,370
Events	22,282	33,418	32,404	16,036	15,753
Communications and Outreach	20,338	13,228	7,978	1,858	2,775
Board Expenses	2,291	1,969	627	1,413	678
TOTAL	49,750	54,488	44,957	34,205	30,961
NET	5,107	14,330	14,205	16,874	3,384



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Daryl Lassila, Organic Lentil Farmer with
David Oien, Owner Timeless Seeds

15th Annual MOA Conference and Member Meeting Planning Underway

Behind the scenes at the Montana Organic Association, the Conference Committee is hard at work event planning for the 15th Annual MOA Conference, which will be held December 7-9, 2017, at the Mansfield Center in Great Falls. This year's theme is "Organic Resiliency In A Changing World."

We're excited to present Keynote Speaker Dr. Stephen Jones, a wheat breeder and the Director of the The Bread Lab. Stephen has a PhD in Genetics from the University of California at Davis and teaches graduate courses in advanced classical genetics and in the history and ethics of genetics. The Bread Lab is a combination think tank and baking laboratory where scientists, bakers, chefs, farmers, maltsters, brewers, distillers and millers experiment with improved flavor, nutrition and functionality of regional and obscure wheats, barley, other small grains and beans.

Area farm and facility tours are a staple of MOA conferences and this year we'll continue the tradition. We will have a live and silent auction, with entertainment provided by Jim Sargent. Session presenters will include Pat Carr, Carmen Fernholz and Bob Quinn. An impressive lineup of topics and speakers are filling the agenda and more details will be available soon.

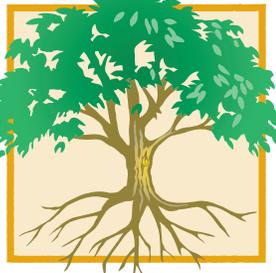
Chandy Bomgardner will provide catering using locally sourced, organic

ingredients. MOA has also arranged for lodging at discounted rates at Laquinta Great Falls.

Mark your calendars for December 7-9 and visit MOA's website or Facebook page for the latest information.

Direct general inquiries to Patti at 406-333-1054 or email moamembership@gmail.com. Sponsor and Vendor opportunities are available; please contact Susan at 406-274-4869. 

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MOA's 15th Annual Conference
Organic Resiliency In A Changing World
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Call for Nominations to Serve on NOSB Board due by August 7

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is a Federal Advisory Committee that provides advice and recommendations to the Department of Agriculture on the implementation of the Organic Foods Production Act. NOSB members are volunteers and come from across the organic community. Each member is appointed by the Department of Agriculture to a five-year term.

USDA seeks nominations to fill one vacancy for an individual with expertise in areas of environmental protection and resource conservation to serve on the NOSB from January 2018 to January 2023. The USDA is also seeking nominations for a pool of candidates to fill future unexpected vacancies in any of the seven position categories, should unexpected vacancies occur. A person appointed to fill an unexpected vacancy will serve for the remainder of the 5-year term of the vacant position.

Committee member duties include:

- Attending committee meetings (travel paid by USDA)

- Participating in bi-monthly subcommittee conference calls
- Reviewing materials and/or recommending changes to the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances
- Advising the Secretary on other aspects of the USDA organic regulations

Written nominations must include a resume, an AD-755 Application Form, and a cover letter, and **must be postmarked on or before August 7, 2017.**

For more information, visit the NOSB Nominations Webpage at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/nosb/nomination-process> 

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— Gary Hopkins



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Young Ag Couples Conference Report by Charley Overbay, Quinn Farm & Ranch

The 2017 Young Ag Couples Conference was held early this year in Helena. Each year, the Montana Organic Association sponsors one couple to attend this conference and my wife Stephanie and I were chosen to attend this year. The conference is not open to everyone—only a small handful of couples from around the state attend each year and each couple is sponsored by a company, organization, regional conservation district, or extension office. In 2017 there were 22 couples in attendance plus four couples on the steering committee (couples that attended the previous year and volunteered to help organize the event this year).

The Young Ag Couples Conference was a great opportunity to network with other young couples from around the state. I really enjoyed the tour of Rocking Z Ranch. The speakers were top notch and very engaging. There was much discussion on estate planning and transitioning the farm or ranch operation from one generation to the next.

There was also discussion on becoming leaders in our industries. This information focused on communication, getting involved, building social networks and being willing to experiment.

Communication was a major focus of the conference. Without it, tasks don't get accomplished and issues don't get resolved. Learn as much as you can from the older generation and teach what you know to the younger generation. Take time to nurture your relationship with your spouse. Agriculture work requires long hours, which can be taxing on a relationship. Do not take your spouse for granted and make time to be with them.

