



Organic Matters

GE Seeds and Crops Update

By Kristina Hubbard, Organic Seed Alliance

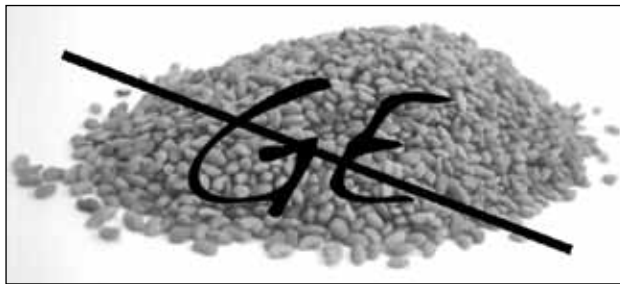
The issues of organic integrity and contamination by genetically engineered (GE) seeds and crops continue to receive unprecedented attention. Below is a short update on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) recent decisions to approve GE alfalfa and sugar beets, much to the dismay of the organic community. And, there is good news to share from our state legislature.

First, an update on GE alfalfa: In December 2010, USDA released its final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as ordered by federal court. The agency proceeded to engage stakeholders in discussions on "co-existence," as Secretary Vilsack said he was deciding whether to approve ("deregulate") GE alfalfa with or without restrictions. Although many believed USDA would announce a conditional approval (i.e., isolation distances, etc.), in January 2011, the agency announced a full deregulation of GE alfalfa without restrictions that aimed to mitigate gene flow to organic and other non-GE alfalfa.

Although Secretary Vilsack outlined additional steps his department would take to ensure "the availability of high

quality seed," the most meaningful steps toward ensuring fairness and organic integrity were absent from this decision.

This decision led the Center for Food Safety and Earthjustice to file a second lawsuit against USDA. In March 2011, the attorneys filed a lawsuit arguing that the agency's recent unrestricted approval of GE alfalfa was



unlawful. USDA's own data shows that more than 90% of all the alfalfa planted in the U.S. is grown without herbicides. With the full deregulation of GE alfalfa, USDA estimates that up to 23 million more pounds of toxic herbicides will be released into the environment each year.

GE sugar beets have followed a similar path as GE alfalfa. Plaintiffs in the GE sugar beet lawsuit enjoyed a huge victory last year when a federal district judge vacated USDA's approval of the GE beets pending a full EIS. Although GE sugar beets were again a regulated crop and illegal to plant, within weeks of this ruling, USDA issued permits for GE sugar beet plantings. In response to these permits, a second lawsuit was filed in September 2010 challenging these plantings, and in November, the judge ordered the crops be destroyed.

continued on p. 8

MOA Farm Tour on June 17 in Malta

Mark your calendars for MOA's early summer Farm Tour on Friday, June 17, 2011, at Mark Bruckner's Farm. Mark farms 3,400 organic dry land acres near Malta, Montana, and specializes in rye

and spring wheat. He has been farming organically since 1999 and has much to share with new, transitioning and established organic grain farmers.

continued on p. 5

Inside This Issue

- Notes from Underground... 2
- Food to Bank On 2
- On the Farm..... 3
- AATRA Funding Cut..... 3
- MOA Financial Report ... 4-5
- Small Biz Opp Workshop... 6
- Product Safety Website 6
- USCOEA..... 7
- Upcoming MOA Events 7
- What's New in Stores? 9
- NOSB Update 9
- Organic Kitchen 10
- To Your Health..... 10
- MOA Member Benefits 11
- GEM Local Farmer Day.... 11
- A View from the Chair 12

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Notes from Underground

by Cathy Zabinski, MSU Bozeman



For me, the appreciation for soil and what happens belowground increases with the difficulty of the environment. I'm not a farmer but I'm an avid gardener, and professionally I am a plant and soil ecologist at Montana State University. My teaching and research

has been largely related to restoration ecology—especially how to get plants to grow on heavily disturbed or contaminated sites—but after spending a sabbatical year in France and enthusiastically experiencing the French food system, I became interested in sustainable food production. In many ways, disturbed systems needing restoration have a lot in common with agricultural systems making a shift to lower input farming. For both, the goal is to restore the function of belowground communities, especially nutrient cycling. So, I'll tell you some stories about soil biota. Some of it might be useful information for thinking about how to manage soils, and some of it will be just interesting stories about things that most of us don't usually think about.

