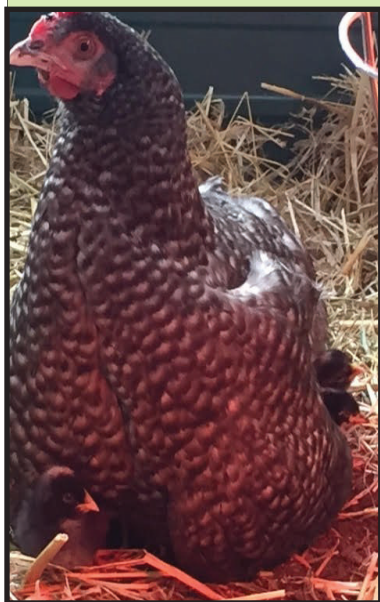




Organic Matters



17TH ANNUAL MOA CONFERENCE A GREAT SUCCESS

The Montana Organic Association held its 17th Annual Conference and Business Meeting at The Commons in Bozeman, December 5 -7. More than 300 people attended and took part in a rich agenda that included workshops, tours, speakers, a trade show, entertainment, organic food, student opportunities, plenty of networking opportunities, and more. The response to the annual conference was tremendously positive.

Among the plenary sessions were those addressing organic standards and environmental contamination, human and soil health, as well as climate change. Break-out sessions covered MSU research updates, federal policy updates, carbon sequestration, blockchain, livestock integration into vegetable production, and more. Several students discussed their work on projects relevant to the organic industry with poster presentations.

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The conference had two keynote speakers; Dr. Stephen Jones, Director of the Washington State University Bread Lab, and Matthew Dillon, Senior Director of Agricultural Policy and Programs at Clif Bar & Company. Both provided thought-provoking, personal, and poignant addresses to the MOA audience that showcased their passion for organic agriculture and inspired producers and professionals alike. In conference surveys, responders mentioned both keynote speakers as being essential and high-quality additions to the conference. MOA is grateful for their significant support of MOA members and its mission.

The conference boasted more than 60 sessions and more than 80 speakers and session leaders.

MOA offered two day-long workshops, led by experienced and knowledgeable professionals, that were both well attended and provided producers with tools they can use when they returned home. Organic U and the Farm Commons' "Cultivating Your Legally Resilient Farm" workshops had more than 60 participants combined. Participants took away skills as well as a list of practical tasks they could act on to make their farms operate more sustainably and become more efficient.

Once again, Chandee Bomgardner, with Bomgardner Catering of Loma, MT, provided delicious and nourishing organic food. Chandee used mostly locally sourced food ingredients like grass-fed beef and

MORE ON THE MOA Conference

Continued from page 1

lamb, carrots and other root vegetables, apples and Flat-head Lake cherries, goat cheese, Montana-grown certified organic grain, pulses, and greens. Once again, respondents noted the presentation of outstanding organic food as one of the best things about the conference.

The MOA Conference Committee incorporated some creative, cultural elements in the conference by including the "Women in Agriculture Photo Exhibit" as well as ruminations on "green" provided by Chrysti the Wordsmith and was fortunate to book the Montana Jazz Collective for Thursday night entertainment.

MOA recognized three people for their vital contributions to Montana's organic industry at the Friday night Awards Dinner. MOA recognized Melvyn and Susan Brown (Amaltheia Dairy) of Belgrade for their foundational work in Montana's organic community with the "Lifetime of Service" award. Nate and Sarah Brown celebrated their parents' recognition and joined them on stage in appreciation. MOA also recognized Dr. Bruce Maxwell, with the Montana State University Department of Land Resources & Environmental Science, for his tireless work with the "Leadership in Organics" award. Dr. Maxwell has demonstrated a commitment to Montana's organic community. In addition to his work for MOA and at MSU, he sits on the Mon-

tana Climate Solutions Council.

As part of the annual MOA business meeting, the Board of Directors elections took place at the conference. This year members turning in ballots and filling out a lottery card were eligible to win a prize. MOA member Michael Deakin won an MOA logo hat and t-shirt.

The MOA membership re-elected incumbent and new Directors to the Board. The incumbent members are Doug Crabtree, Judy Owsowitz, Sam Schmidt, and MonaRae Tuhy, and the new Directors are Nate Powell-Palm and John Wicks.

The membership unanimously approved a non-discrimination statement that will be used in MOA materials and for obtaining grants. MOA is striving to develop a working policy platform, and while it met challenges moving forward, it is committed to establishing policy positions in the coming year.

THANK YOU
SPONSORS AND
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Many people and organizations contributed to the conference. MOA is grateful for all contributions, whether it is sponsoring the conference, hosting a vendor table, donating food and

auction items, volunteering, or just pitching in to help. The conference surveys indicated that attendees were pleased with the program and speakers, the trade show and networking, the venue, and the food! There is always room for improvement, and the conference committee will keep in mind suggestions to make the conference even better next year. MOA looks forward to building on this auspicious gathering. If you are interested in volunteering in any way, please let us know at moamembership@gmail.com

Non-Discrimination Language adopted by MOA Membership at the 2019 Business Meeting:

Montana Organic Association is a registered non-profit membership organization 501 (c) 6 and does not discriminate in its employment, membership acceptance or board selection practices on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, color, national origin, age, religion, marital status, political ideas, creed, or disabilities.



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Farmers and Ranchers are on the Frontline of Climate Change

This year's devastating losses from extreme weather have brought home the urgent need to address the climate crisis and its impacts on agriculture. Now is the time to join thousands of other farmers and ranchers across the nation to ask policymakers and federal administrators to help us meet the challenges of a changing climate.

As sustainable, organic farmers and ranchers, we can do much to build the resilience of our farms and ranch operations to extreme weather events, store excess carbon in our soils and trees, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But we cannot do it alone - and now is the time to join thousands of other producers across the nation to ask policymakers and federal administrators to help us meet the challenges of a changing climate and become part of the solution.

As a member group of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, the Montana Organic Association, along with almost fifty NSAC member groups, is gathering signatures on a Farmer Letter on Climate Change. Beginning in the spring of 2020, we will use this letter in meetings with members of Congress, USDA program leaders, and other key decision-makers to urge effective policy action to combat climate change, and especially to help farmers and ranchers weather the storm and lead the way towards a more sustainable future. You can view the letter and add your signature at: [Farmer Letter on Climate Change Solutions in Agriculture](#) (See the text of the letter below).

Note that we are specifically seeking signatures from *farmers*, as defined by USDA as producers who sell at least \$1,000 in farm products annually. If you are a gardener, service provider, advocate, or organic consumer who is not making income from farm products, there are other ways that you can help in our efforts to address the climate crisis in our agricultural and food system. For starters, you could share this sign-on opportunity with the farmers in your networks or at farmers' markets. As this campaign grows, there will be more opportunities for folks to get involved soon!

NSAC "Farmer Letter on Climate Change"

We, the undersigned farmers and ranchers, write to express our deep concerns about climate change impacts on agriculture in the United States and to call for solutions that invest in our rural and agricultural communities. Agriculture is on the front lines of a changing climate. Compared to a generation ago, we are experiencing greater weather extremes, from recurrent 100-year floods to severe and prolonged droughts to greater heat waves that threaten workers, crops and livestock. As temperatures continue to rise, new pest and disease pressures are impacting crop yields and quality. As farmers and ranchers, we are accustomed to adapting to change, but the greater extremes we are experiencing today are unprecedented. Our rural communities lack the resources and infrastructure, making them especially vulnerable to climate change impacts. We recognize that these challenges are not experienced equally—disproportionately affecting socially disadvantaged communities, especially farmers and ranchers of color.