We were strongly encouraged to get involved in any way possible. Take part in organizational boards and committees. Talk with elected officials about issues of importance to agriculture. Take opportunities to teach the youth in FFA or 4-H.

It is important to build a network of respected peers. We are all familiar with the saying, "It's not what you know, it's who you know," and I think most people agree that this is true.

It's important to learn the basics of what works, but it is also important to be willing to experiment and try something new. Markets and prices are always changing, so keep experimenting and trialing. Look for new ideas that might be your next big thing.

There was also discussion on becoming leaders in our industries. This information focused on communication, getting involved, building social networks and being willing to experiment.

I did have a couple really good conversations about organic cropping systems, and a few of the other attendees were quite interested and open to listening. One guy in particular

was a skeptic, but I tried to be bold and answer all the questions I could about organic production. One question they had was about marketing their crops during the transition years from conventional to organic production.

The conference planners didn't forget to schedule in some fun. We made good use of the dance floor Friday night, and we were very enthusiastic participants in the costume party. We dressed up as Carl and Ellie from the movie "Up." Part of our costume included inflated balloons with the phrase, "Adventure is out there," written on them.

I hope we represented the organic community well. We had a great time at the conference and we left with a better understanding of and commitment to some specific long-term goals. We are very thankful for MOA's sponsorship for us to attend this informative event. We strongly encourage MOA to continue to make this investment in the young couples within the organization. We also encourage the couples who are offered the opportunity to attend to do so.

Charley Overbay is Produce Manager of Quinn Farm and Ranch in Big Sandy, Montana, and he and his wife Stephanie have been MOA members since 2014. 

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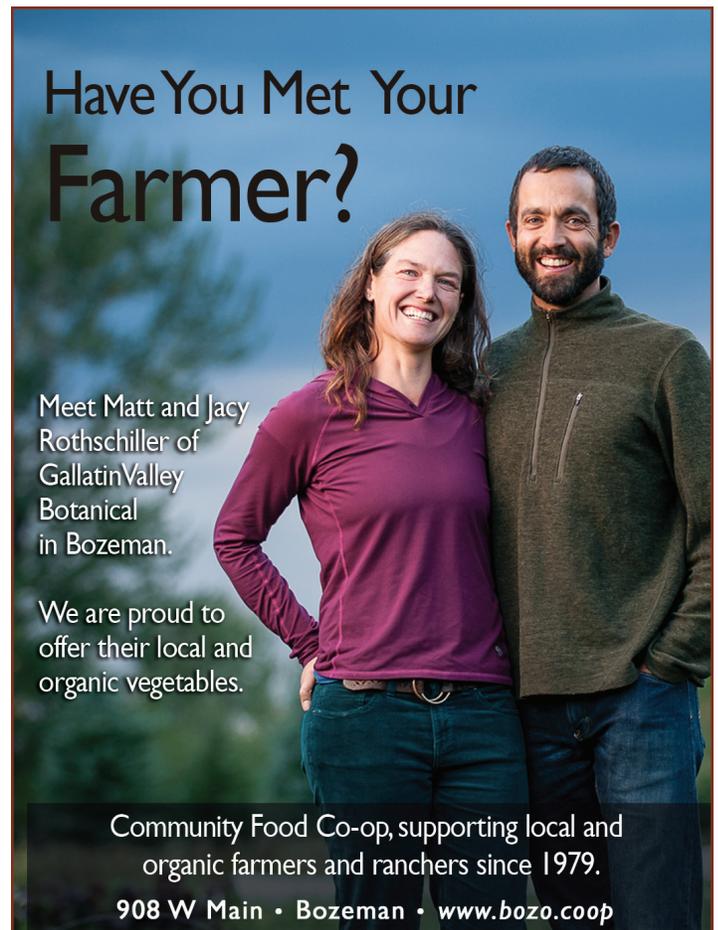
NOSB Web Conference on Hydroponics

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) will meet via conference on **August 14, 2017 from 1:00pm - 3:00pm Eastern** to discuss hydroponics in organic food production. The NOSB will NOT be voting on a recommendation during this web conference. A transcript will be available approximately two weeks after the event.

The NOSB is a federal advisory committee established by the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 and administered through the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The NOSB recommends whether substances should be allowed or prohibited in organic production, handling, and processing, and advises the Secretary of Agriculture on other aspects of the organic regulations.

Access the web conference at: <https://cc.readytalk.com/r/3itgag2r7btt&eom>

If you encounter technical difficulty, please contact ReadyTalk at <https://support.readytalk.com/SP/?src=ccemail> 



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Organic Trade Association Surveys Organic Stakeholders to Build a Farm Bill Platform

by Maggie McNeil, Organic Trade Association

More than 500 organic stakeholders across 45 states weighed in on issues they see as critical to the organic sector as part of a comprehensive farm bill survey conducted by the Organic Trade Association (OTA) in the lead up to Congress beginning debate on the 2018 Farm Bill.