Soil is the home for an overwhelming number of organisms. One gram of soil, which is about a half of a teaspoon, has as many as one hundred million bacteria in it that belong to somewhere between 1,000 and 100,000 different species. Fungi are not quite as numerous, with only tens of thousands in a gram of soil, but they occur in long thin strands, about the diameter of a strand of hair, so in most soils their mass is greater than the bacteria. After that there is a whole complex web of soil organisms including the single-celled protozoans, such as the amoebas from your 10th grade biology book; nematodes, the barely visible roundworms; microarthropods, an incredibly diverse group with mites and springtails; and the larger animals that we're most familiar with because we can see them—earthworms, centipedes, millipedes, ants, and others. For most of the soil biota, we have names for a small percentage of the species and even less information about what they do and how they do it. Overall we know that soil biota are important for breaking down organic matter and nutrient cycling, but because most of them are small, a lot of them look alike, and all of them live in a place that can only be studied by disturbing the system, the belowground world is truly a secret underground.

There are a lot of stories that could be told about this

underground, but for now just one. The part of the soil where most of the soil organisms congregate, especially the microbiota, is right around the roots, an area technically known as the rhizosphere. It's because that area is incredibly rich in compounds that are either actively secreted into the soil or that leak out of the roots or that are sloughed off as dead cells. The biochemistry of the rhizosphere is incredibly rich and because the easiest way to study the compounds in the rhizosphere is by growing plants in a liquid solution, we have not fully characterized what is happening with roots growing in soil. Because up to 20% of all of the carbon that a plant fixes during photosynthesis ends up in the rhizosphere, people have speculated that plants must use those exudates to sustain a microbial community that can increase their nutrient uptake. And for some of the microbes in the rhizosphere, that might be true. But pumping sugars out of your roots to encourage beneficial microbes is a little like passing out \$20 bills to attract friends. The soil biota, with the rich diversity and really complex web of interactions, includes organisms that increase plants uptake of nutrients, that graze on roots, that act as pathogens, that eat the beneficial microbes, that eat the predators of beneficial microbes, or that ignore plants. Anything is possible belowground. The importance of soil biota to all forms of life on this planet, and that it is really an uncharted world is what makes it a fascinating area to study.

Cathy Zabinski is an Associate Professor of Restoration Ecology, Land Resources and Environmental Sciences at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana.



Cathy Zabinski

Food to Bank On

Do you believe that everyone in our community should have access to healthy, local food for their families? The Community Food Co-op's Food to Bank on Program aims to do just that by working with area farmers to provide fresh, local food to the Gallatin County Food Bank. The program is driven by both customer donations and contributions from the Co-op. Anyone can make a donation, of any size, at the cash register. These donations are used to purchase local food that is then delivered to the Food Bank. These monthly deliveries also support our local food system, as the Co-op works with local producers year-round and buys food that might otherwise go to waste.

The Community Food Co-op is located at 908 West Main in Bozeman. For more info, visit www.bozo.coop or call 587-4039.

On the Farm by Nate Powell-Palm

With five calves born before January 15th and three more making their way into the fields in the past week, this past calving season has made me thankful not only for its season, but for a family and community who have made going to school so far away from Montana possible while still running an organic ranch. As my cows finish the last of their winter hay, I'm laying out my plans for contracting new land, making more hay and getting ready to dive into egg and vegetable production.

This spring was full of the usual thrill of new calves, increased egg production and planning for a high wind tunnel. But one event in particular confirmed the power of community building. This was the first annual "Montana GreenCon" hosted by Belgrade High School. GreenCon provided high-schoolers from across the state a platform to learn, discuss, and present on issues concerning sustainable community building. However, almost as important as the event itself was the food that nourished 65 students over the course of the two-day event. The majority of the food came from within ten miles of the school, Cold Springs Ranch provided 50 lbs. of beef along with 30 dozen eggs. With potatoes from Springhill, flour and beans from Three Forks and apples from the Flathead, all food products were from somewhere in Montana. This event displayed the abundance that can be found even in early spring around Montana and it introduced to many the potential of eating locally.

With warm weather comes a flurry of eggs from the previously reluctant Chantecler hens. As our refrigerator begins to overflow, we're quickly beginning to explore new sale outlets for egg production, including the winter farmer's markets, as well as selling them online through the new local products marketing site, www.fielddayfarms.com.