Climate change presents a fundamental threat to our ability to remain viable in the years to come. We must act now to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, change to a renewable energy system and advance a multitude of solutions, including the unique and important climate solutions offered by agriculture. We also

Continued on Page 5.

need investment in conservation practices and farm programs that make our operations and rural communities more resilient to extreme weather events.

We are committed to being part of the solution. By improving soil health and increasing soil organic matter on our farms and ranches, we have the power to draw down atmospheric carbon levels at the root of climate change. This approach is recognized by farmers and scientists throughout the world as a critical climate strategy. Through our use of soil health practices like cover crops, crop rotation, improved grazing management and reduced tillage our farms and ranches can become net carbon sinks. These same practices are necessary for adaptation to climate disasters; soil organic matter increases water holding capacity and reduces erosion, which can help our operations withstand some weather extremes. We can and must also reduce potent greenhouse gas emissions, like nitrous oxide and methane emissions, through a diversity of strategies.

We must also protect our agricultural land from the ongoing loss to non-agricultural development. When agricultural lands are converted to urban uses, the greenhouse gas emissions associated with that land increase significantly. One study found that an acre of urban land emits 70 times more greenhouse gas emissions than an acre of irrigated cropland and 100 times more than an acre of rangeland. Protecting our farms and ranches will ensure this vast and important land is available for both food production and carbon storage for generations to come.

Our farms and ranches can also produce renewable energy in unique and important ways. More farmers than ever before are taking steps to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels, as well as producing on-farm renewable energy themselves, including solar and wind, with the opportunity to continue to grow this into an even greater source of renewable rural energy.

Many of the climate solutions offered by agriculture provide multiple benefits to our farms, our communities, and our environment. Among them are increased crop yields, greater resilience to weather extremes, improved air and water quality and enhanced wildlife habitat. We should seek to advance climate solutions that provide these multiple benefits.

But agriculture cannot become part of the climate solution without significant investment. We must reduce the risk to producers in shifting to new climate-friendly agricultural practices by investing in relevant technical assistance, financial incentives and research—especially for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. No climate policy at the national level will be complete or effective without recognizing the role agriculture must play in avoiding the worst impacts of climate change, reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing our carbon sinks and our resiliency. Our food security depends on embracing agricultural solutions to a changing climate.

These solutions to climate change will promote an agricultural economy that is based on fairness and opportunities for family farms and rural communities.

If you recognize that unpredictable and extreme weather events as valid, threatening, and increasingly a problem and agree that agriculture must be recognized for the front line effects it is enduring and that sustainable agriculture also provides mitigating solutions to climate change, then please add your signature at: [Farmer Letter on Climate Change Solutions in Agriculture](#)



Notice of Board of Director Election Results, Board Officers and Committee Chairs

MOA held annual Director elections at conference in December 2019.

Incumbent directors elected to the Board of Directors for three-year terms are:

- Doug Crabtree
- Judy Owsowitz
- Sam Schmidt
- MonaRae Tuhy

New Directors elected for three-year terms are:

- Nate Powell-Palm
- John Wicks

In January 2020, the MOA Board met at its annual Face-to-Face Meeting in Helena to conduct business and to elect Board officers. The following Directors were elected to one-year officer positions:

- Chair – Becky Weed
- Vice Chair – Cliff Merriman
- Treasurer - Heather Estrada
- Secretary - MonaRae Tuhy
- Parliamentarian - Sam Schmidt
- Member at Large – John Wicks
- Past Chair - Doug Crabtree

The direction of the Montana Organic Association is only as strong as its leadership. MOA welcomes energetic, committed dynamic leaders to join us to ensure the continued success of MOA. The Board of Directors election take place during the MOA Conference Annual Business Meeting. Directors serve three year terms and can be re-elected for subsequent terms. The Board of Directors usually

meets in person one to two times each year and as needed by conference calls. Other volunteer committee work, including leadership, is expected. Since MOA is not in a position to provide monetary compensation for Board work, Directors will receive board experience advising a growing, statewide organic organization.

Directors seeking re-election, or anyone interested in serving as a new Director, should contact the MOA Nominations and Election Committee Chair Sam Schmidt at sam@montanamilling.com. MOA strongly encourages all candidates to volunteer on committees for at least one year, prior to consideration. Time commitments vary depending on the work, but typically committees meet by phone once a month.

If you are interested in volunteering for a MOA committee, please contact Committee Chairs for more information on needs and how to participate.

Conference Committee

- Jamie Ryan Lockman, Chair
jamieryanlockman@gmail.com

Farm Tour Committee

- Sam Schmidt, Chair
sam@montanamilling.com

Policy Sub-Committee

- Doug Crabtree, Co-Chair
doug@vilicusfarms.com
- Nate Powell-Palm, Co-Chair
nate.powell.palm@gmail.com

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Farm Service Agency Programs Available to Organic Producers

By Shelly J. Rolando, Chief Agricultural Program Specialist, Montana State Office, USDA-Farm Service Agency

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of programs to support both organic producers and handlers. From financing input costs and storage and handling equipment, to risk protection, FSA is committed to helping organic agriculture grow and thrive.

“We appreciate our strong partnership with the Montana Organic Association that has helped us spread the word about key FSA programs,” FSA State Executive Director Mike Foster said. “I urge Montana organic producers to work closely with their local FSA office and explore the federal program benefits available to help growers sustain and expand their operations.”

FSA’s toolkit of assistance to organic producers includes the national Organic Certification Cost Share Program. Organic producers and handlers will be able to visit their local FSA office to apply for federal reimbursement to assist with the cost of receiving and maintaining organic or transitional certification. To learn more about organic certification cost share, please visit www.fsa.usda.gov/organic or contact a local FSA office.

These programs join the many programs already in existence with FSA that can assist organic producers. The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) is a risk management tool to protect organic producers from low yields or crop losses due to natural disaster. Since traditional crop insurance isn’t available for all crops, or in every county, NAP can provide this type coverage at a low cost for those crops not insured by the federal crop insurance program. NAP allows producers to obtain basic risk protection and will cover the organic, direct market, fresh, and processing crop values when adequate pricing data is available.

When a natural disaster causes crop losses, or prevents planting, NAP participants may receive payment on their crop losses to help recover their expenses for the year. NAP includes a basic option for losses of 50 percent or greater at 55 percent of the average market price established for the crop. Additionally, producers now have buy-up options with coverage of between 50-65 percent of production based on a 100 percent of the crop’s established average market price.

All NAP coverage options require producers to pay a service fee of \$325 per crop with a cap of \$825 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Electing additional coverage requires a premium to be paid in addition to the service fee. Crops intended for grazing are not eligible for this additional coverage. The service fee is waived, and premiums are reduced by 50 percent, for beginning farmers with less than 10 years of experience, limited resource producers, minority and women farmers and ranchers, as well as veteran farmers and ranchers. Payments under NAP are capped at \$125,000 for basic coverage and \$300,000 for buy-up coverage, and there is an adjusted gross income limit of \$900,000.

Crops eligible for NAP coverage include crops grown for food; crops planted and grown for livestock consumption; crops grown for fiber, such as cotton and flax; crops grown in a controlled environment, such as mushrooms and floriculture; specialty crops, such as honey; and value loss crops, such as aquaculture, Christmas trees, ginseng, ornamental nursery, and turf-grass sod.

To participate in NAP, a producer must be a landowner, tenant or sharecropper who shares in the

Continued from Page 8.

risk of producing an eligible crop. Subscription Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations may also be considered eligible. Producers must file an application for coverage and pay the applicable service fee no later than the sales closing date for the crop. For crop year 2020, the sales closing date for the majority of spring-seeded crops is March 16, 2020. For more information on NAP, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/nap.