Organic fruit and vegetable growers, grains and oilseed farmers, livestock and poultry producers, dairy farmers, vineyard owners and flower growers, along with organic processors, food makers, distributors and other organic operations answered questions concerning barriers they face in their organic operations—

from regulatory, research, and marketing, to production and investment barriers. Survey respondents also evaluated the effectiveness of existing programs geared towards the organic sector. In preparation for developing its advocacy work on the next farm bill, OTA partnered with members of OTA's Farmers Advisory Council and other organic organizations—17 of them—to poll stakeholders directly on issues.

The Farm Bill—a five-year omnibus bill that sets policy for commodity support and risk management, publicly funded agricultural research, rural development, conservation and

nutritional support programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)—is set to expire in September 2018.

Survey participants cited lack of university or professional programs focusing on organic processing and technology, and lack of consumer awareness of organic's benefits and value as critical challenges—or barriers—for both organic producers and handlers. Specific producer concerns were the cost of buying land, and the cost and availability of labor. Organic processors and food makers said a pressing issue is the lack of dependable supply of domestic organic raw materials.

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Some of the top organic policy actions suggested by participants:

- Strong support for the National Organic Program in applying uniform standards and providing strong oversight across the globe,
- Increased public education about the benefits of organic,
- Investment to support transition to organic and access to land programs for new organic farmers,
- Increased funding for organic production and ingredient research,
- Programs to improve transparency and tracking of international organic trade,
- Improved and increased data on the organic industry.

OTA is now using the information obtained in the survey to build a well-vetted farm bill platform with

additional input from OTA task forces and councils. Efforts will then focus on educating Congress and the Administration about the importance of America's almost \$50 billion organic industry, the priorities of the country's more than 20,000 organic operators, and the expectations of millions of organic consumers. 

*"When health is absent,
wisdom cannot reveal itself,
art cannot manifest,
strength cannot fight,
wealth becomes useless,
and intelligence cannot
be applied."*

— Herophilus

New Program Certifies Bee-Friendly Farms

The Bee Better Certified program is a new, nationwide certification that enables agricultural producers to let consumers know they are farming in ways that benefit bees. The program was developed by the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation in partnership with Oregon Tilth, with Conservation Innovation Grant funding from USDA. Interested farmers submit an application to Oregon Tilth, which inspects the farm and certifies it if it meets standards. Certified farmers are able to use the Bee Better seal. Visit <https://goo.gl/BxBpX7>

(Sources: National Center for Appropriate Technology and USDA) 



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Organic Advisory & Education Council

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- SICK BINDWEED PLANTS -

Perennial Field Bindweed is one of the primary weeds that producers have issues with in Montana's organic systems. There is ongoing Field Bindweed research at Montana State University and the Organic Advisory and Education Council is working with them to explore the usage of natural bio-controls for problematic weeds. To move forward we need your help to identify and collect sick bindweed plants. We are asking you to scout your bindweed patches this season to find local diseases, especially root-type diseases where there may be a yellowing of the leaves, and a discoloration of the roots. When you find a diseased bindweed plant – please do the following:

1. Write down the location, date, and take a picture.
2. Dig up the plant down to the roots, shake off the dirt.
3. Look for discolored roots.
4. Put the sample in a paper bag. Do NOT use a plastic bag. The humidity in the plastic bag will affect the sample. A paper bag makes it easier for the lab team to deal with a dry sample. If you have multiple samples, place each one in an individual bag with the location information clearly indicated for each.
5. Include your name, address, phone number and email.
6. Mail sample(s) to:

Professor David C. Sands
119 Plant Bioscience Building
Montana State University
Bozeman MT 59717-3150

We are asking everyone to help out to find a workable organic solution to this issue. The samples you provide may move forward the ongoing research in a meaningful way. Thank you in advance for your help with this vital research.

The Organic Advisory and Education Council (OAEC) is a non-profit organization made up of Montana certified organic farmers whose mission is to assess priority needs for research and education specific to Montana's organic farming community. OAEC's mandate is to identify and to target funds for most needed projects. In an equally important role, OAEC provides information and advice to researchers and educators on areas of critical need in the organic community.

Deep Winter Greenhouse Construction Documents Available

On its Deep Winter Greenhouse (DWG) resource page, University of Minnesota is offering access to construction documents for its 2.2 prototype DWG. A DWG is a passive solar greenhouse for growing crops in northern latitudes. DWGs can be used to grow cold-hardy crops that thrive with minimal light, providing year-round production capacity for small scale farmers and gardeners. Visit: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/rsdp/statewide/deep-winter-greenhouse/>

(Sources: National Center for Appropriate Technology, University of MN) 

Calendar of Events

Find the organic events in your area by visiting 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.