Since receiving our organic certification for vegetable production, we have been researching ways to extend our growing season. Thanks to an NRCS grant, we can work toward this by setting up a small (30X48), high wind tunnel. Eliot Coleman's (Four Season Farm) movable high wind tunnel would be ideal, but we may have to start with a fixed structure and graduate to a portable unit down the road.

Around March 1, it struck me that, aside from the two weeks I would spend in Montana for Winter Break, I would largely be missing the time of year which is the most exciting for any farmer or rancher, the time that gives me hope and vision for the coming year – Spring. But I have found a substitute for the spring buzz here in Iowa. I will be receiving funding from



Dining Services at Grinnell College to begin an organic hog operation which will ultimately cover the pork needs for the students at Grinnell. The squeal of the days old piglets and the smell of spring mud assuages my cravings to be home working with my animals, not to mention the fact that springtime activities involving babies are proving to be a big draw for my volunteer workforce. Some of my female peers had never seen a piglet. We'll see if the attraction lasts once they're looking at a few 300 pound sows.

My first year in college has flown by. With only a few weeks of school left, I am realizing that college has only forstalled the work awaiting me at home and I look forward to the busiest season of my short farming career as I try to catch up on everything I've missed, market as much beef, eggs and vegetables as I possibly can, and figure out the intricacies of a "micro" irrigation system when I'm not sure I've even figured out the best use of a "macro" irrigation system, a.k.a. "the ditch!"



Nate Powell-Palm

ATTRA Funding Cut

by Jeff Schahczenski, NCAT

We don't usually make such requests of our friends, but as you may have heard by now, ATTRA, the National Sustainable Information Service, was caught up in the budget cuts going on in Congress, and its funding was eliminated for the remainder of the 2011 fiscal year. This cut has already led to the lay-off of 20 professional staff members who will not be able to help farmers and ranchers from around the country. Here is how you can help: PLEASE take a moment and call Congressman Rehberg, Senator Tester and Senator Baucus and remind them that ATTRA was incorrectly targeted as an earmark in the FY2011 budget. Then, ask them to restore full funding for ATTRA in the next FY 2012 funding bill.

MOA Financial Report

by Wes Henthorne, MOA Treasurer

With budgets large and small dominating the news, I was asked recently to do a breakdown of MOA's finances so everyone can see where our funds come from and how we spend them.

Because we use a cash accounting system, income and expenses are recorded when funds are received and disbursed. This can create a situation that makes a particular year look better or worse than it really should. For instance we paid the printers for the last issue of our 2010 Newsletter in early 2011. If this had been paid in 2010 the Newsletter expense for 2010 would be nearly double what it is. I averaged the data on this table to create pie charts that illustrate our Income and Expenses for the past five years.

The Events Income comes from our Conferences and Farm Tours and is by far our largest source

of revenue. Conference and Farm Tour Expenses are the largest expense category. These two items have the largest impact on our net income in just the way you would expect. If we have lots of members attend a conference and are able to keep our food and speaker costs down, we do well. If we experience inclement weather during an uncertain economy attendance can be lower than planned but costs remain the same and the results are not pretty. The Board works very hard to put out quality conferences with good organic food at a reasonable price. Member attendance is what makes this work.

While our Conferences and Farm Tours are our areas of relatively higher risks and rewards, Membership Income is our steady seed money that gives us a starting point for all of our activities. Again, it's a case of members making things work financially.



MOA Income and Expense						
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	Average
Income						
Advertising	1,065.77	1,305.71	1,633.10	974.25	898.00	1,175.37
Events Income	20,050.00	27,485.11	27,596.40	31,217.80	32,069.56	27,683.77
Membership	6,635.00	3,860.00	4,515.00	5,905.00	4,960.00	5,175.00
Grants & Gifts	1,536.72	1,476.63	2,570.00	25.00	3,800.00	1,881.67
TOTAL	29,287.49	34,127.45	36,314.50	38,122.05	41,727.56	35,915.81
Expenses						
Administration	3,214.97	3,729.89	2,633.84	2,540.89	1,859.09	2,795.74
Promotion-Website	8,229.50	12,456.82	9,530.00	7,838.50	5,000.00	8,610.96
Conference-Farm Tours	8,187.66	27,718.50	11,839.37	27,623.69	28,561.05	20,786.05
Newsletter	1,890.02	3,384.62	6,443.48	4,369.56	3,088.49	3,835.23
Board Expense	848.93	272.25	608.90	49.15	269.81	409.81
TOTAL	22,371.08	47,562.08	31,055.59	42,421.79	38,778.44	36,437.80
NET	6,916.41	(13,434.63)	5,258.91	(4,299.74)	2,949.12	(521.99)

Farm Tour continued from p. 1

The following is an excerpt from an AERO interview with Mark Bruckner: "Montana has a two-decade-plus history of successful organic grain farming. Many farmers doubt that it is possible to control weeds without toxic chemicals. It is possible and it does not take heroic effort or exceptional ability. An organic weed control plan that works can be developed for almost any farm."