FSA offers additional programs to help producers recover when natural disasters impact their farming operation. These programs include the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), Livestock Forage Disaster Assistance Program (LFP), Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). LIP provides assistance to livestock producers who have suffered a loss of livestock in excess of normal mortality, due to an adverse weather event or attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government. LFP provides compensation to livestock producers who have suffered grazing losses due to drought or fire on federally-managed land. ELAP provides emergency assistance to producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by LFP and LIP. TAP provides financial assistance to orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

FSA can provide credit to agricultural producers when private and commercial credit isn't available. Loans are available to purchase or expand a farming operation and for operating expenses. FSA's microloan program is designed to meet the needs of small and beginning farmers, non-traditional, specialty crop and niche-type operations by easing some requirements and offering less paperwork.

FSA can also provide low-interest financing to build or upgrade facilities for storage and handling of eli-

gible commodities through Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL). Eligible borrowers must be able to show repayment ability and meet other requirements to qualify for a loan.

FSA is also committed to protecting our greatest resources through a number of voluntary conservation programs. These programs work to address conservation issues including protecting drinking water, reducing soil erosion, preserving wildlife habitat, preserving and restoring of forests and wetlands, and assisting farmers whose farms are damaged by natural disasters. FSA accomplishes this through programs like the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), and Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP).

Organic dairies may be interested in FSA's Dairy Margin Coverage, a voluntary risk management program for dairy producers. Dairy Margin Coverage offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.

For additional information on these FSA programs and other programs available to producers, please contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/mt. To find an office nearest you, visit www.offices.usda.gov.





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2019 MOA Awards

The 2019 MOA “Lifetime of Service” and “Leadership in Organics” Awards were presented at the Conference and Awards Banquet on Friday, December 6, during the annual dinner at the Commons, 1794 Baxter Lane East, Bozeman.



Melvyn and Sue Brown of Amaltheia Organic Dairy of Belgrade, MT are joined by their son Nate, MOA Chair Doug Crabtree, and their daughter Sarah Brown on stage as they accept the MOA Lifetime of Service Award.

The “**Lifetime of Service**” award goes to an organic producer, handler, retailer, researcher, service provider (or other) who has demonstrated a long-term commitment to organic agriculture in Montana. In 2019, the MOA recognized **Melvyn and Susan Brown** for their exceptional model of persistence and contributions to Montana’s organic community with this

foundational award.

Previous recipients of the “Lifetime of Service” award are: Robert Boettcher (2005), Barry Flamm (2006), Bob Quinn (2007), David Oien (2008), Jim Barngrover (2009), Laughing Water (2010), Steve and Cindy Baril (2011), Russ Salisbury and Elsie Tuss (2012), Judy Owsowitz (2013), Becky Weed (2014), Wes Henthorne (2015), Ric and Dawn Blair (2016), Randy Hinebauch (2017), Jane Kile (post-humous, 2018), Dr. Jim Sims (post-humous, 2018).

The “**Leadership in Organics**” award goes to an organic producer, handler, retailer, researcher, service provider (or other) who demonstrates an on-going commitment to advancing the adoption, practice, and success of organic agriculture in Montana. In 2019 MOA recognized **Dr. Bruce Maxwell** for his leadership and commitment to Montana’s organic community.

Previous recipients of the “Leadership in Organics” award are: Margaret Scoles (2005), Jon Tester

(2006), Jonda Crosby (2007), Mikel and Nancy Lund (2008), Jon and Amy Kvaalen (2009), Andre’ Giles (2010), Nancy Matheson (2011), Dave and Dee Turner (2012), Jeff Schahczenski (2013), Daryl and Linda Lassila (2014), Ole Norgaard (2015), Connie Poten and Andy Sponseller (2016); Kristina “Kiki” Hubbard (2017), Matt and Sonja Johnson (2018).

Contact Doug Crabtree or Judy Owsowitz with your nominations for these prestigious awards.

moamember-ship@gmail.com



Dr. Bruce Maxwell, Montana State University, shares his thanks and inspiration as he accepts the MOA Leadership in Organics Award.

MOA Welcomes New Board Members Nate Powell-Palm and John Wicks



Powell-Palm testifies before the US House Appropriations Agriculture, Rural Development and other agencies subcommittees, April 10, 2019

Nate Powell-Palm started farming when he was just 12 years old as part of a 4-H project, and used grants and other opportunities to develop and expand his cattle operation in Bozeman, MT. Raising livestock according to organic standards, he applied for certification while still in high school. During college, he completed IOIA training, and started working as an organic inspector. Since graduation, he has expanded the farm into crop production while also growing his cattle enterprise. A Farmstead member of the Organic Trade Association through Montana Organic Association (MOA), he has been a regular participant in the trade association's Policy Days, and is an effective spokesperson for organic agriculture in D.C.

He is under age 30, and already has more than 15 years' experience with organic production. This past April, he provided testimony regarding the economic opportunities for farmers through sustainable agricultural practices before the U.S. House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food & Drug Administration, and related agencies. He has already proven to be a leader in organic agriculture, not just in Montana but on a broader national stage. In addition to serving on the MOA Board, he was named to the USDA National Organic Standards Board in December 2019.



John Wicks with wife Gwyn enjoying a sunny day with the crowds.

John Wicks is a fourth-generation farmer in Liberty County, MT. Born in Havre, Montana, John spent the majority of his childhood on a dry-land wheat farm south of Chester, but also spent a considerable amount of time in Eastend, Saskatchewan where his family also farmed until 1997.

John earned his Associates Degree of Applied Science in Welding and Machining from Helena College, and worked in the field before attending Montana State University to study agriculture. During his first year of study, John's father Russel passed away, and John returned home to run the family farm at the age of 21.

John has been farming in North Central Montana since 2007. John began experimenting with cover crops in 2012, and is now planting fallow ground almost exclusively with the goal of 100% in covers. John's main crops include lentils, chickpeas, wheat and barley. John has farmed organic ground for the since 2016, and is in the process of converting the entire 6,000 acre farm to an organic system.

John currently serves on the Liberty County FSA Board and The MT AG Development Council. He and his wife Gwyn enjoy raising chickens, working in the garden and traveling.



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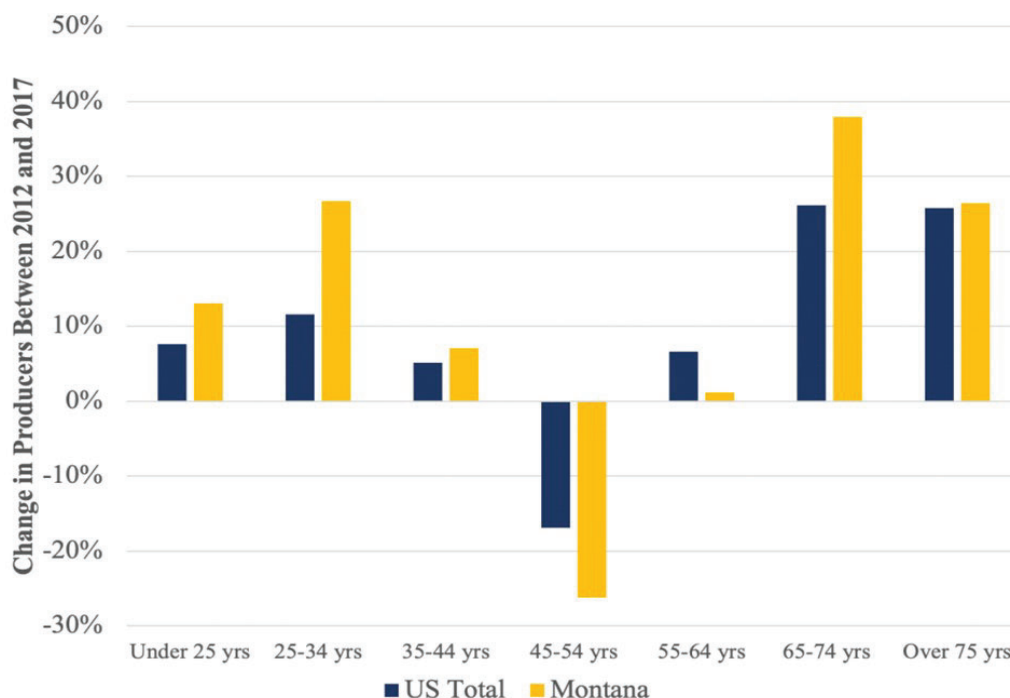
8 Charts About the Opportunities and Challenges for Montana's Organic Sector