Visit: <http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org/omadrates.htm> for details or call Susan Waters at (406) 274-4869.

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Please sign me up as a MOA Member!

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Farm or Business: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Type of Work: _____

Annual Membership Levels:

- Individual.....\$30
- Household.....\$50 (includes two memberships)
- Farm/Ranch/Business....\$75 (includes two memberships, a 5% discount on newsletter ads and a website directory listing)
- Organic Business.....\$250 (includes two memberships, a 10% discount on newsletter ads and a website directory listing)
- Lifetime.....\$750 (includes two memberships, a 10% discount on newsletter ads and a website directory listing)
- Lifetime Business.....\$2500 (includes two memberships, a 10% discount on newsletter ads and a website directory listing)
- Publication/Media.....\$500 (includes full page, quarterly newsletter ads, a website directory listing, and full media coverage)
- Silver (-5%).....\$1650 (includes two memberships; full page, quarterly newsletter ads; a website directory listing; full media coverage; two conference registrations & conference lunch sponsorship)
- Gold (-10%).....\$2000 (includes two memberships; full page, quarterly newsletter ads; a website directory listing; full media coverage; two conference registrations & conference dinner sponsorship)

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A View From the Chair

A summer of discontent has spread across much of Montana and the Northern Plains. Usual spring rains, that make crop production possible in our ecosystem, have either not come at all or have been light and spotty, depending on your location. Uncharacteristically, this drought started in the east. Friends in North Dakota and NE Montana reported withered crops more than a month ago. The drought has spread west as calendars turned to summer. Each day without rain lowers crop prospects. We'll tighten our belts and reaffirm that we farm in "next year country." As a community, let us be available to each other to commiserate the losses and offer support however we are able.

Beyond our state, other issues threaten our larger community of organic farmers, ranchers, and food citizens.

First, not all that is represented as organic is created equal. In late May, while attending the Organic Trade Association (OTA) Policy Days, We learned that "significant fraud has occurred" involving supposedly-organic corn and soybeans, imported to the US from Turkey. In a classic "bait and switch," traders purchased some organic crops then used the certificates to represent (many) other non-organic lots. In this manner, literally shiploads of illegitimate feed entered the organic market. The wheels of justice are turning, albeit slowly. The USDA has revoked certifications, notified importers and continues to investigate. There are proposals, from the OTA among others, for increased budget for enforcement, reduced exemptions from certification for brokers and to establish "best practices" for importers. Public data from the USDA indicate that organic corn

and soybean imports from Turkey in 2016 were several times greater than the previous year. Common sense should have driven skepticism before these products ever reached the US.

While these fraudulent shipments are very troubling, it is reassuring that the "system" does appear to be working. Perhaps owing to pressure from groups like MOA, the OTA and our representatives, investigations are on-going, illegal actions have

While we do not lack for challenges, as organic farmers, ranchers, processors and food citizens, we are part of the solution.

been discovered, sanctions were issued and the matter is seeing the public "light of day." The knowledge that enforcement does occur will discourage others from perpetrating similar fraud in the future. And, perhaps, food manufacturers will strengthen their commitments to source domestic supply and support US organic farmers in rising to meet the demand of the organic market. That is what MOA will continue to advocate for!

Another troubling "sign of the times" is the ongoing wave of mergers and acquisitions involving organic food manufacturers, retailers and brands. Amazon now "owns" Whole Foods; General Mills owns Annie's; and Flower Foods owns Dave's Killer Bread, just to name three deals that impact Montana growers. One reason for the big to get bigger is to exert more market power over suppliers. In other words, pressure processors and farmers to take lower prices for their products. This has definitely happened to growers in Montana.

The new, larger companies offer lower prices, shorter contracts and less favorable terms for organic crops and livestock. I have not visited a Whole Foods since Amazon's buy, but, I do know that the price of Annie's and Dave's products did not decline at retail despite significant declines in contract prices offered to Montana farmers. While organic production still offers a great opportunity for farmers, consolidation of buyers threatens to "take some bloom off of the rose."

What can we, in Montana, do to counter the impacts of corporate consolidation in the organic food sector? We can celebrate that here in Montana our MOA community includes a number of small organic food processors that are committed to Montana producers. As producers, we can choose to support these businesses, perhaps even if they offer somewhat lower prices for our crops than out-of-state buyers (greed works both ways). We can also celebrate and support the vibrant local market for small-scale producers. As food citizens, we can support local and in-state producers and processors preferentially over national brands.

By working together and making our voices heard, we will continue to improve our food system, our communities and our economy. These are the goals upon which MOA was founded and continues to advocate for today.

Keep your spirits up, have faith that Nature will support us as we work to heal her, and be assured that you and your MOA are part of the solution!

Doug Crabtree, MOA Board Chairman