"Many transitional farmers do not understand that there are many things they can do to control weeds," says Bruckner. "Subtle things like: seeding six days later; growing taller or more aggressive crops; and shallow fall tillage of weedy spots in the previous years' stubble all add up to make acceptable weed control achievable without the chemical inputs. I have found enhancing soil fertility to be more difficult to achieve than weed management in small grains."

"My recommendation is for the transitioning farmer

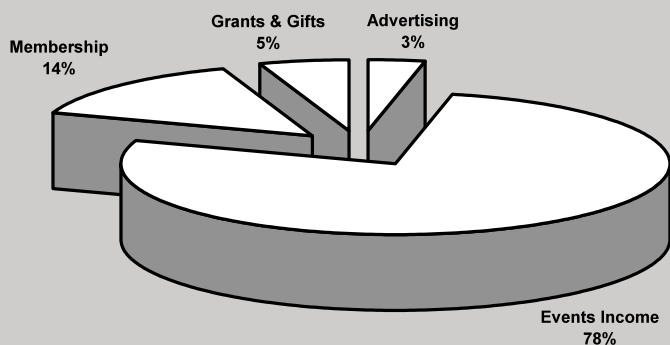
to start with crops that grow fairly easy in an organic system. For me these have been barley, rye and wheat. Weed control in high value crops like flax or lentils is much harder to achieve. I would say start with experimental acreage of these crops and expand as you feel more confident. Hay crops are the easiest and least expensive organic crops to grow and during the transition years, they can be a good choice. There is a good market for grain hay like, haybet, oats or rye hay in many areas."

"But don't go it alone. The people you meet and contacts you make can be invaluable. Look for a mentor at every conference and event you go to if you are a transitional farmer," advises Bruckner.

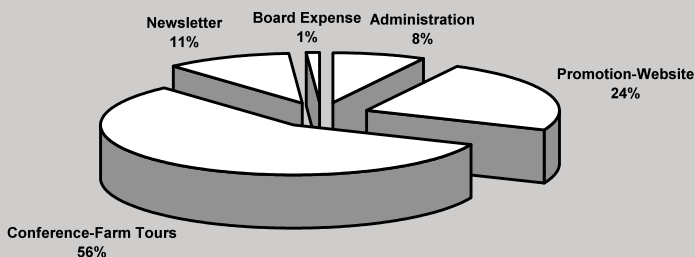
Join us on June 17, 2011, for this much-anticipated MOA Farm Tour.

For more information and to pre-register, call Sam at (406) 771-9229, or visit MOA's website at: www.montanaorganicassociation.org.

MOA Income 2006-2010



MOA Expenses 2006-2010



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Small Business Opp Workshop

by Daryl Lassila, MOA Board Chairman

Senator Tester held an educational and informational Small Business Opportunity Workshop at MSU in late March. It was well attended mostly by local residents. But some did travel great distances to hear Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan speak.

The morning was divided into different breakout sessions with about 40 interesting speakers with subjects ranging from banking, insurance, livestock, grain and marketing. Kathleen Merrigan moderated two of the workshops and gave an insightful speech on the current affairs in Washington.

After the workshop, a small group of people with an organic background joined Senator Tester and Kathleen Merrigan for lunch. It was good food and good conversation discussing the future of organics and GE/GMOs in the new farm bill. A lot of information was packed into a few hours as the guests had to travel to more meetings across the state.

New Product Safety Website

The Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) announced the official launch of its website at www.produce-safetyalliance.cornell.edu and issued a call for farmers, researchers, state officials, produce industry experts and others interested in produce safety to join an Alliance working committee. The committee members will assist in the development of a national Good Agricultural Practices (GAP's) education curriculum focused on understanding and implementing fresh fruit and vegetable food safety practices.