BY ANTON BEKKERMAN ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON [AGECONMT](#), DECEMBER 9, 2019

I was recently invited to be part of a panel at the 2019 Montana Organic Association's annual meeting. The panel was focused on better understanding the challenges and opportunities for resilience of Montana's organic producers in light of uncertain climatic and market conditions, and I was asked to provide the economics / social science perspective. As I thought about the trends I've observed in Montana and the research associated with agricultural and food production and markets, There were eight areas that became apparent in representing the opportunities and challenges faced by Montana's organic industry.

1. Montana is outpacing the United States in the number of young producers entering the food and agriculture industry.

The graph below shows the changes in agricultural producers across different age brackets, in the United States and in Montana between 2012 and 2017 (i.e., the two years when the Census of Agriculture was conducted). The data indicate that in Montana, producers who are under 25 and those between 25 and 34 increased by 13% and 26%, respectively. This is approximately twice as much as the average increase in young producers across the United States.



Notes: Data from the US Census of Agriculture, 2012 and 2017

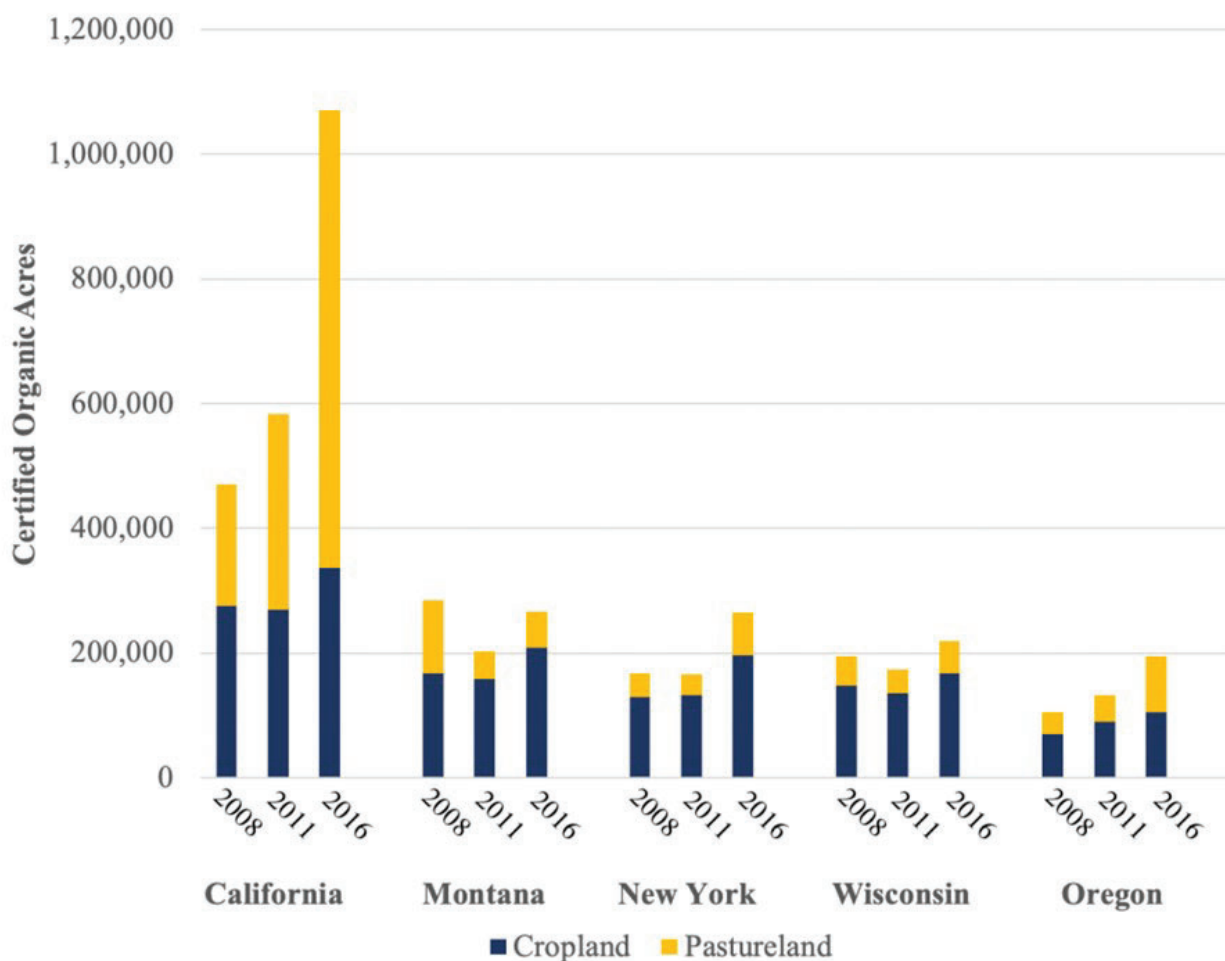
Younger food producers have been repeatedly shown to be more likely to adopt organic production practices and adopt new production and management technologies. This could represent a significant opportunity for Montana's organic industry to grow at a faster pace than in other U.S. regions.

Continued on Page 15

8 Charts About the Opportunities and Challenges for Montana's Organic Sector

2. Montana has a higher-than-average land and human capital infrastructure for organic production.

Montana has traditionally been one of the leaders in the total acres allocated to organic production. In fact, Montana remains as the state with the second largest number of organic production acres in the United States. Perhaps more importantly than having a large existing base of certified-organic land is the fact that there are a critical mass of producers who understand and have knowledge about how to transition and be successful in organic production. As new producers potentially look to organic production and existing producers consider diversifying their management portfolio, this existing knowledge base can be particularly beneficial to leveraging peer networking and learning opportunities among existing and new producers.



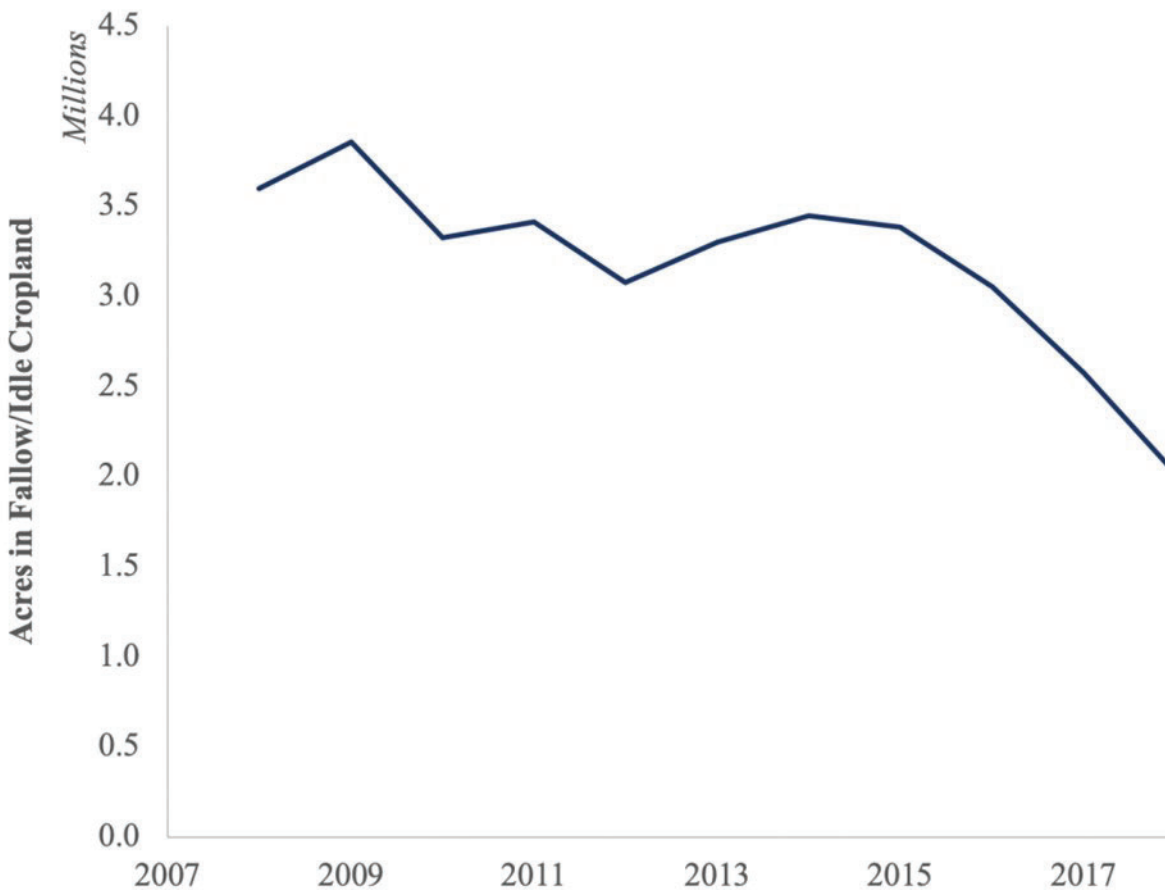
Notes: Data from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Continued on Page 16.

8 Charts About the Opportunities and Challenges for Montana's Organic Sector

3. Montana producers have increasingly become more diversified and production-intensive.

As the graph below shows, the number of fallow and idle cropland acres in Montana has consistently dropped over the past decade, and is rapidly nearing being 50% lower than in 2007. This is one of the many indicators that Montana producers have increasingly altered their cropping systems to be more intensive. Producers have also increased their portfolio of crops. While 10 or 20 years ago, the wheat–fallow rotation could have described the vast majority of dryland farmers in Montana, it isn't the case today. Peas, lentils, chickpeas, canola, hemp, flax, among other pulse and oilseed crops have rapidly replaced fallow and are not likely to go away.



Notes: Data from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Cropland Data Layer.

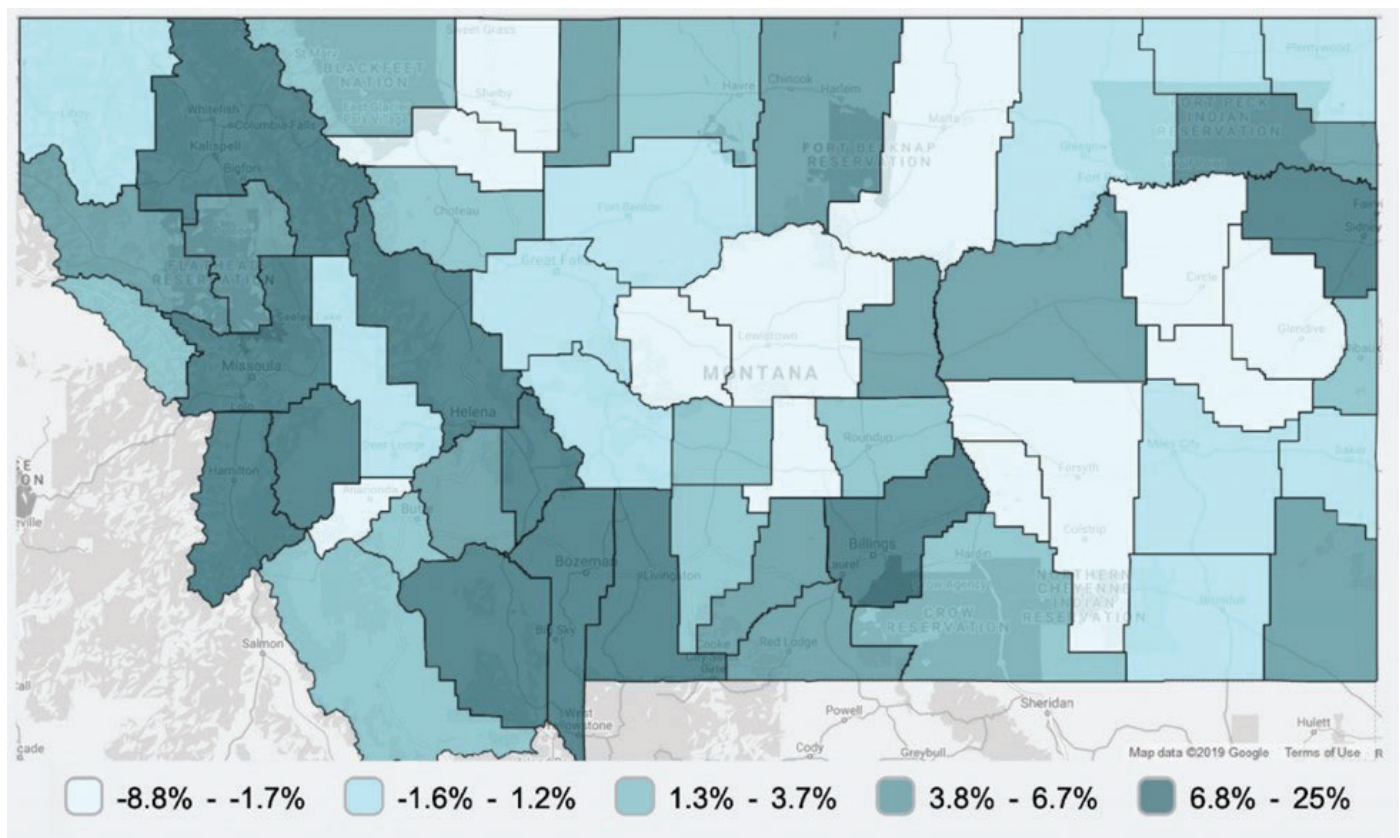
Producers' who have recently adopted more diverse and intensive production systems are much more likely to have the skills, confidence,

8 Charts About the Opportunities and Challenges for Montana's Organic Sector

4. Changing Montana demographics and potential for local market development.

If you've lived in Montana during the past 5-10 years, you've probably noticed the rapid influx of new residents. The map below from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that between 2000 and 2018, much of this in-migration is concentrated in the western and southwestern parts of the state. Additionally, data from the Internal Revenue Service indicate that Montana has the third-highest rate of in-migration by individuals earning more than \$200,000 annually.

Notes: Map courtesy of the US Census Bureau.