The Alliance is a broad-based partnership charged with developing a national education and training program for farmers, packers, and regulatory personnel of fresh produce in anticipation of a new produce safety rule from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It is housed at Cornell University's National GAPs Program and is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the FDA.

"There is no more fundamental function of government than protecting consumers from harm, which is why food safety is one of USDA's top priorities," said Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan. "The Alliance will bring a wide range of voices to the table and use that information to develop a valuable curriculum for fresh fruit and vegetable food safety practices. I encourage all interested parties to assist in these efforts as we move forward."

USCOEA

by Sam Schmidt, MOA Board/Montana Milling, Inc.

What has six letters and requires another paper trail?

Interesting fact: Roughly 25% of U.S. goods go to Canada, and 20% of goods the U.S. imports come from Canada. Now, this is "all" goods, not just organic items, but it still gives you an idea about how much trade is done between the two countries. This makes you scratch your head and ask, "Why did the two countries decide to create different standards for their organic programs?" Well, I can't answer that completely, but for a grain producer, the latest acronym you need to learn is USCOEA, or United States – Canadian Organic Equivalency Agreement. And unless you want to limit your marketing options, you will probably need to become USCOEA compliant. Why? Well, for companies such as ours, who sell a lot of products to the PNW region, there is a good chance that a finished product with our ingredient will be shipped north. So, what is required for this? Basically, producers just have to affirm that no "Sodium Nitrate" has been used as an input, and that "Hydroponic" (in liquid) or "Aeroponic" (in the air and soil-less) growing practices, have not been used. To my knowledge, this is not an issue for the

Montana grain producer, but that doesn't change the fact that appropriate measures need to be taken. What are they? Before your next certification audit, producers are likely going to be asked by end users to sign an affidavit stating they have not utilized any of the prohibited inputs or practices, and then at your next certification audit, you will need to become USCOEA accredited. This is another paper trail that end users are no more excited about than producers are (and trust me, I would gladly switch our requirements to become compliant for yours). But at the end of day, it will prevent all of us from any marketing limitations, and that's what is most important.

Upcoming MOA Events

MOA's Annual Conference will be held in Billings in late November or early December. We're currently busy planning this event, so check the MOA website and the summer issue of *Organic Matters* for details. Call Lou Ann at (406) 721-4331 with your topic and speaker ideas or if you'd like to get involved, especially if you're located in the Billings area.

We're also planning a fall Farm Tour at TenSpoon Organic Winery in Missoula. Details coming soon!

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GE Seeds and Crops Update *continud from p. 1*

Unfortunately, USDA decided soon after to “partially deregulate” GE sugar beets and a legal effort to stop plantings was unsuccessful. A partial deregulation means the crops will be grown under permits that have historically only been used for experimental field trials. This is essentially a way to commercialize the crop before the court-ordered EIS is completed.

Given that more GE crop types are now entering U.S. soils, the Montana Legislature’s unanimous approval of Senate Bill 218 comes as a welcome move toward fairness in our farm fields. In a nutshell, the bill provides a sampling protocol that owners of plant patents or other intellectual property protections must abide by when investigating a farmer for alleged infringement (e.g., when a farmer is suspected of saving patented seed). Importantly, the bill allows a third party (the Montana Department of Agriculture) to participate in investigations and take samples. When disputes arise, mediation is required before judicial action can be filed.

Though not perfect, the bill is a step in the right direction. And it was drafted with the help of farm groups that promote biotechnology and worked to kill a similar bill in 2009. Director Ron de Yong and department attorney Cort Jensen worked hard to bring diverse viewpoints to the table. Looking ahead, our next legislative effort must work toward transferring liability for the unwanted spread of GE seeds and crops back to the patent owner. Farmers who neither choose nor benefit from the technology, and at times are harmed by it, need those who own, promote, and profit from it to be held responsible for contamination. The 2012 Farm Bill will provide us an opportunity to implement this critical piece at the federal level.

Kristina (Kiki) Hubbard is director of advocacy and communications for Organic Seed Alliance. Find talking points on GE alfalfa and sugar beets, in addition to a one-pager titled, Ten Ways to Respond to USDA’s GE Alfalfa and Sugar Beet Decisions, at www.seedalliance.org. Kiki is also a board member of Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) and represented AERO in Senate Bill 218 discussions.



Kiki Hubbard

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“Any change in any of these factors impacts all the factors. No one element acts alone, but all are part of a system... When you change one thing, everything else in the web of life changes in relationship.”