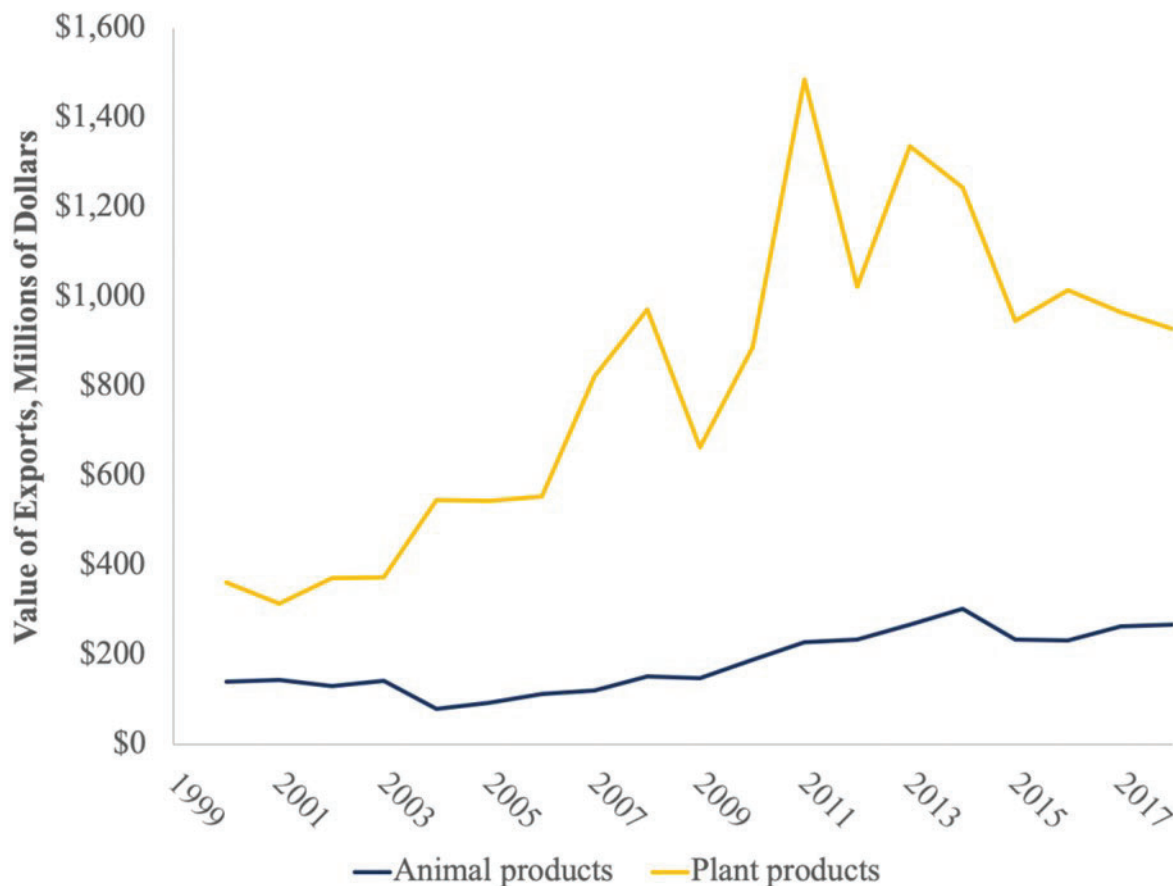
The combination of an increase in population and, in particular, individuals with a relatively high disposable income offers some potential that there is likely to be a higher demand for organic foods in local markets (since organic products typically have a price premium).

8 Charts About the Opportunities and Challenges for Montana's Organic Sector

5. Strong existing export infrastructure for agricultural products.

The vast majority of Montana agriculture is exported outside of the state. Small grains and pulse crops in particular are exported to international destinations, although as shown in the figure below, the value of international animal product exports has also risen over the past twenty years. This existing export infrastructure and existing trade relationships with international partners could be leveraged to incorporate organic exports. Montana agricultural producers have historically focused on the production of high-quality grains and livestock, and this rapport and reputation could be beneficial for making in-roads for marketing high-quality organic products.

BY ANTON BEKKERMAN Originally published on [ageconmt](#), DECEMBER 9, 2019

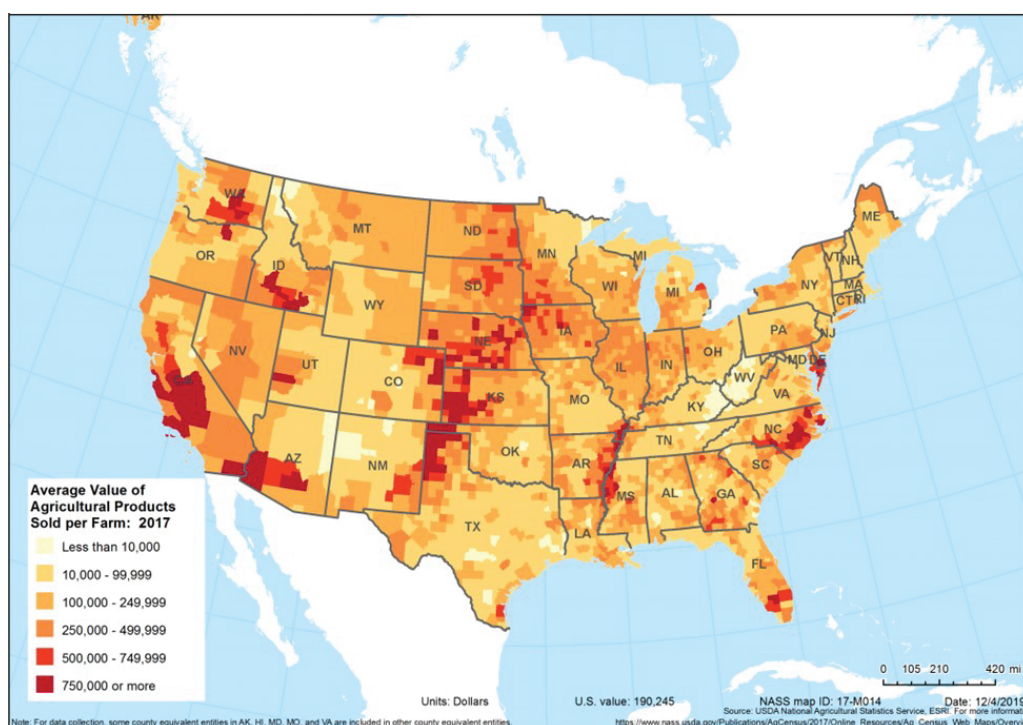


Notes: Data from the USDA Economic Research Service.

8 Charts About the Opportunities and Challenges for Montana's Organic Sector

6. Montana does not have the same productivity as other U.S. regions.

While agricultural production remains one of Montana's primary industries and Montana has been a leader in organic production over the past 10-15 years, northern Great Plains producers may be at a competitive disadvantage if (when) farmers and ranchers in other, more productive regions take on more organic production. As the map below shows, the average value of agricultural production in Montana is right around average, relative to other parts of the United States.



Notes: Map generated using the 2017 Census of Agriculture data.