-Don M. Huber, Ph.D., emeritus soil scientist of Purdue University

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T I M E L E S S

What's New in the Stores?

by Jill Owen, Mountain Front Market

I own and operate a small natural food store in Choteau, Montana (pop: 1800). The buying trends of my customers sometimes mimic the national trends in the natural food industry, but more often they are influenced by the various diets circulating through the community. Currently amongst all of the various eating plans the common denominator is to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables. Produce sales have finally shown an increase after remaining flat for 3-1/2 years.

Due to an interest in the Paleo diet (includes meat, veggies, fruit, nuts, seeds) by some of my customers, the meat case is emptying faster than I can fill it, with goat meat sales rivaling the beef sales.

Organic dairy has always been a good seller in this community, in spite of the relatively high price. Customers recognize the importance of consuming organic dairy products and they often comment on how the quality far exceeds the non-organic milk and cream.


The same is true for organic coffee.

The gluten-free section of my store is a big draw. Although customers interested in these items might not be committed to the organic idea, they end up purchasing other organic products.

Trends may come and trends may go, but I hope the trend of eating organic food continues to grow in Choteau, throughout our state and beyond. That's healthy news for all of us!

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Mountain Front Market

NOSB Update

by Barry Flamm

Visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org/nosb.htm

As I write this, the NOSB Seattle Board Meeting is only one week away (late April) and I am busy preparing for it, including reading the 3728 public comments received by the April 10 deadline. I'm looking forward to seeing the comments submitted by MOA and individual members.

Public comments have already resulted in a change in the agenda. The Handling Committee has withdrawn its recommendation on Nutrient Vitamins and Minerals and will resubmit a revised version for the fall meeting. My reading of the comments suggests that most commentators oppose these supplements added to organic products, or at the very least, believe proposed supplements should be reviewed through the petition process.

Since you will not read this update until after the Board meeting is over, I will keep this brief, but will provide a detailed account of the meeting for posting on the MOA website (web address under headline) in mid-May.

Vacancies for the 15-member organic advisory board need to be filled for an organic producer, organic handler, consumer / public interest representative, scientist, and environmentalist. The positions are specifically designated to represent various sectors

of the organic industry, including those who own or operate an organic production or handling operation, represent public interest or consumer interest groups, have expertise in areas of environmental protection and resource conservation, or have expertise in fields of toxicology, ecology, or biochemistry. MOA has many talented people that could serve the Board and thus the Organic Community very well. Next year is my last on the Board and will create the only Board vacancy in 2013, unless there are early resignations.

Appointed persons will serve a 5-year term of office beginning Jan. 24, 2012.

To see the notice of announcement in the Federal Register, visit www.regulations.gov and enter keyword or ID "AMS-NOP-11-0006-0001." Written nominations, with cover letters and resumes, must be postmarked on or before July 17, 2011. Nominations can also include endorsements or letters of recommendations. NOSB membership application forms and information about criteria for selection are available on the NOP website.

As Maria Rodale said at last fall's MOA conference, summed up in two words: "Demand Organic!" She made a strong case for "How Organic Farming Can Heal Our Planet, Feed the World, and Keep Us Safe."

I hope I will have seen some of you in Seattle. Best wishes for a successful organic year!



Spring is the time for do-overs and the perfect opportunity to spring clean your diet and nutrition. Eating local and organic is a great way to start!

Irish Salmon With Sorrel

by Thymestudio, www.food.com

4 (4 -6 ounce) salmon fillets	2 granny smith apples, diced small
Salt & freshly ground black pepper, to taste	1 bunch chopped scallion
1 whole lemon, juice of	1 bunch sorrel, shredded (about 8 leaves)
1 tablespoon olive oil	1 teaspoon chopped parsley
4 tablespoons butter, divided	1 lemon, sliced for garnish

Preparation

Dry salmon on paper towels and season with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and 12 tablespoons of butter to a large skillet and heat over medium/high heat. Place the salmon fillets (presentation side down) on the hot skillet. Fry until golden brown, turning at least twice. In a separate saucepan, gently cook over medium heat in the remaining butter the diced apples, scallions, sorrel, about 2 minutes. Divide among four plates. Place the cooked salmon fillets on top. Serves 4.