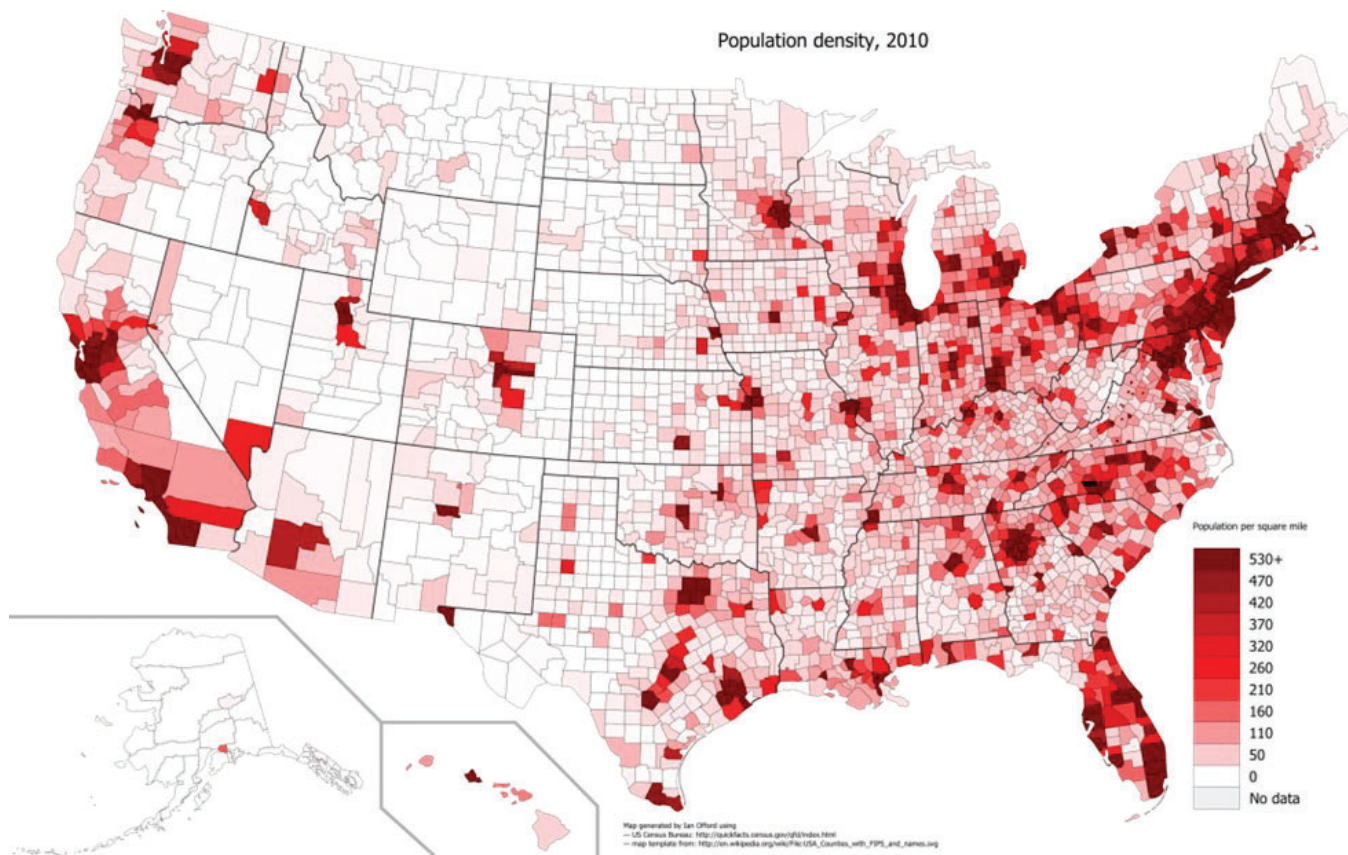
There are multiple reasons for this—including land productivity, precipitation and weather variability, proximity to processors, proximity to final producers, expansiveness of transportation infrastructures, among others—but the outcome is the same: if producers in regions where agricultural production has been historically more valuable decide to enter organic production, Montana's organic industry is likely to be adversely affected.

8 Charts About the Opportunities and Challenges for Montana's Organic Sector

7. Montana is simply not very close to densely populated U.S. consumer locations.

Montana only crossed the million mark for population in the early-2010s, and it also is home to the most remote city in the United States. There is a definite charm and appeal to living in a state that's so expansive and yet so sparsely populated. However, when it comes to marketing opportunities, Montana's remoteness does create a number of challenges.

The map below shows that population density by county from the most recent U.S. Census. The majority of the most densely populated U.S. cities are nowhere near Montana. When it comes to marketing organic food products, this is a problem because the additional costs for transporting organic products from Montana to major consumer centers could price these products above what individuals are willing to pay (especially because organic products already have a significant price premium relative to conventionally produced foods). This can be exacerbated if producers in other states—which are closer to major population locations—enter organic production.



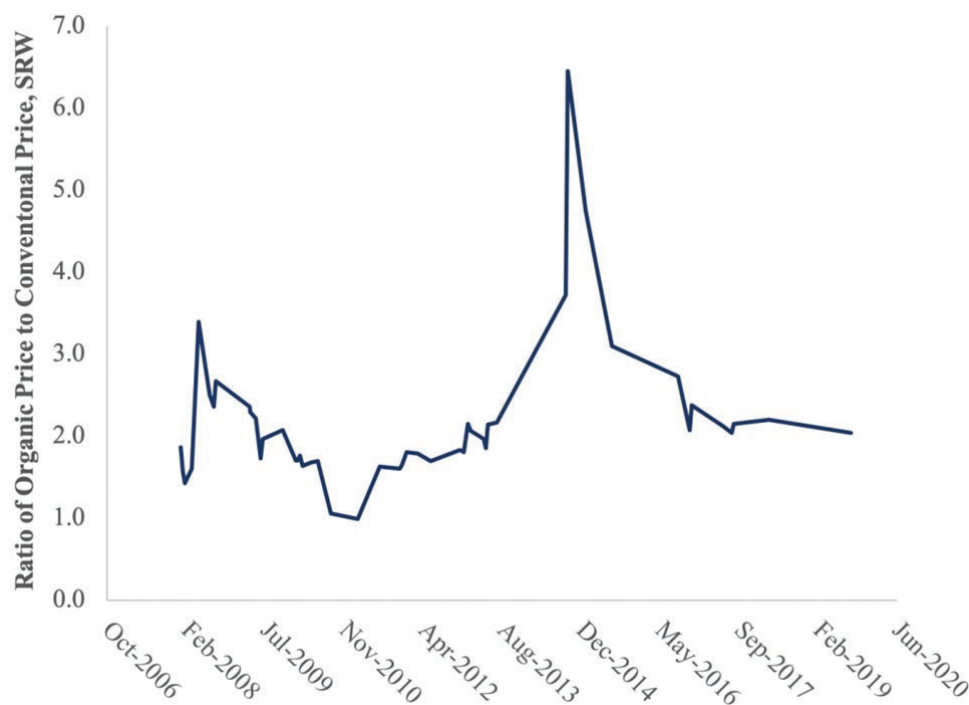
Notes: Map courtesy of the US Census Bureau.

8 Charts About the Opportunities and Challenges for Montana's Organic Sector

8. Relative organic-to-conventional prices fluctuate and may limit entry (or create exit) for organic producers.

For many producers—and perhaps more so for farmers and ranchers who currently use conventional production methods—one of the critical decision factors in entering organic production is the relative price of organic commodities to conventional commodities. That is, many want to know: Is it worth incurring additional time and money costs for producing organically relative to my existing opportunities for producing conventionally?

The figure below shows that this organic-to-conventional price ratio (the figure shows the relationship for soft red winter wheat between 2006 and 2019) is on average approximately 2-to-1, but can vary significantly. Historically, when the price ratio exceeds 2.0, there have been more organic acres entering production. However, when the price ratio fell below 2.0—especially for an extended period, such as 2009-2012—many fewer organic acres entered and in Montana, there were numerous organic farmers who transitioned all of their organic land back to conventional practices.



Notes: Data from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Over the past 2-3 years, the organic-to-conventional price ratio has been relatively stable at its historical average. But, how it changes in the future is, well, uncertain.

What factors are influencing your decisions to enter or not enter organic production? Do you see Montana as becoming an even greater factor in U.S. organic production?