Sorrel and Goat Cheese Quiche

A Luna Circle Farm original recipe

2-3 cups sorrel, chopped	3 eggs
A few scallions, chopped	1½ cups milk
3-4 ounces goat cheese (chevre)	¼ teaspoon salt
	Parmesan cheese

Preparation

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spread goat cheese (or any strong flavored cheese) in the bottom of a piecrust. Cover with chopped sorrel and scallions. Beat eggs, salt and milk together. Pour over greens. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until top is golden brown.

Rhubarb Vinaigrette

Sharon Lindquist

1/4 C honey	Zest of one lemon
1 C water	1/4 C olive oil
4 stalks rhubarb, diced	Pinch of coarse sea salt
1/4 C red wine vinegar	Several twists freshly ground pepper

Preparation

First, heat water and honey over medium heat. When mixture begins to boil, add rhubarb and boil 5 minutes, stirring often. Stir in vinegar and lemon zest, and simmer 5-10 minutes until dressing has reduced by half. Remove from heat, cool slightly, whisk in olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Serve warm or cold over fresh salad greens.

To Your Health

by Sharon Lindquist, MOA Member

When the seed catalogs start arriving in February, I start planning my garden. This year in Eastern Montana, winter continues to linger along with cooler than average temperatures and snow showers instead of April and May rain showers. My greenhouse resides in our living room window on a kitchen table. We often start our tomatoes and sometimes herbs and pumpkins on an electric heating pad. Adding a greenhouse to your property is a valuable addition not only in equity but also increasing your self-reliance for growing your own food. With a greenhouse, a family can plant a fall and winter crop, extending the growing season and having access to fresh food year-round. Greenhouse designs can be small enough to fit in a corner of your garden or large enough for market gardeners. There are assembly kits on the market, recycled window designs, straw bale construction, or hoop styles—just to name a few. There are a few basic considerations when planning a greenhouse. Greenhouses need a ventilation and shading system for summer and an insulation and heat source for winter, along with humidity. If you like raising chickens, consider housing them in your greenhouse during the winter. Many warm bodies in one space will raise the air temperature in the structure by a few degrees and the CO2 they give off from breathing, as well as the manure for soil fertilization, is good for plant health.

Plants that do well in a greenhouse during the colder months, requiring temperatures of 50-70 degrees during the day and 45-50 degrees at night are: beets, broccoli, chard, onions, lettuce, peas, cabbage, carrots, and lettuce. Starting and establishing your lettuce before it turns cold will insure that you have lettuce for 3 or 4 months into winter. Plants that do well in a greenhouse during warmer months, requiring temperatures of 60-85 degrees in the daytime and 55-65 degrees at night are: cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, squash, and tomatoes. Companion planting of herbs are a natural way to repel insects and add flavor to your meals.

The judgment is out on whether European Sorrel is a herb or vegetable, but may be something to consider starting in your greenhouse. European Sorrel resembles spinach in appearance and when the leaves are young taste fruity like a kiwi fruit. Once the leaves mature, it is tangier in taste and a nutritious additive to soups and stews. Nutritionally, sorrel is high in Vitamin A and C with moderate levels of calcium, potassium, and magnesium. It is a perennial and once you have a mature plant, it can be transplanted outdoors to become one of your first edible greens in the springtime. Another early perennial is rhubarb, often used as a spring tonic because it has modest amounts of Vitamins C, A, and K as well as folic acid, manganese, magnesium, and potassium. Rhubarb is 95% water, low in calories, and has long been used in natural medicine for its diuretic and anti-inflammatory properties.

Exploring other culinary uses for rhubarb such as pickled or a tangy salad dressing or unique dessert topping is exciting and delicious. On the left is a recipe for a Rhubarb Vinaigrette, the chunky texture of this tasty dressing elevates any salad and may be complemented by fresh goat cheese and toasted nuts. You'll enjoy the sorrel recipes too. Cheers!

MOA Membership Benefits

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

- Individual** . . . \$30
- Household** . . . \$50 (includes 2 memberships)
- Farm/Ranch/Business** . . . \$75 (5% discount on newsletter ads and 40-word online directory listing with your logo and link to your website)
- Organic Business** . . . \$250 (10% discount on newsletter ads and 100-word online directory listing with your logo and link to your website)
- Lifetime** . . . \$750

Each membership level delivers a quarterly newsletter devoted to sharing the latest news and information about the association and the organic industry, discounts to MOA events and the annual conference, special mailings on legislative alerts and events, and the networking and educational opportunities presented by joining others who share interest and experience in the field of organics. Other member benefits include eligibility for a Workman's Comp premium discount, safety training, and other services to assist you in your organic endeavors. The business level categories offer discounts on advertising in our print publications and an online directory listing on the MOA website. The Lifetime Membership gives you permanent access, listings, discounts and the satisfaction that you're supporting the farmers, ranchers, processors, distributors, retailers, students and researchers who make organic food available and accessible. Join today and support organics!

Calendar of Events on Website

www.montanaorganicassociation.org/events.htm

MOA Needs You

As MOA grows and develops, involvement by members becomes evermore essential, whether it takes the form of voicing your opinion or lending a hand. Here are some ways for you to become involved...

Join a committee. MOA has committees that oversee each of its strategic goals. Consider joining the Communications, Conference, Farm Tours, or Fundraising committees. Contact Daryl at (406) 788-7423 or email mtorganic@hotmail.com for more info.

Become a member. The simplest way for you to advance MOA's current efforts and future goals is to provide financial support through membership. Just fill out the form on the right and send it in.

Organic Matters Ad Rates

See www.montanaorganicassociation.org/omadrates.htm for details or call Jim Lindquist at (406) 583-7722.

GEM Local Farmer Promo Day

by Jim Lindquist, MOA Board Member

Some familiar organic farmers and ranchers stopped by to check out MOA's triboard at the Good Earth Market's Local Farmer Promotion Day last February.



Senator Tester and MOA Board Member Jim Lindquist



MOA Treasurer, Wes Henthorne, helps a customer

Please sign me up as a MOA Member!

Name: _____

Farm or Business: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Membership Levels: (effective May 1, 2011)

- Individual.....\$30
- Family.....\$50 (includes two memberships)
- Farm/Ranch/Business....\$75 (includes a 5% discount on newsletter ads and an online directory listing)
- Organic Business.....\$250 (includes a 10% discount on newsletter ads and an online directory listing)
- Lifetime.....\$750

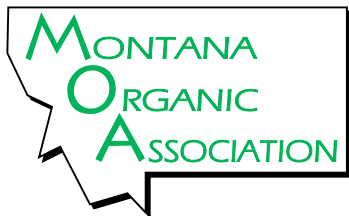
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A View from the Chair

Lots of ideas for new legislation have been tossed around in this contentious 2011 legislative session—some great...some, not so. One of the more enlightened bills being worked on is SB218: "An act establishing procedures for sampling plants protected by patent or other intellectual property laws; requiring mediation of claims involving protected plants; providing an exception; providing rulemaking authority; and providing an immediate effective date." Various spokespersons from several farm organizations, as well as myself, gathered at the Capitol to testify in favor of SB218. Not just once, but twice, and never did any person speak out against it.

In the organic hub of business, the big threat is Roundup Ready alfalfa and beets. We are not in this struggle alone, as a lot of conventional growers are also threatened by contamination of GMOs (genetically modified organisms). (See Kiki Hubbard's *GE Seeds and Crops Update* on the cover page.) The organic and conventional growers have to stick together on this if we are to succeed and we need to educate and motivate consumers to speak out against GMOs. Collectively, we also need to insist on labeling all foods containing GMOs.

MOA is approaching its ten-year anniversary advocating for organics and supporting organic producers, distribu-

tors, researchers and others in the field. MOA is feeling the financial pinch that most non-profit associations are being challenged with in this tough economy, so we are currently conducting a membership drive. If you value the organization, please keep your membership current or consider an upgrade to your membership to take advantage of MOA's new services, such as the online directory of organic business listings or the discount on Workman's Comp premiums. Please share this newsletter with your farmer friends and recruit a few members on your own. We've been pretty generous with lapsed members, but are finding ourselves in the position of having to stop sending newsletters to lapsed members. So if you value this newsletter and the wealth of other MOA membership benefits, please send in your renewal today (MOA sign-up form is on page 11). If you have any membership questions, don't hesitate to contact Sandi Shanks at (406) 297-7588 and she'll be happy to answer any of your inquiries. Or, you can visit our website at www.montanaorganicassociation.org and click on the "Join" button.

Spring is finally here, and with it, a renewed sense of opportunity. Hope to see you at the Summer Farm Tour on Friday, June 17, (see article on cover page) at Mark Bruckner's farm in Malta—mark your calendars today!

Daryl Lassila, MOA Board Chairman