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– Mary Jane Melendez, Chief Sustainability and Social Impact Officer



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Farm Service Agency

Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program-Plus (WHIP+)

FACT SHEET
October 2019

Overview

The Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act of 2019 authorized the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) to help agricultural producers affected by natural disasters in 2018 and 2019. This includes hurricanes Michael, Florence, and Dorian as well as other natural disasters, such as floods, snowstorms, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity and wildfires, and related conditions.

Programs at a Glance

WHIP+ provides assistance to eligible producers who suffered losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines. Payments are based on several factors, including the expected value of the crop, the crop that was actually harvested, and crop insurance coverage and payments, among others. Learn more on the reverse side of this fact sheet.

Eligible crops must be planted or prevented from being planted and include crops for which federal crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage are available. Perennial trees, bushes, and vines grown for the commercial production of an annual crop and coverable under the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) are also eligible for WHIP+

assistance. WHIP+ also includes coverage for maple tap and honey bees, and other value loss and special provisions apply.

Sign-up opened September 11, 2019 and continues into 2020.

Who Is Eligible?

An individual or legal entity that assumes ownership share and risk of the crop, production and market risk associated with the agricultural production of the eligible crops, trees, bushes or vines on the farm.

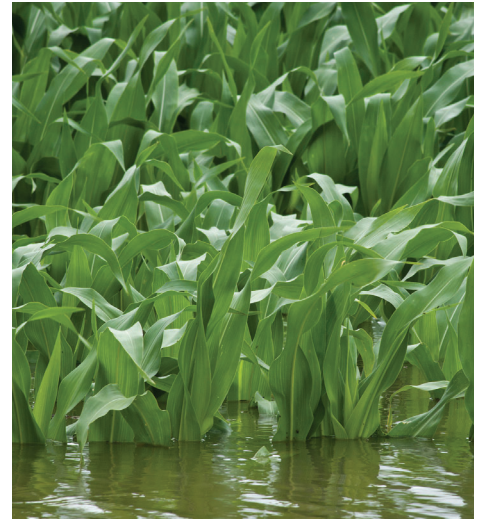
Producers must be able to show, with verifiable evidence, that the producer had a valid ownership share and risk in the crop as well as control of the crop acreage on which the commodity was grown at the time of the disaster. A copy of the contract or agreement is required for contract growers.

How to Apply

To apply, producers must file a:

- WHIP+ application (form FSA-894)
- Notice of loss on all crops, trees, bushes and vines
- Acreage report (form FSA-578).

The acreage report should cover total acreage, including tree count and prevented planted acres. FSA County Committees will review prevented planting acres for program benefits.



Average adjusted gross income provisions do not apply to WHIP+ payments, however conservation compliance provisions do.

Payment Limitation

The payment limitation is \$125,000 per person or legal entity for all three crop years: 2018, 2019 and 2020.

However, if 75 percent of income is derived from farming, ranching or forestry the per person or legal entity per crop year limitation is \$250,000 for each of the crop years: 2018, 2019 and 2020; with an overall payment limitation of \$500,000 for all three crop years.

Payments

2018 crop year losses will be paid at 100% of the calculated payment. For the 2019 and 2020 crop years,



WILDFIRE AND HURRICANE INDEMNITY PROGRAM-PLUS (WHIP+) - OCTOBER 2019



an initial 50% of the calculated payment will be issued. After January 1, 2020, if appropriated funds remain, an additional payment up to the remaining 50% calculated payment will be paid.

Payments for WHIP+ payment are based upon the expected value of the crop, the value of the crop harvested, the level of insurance coverage (as reflected in the WHIP factor), a payment factor and insurance payments received.

The WHIP payment formula is:

WHIP+ payment = the expected value of the crop x the WHIP factor - the actual value of the crop harvested x the payment factor - the NAP payment or crop insurance indemnity received by the producer.

The WHIP factor ranges from 70 to 95 percent. The WHIP factor is 70 percent for producers who did not obtain crop insurance or NAP coverage. The WHIP factor is between 75 and 95 percent for producers who did obtain crop insurance or NAP coverage. Producers who elected the highest coverage level will receive 95 percent.

The payment factor varies by state and commodity and is set to reflect the decreased costs incurred by producers when the crop is not harvested or is prevented from being planted.

Coverage Level	WHIP+ Factor
Uninsured	70%
CAT/NAP Basic 50/55	75%
50% - <55%	77.5%
55% - <60%	80%
60% - <65%	82.5%
65% - <70%	85%
70% - <75%	87.5%
75% - <80%	92.5%
> = 80%	95%

Linkage Requirement

As a condition of payment eligibility, producers must obtain crop insurance or NAP, as applicable, on the crop paid under WHIP+. Crop insurance or NAP must be obtained for the first two available consecutive crop years after the enrollment period ends, but no later than 2022 and 2023. Crop insurance or NAP policy coverage level must be at a level of 60/100 or equivalent.

Linkage does not apply to trees insured under an RMA tree policy.

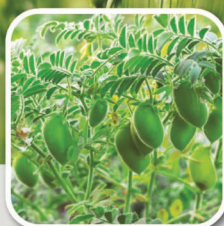
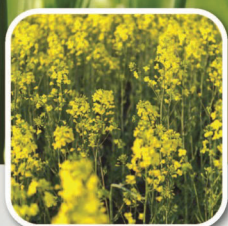
More Information

For more information, visit fsa.usda.gov/farmloans or farmers.gov. Find your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other eligibility requirements or restrictions may apply.

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Organic Business, two memberships, 10% discount on ads, & website directory listing - \$250		Gold Membership, two memberships, full-page ads, website directory listing, two conference registrations,	

Tell us more about what you do. Farm? Ranch? Researcher? Student? Supplier?

TOTAL AMOUNT OF YOUR PURCHASE _____

Return form(s) with your membership dues/donation to:

Montana Organic Association, 3312 Hollis Street, Missoula, MT 59801

If you have questions, call Jamie Lockman at (406) 546-6572 or email her at: moamembership@gmail.com OR to pay online, visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org/commerce.htm

Rev. 10/7/19



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 Montana Organic Association (MOA) brings together people, businesses, organizations, and agencies who are working to develop Montana's organic industry. MOA is proud of its legacy that has led Montana to be a national leader in organic production. But MOA is more than organic production; it also serves to educate about organic products including food, fiber, and non-food items like personal care items and household supplies, and ways to limit the use of chemicals in everyday life. MOA also advocates for policies that protect the environment, promote healthy living, and support individuals, farms and businesses who are actively engaged in developing sustainable businesses and communities. MOA accomplishes this through hosting events, serving as an educational resource, providing network opportunities, and communications.

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A View from the (Past)Chair

Doug Crabtree, Vilicus Farms and Past MOA Chair

It has been my honor to serve as the President of the MOA Board of Directors since 2016. Our Bylaws specify that no Director may serve more than four consecutive years as President. I am now addressing you as the PAST President! I will continue to serve on the Board and provide support to the new President, Becky Weed and Executive Director, Jamie Lockman.

Jamie asked me to share a vision that I offered to the Board at our recent meeting in Helena. This is a vision of the Montana Organic Association, but also of the future of (organic) agriculture in Montana. MOA is and always will be a reflection of the organic community in the state.

Organic continues to grow as a significant portion of the US (and international) food market. The most recent data, provided by the Organic Trade Association indicate that organic food is nearly 6% of all food sold in the US. For fresh fruits and vegetables, the portion is 15%. The share of food that is organic continues to grow much faster than the overall food market. The future of organic is even brighter, as younger citizens (such as “Millennials”) are much more likely to choose organic foods.

While clearly the choice of eaters, organic is also a great choice for farmers and ranchers! The higher value of organic crops and livestock is evident by the fact that fewer than 3% of farmers, managing less than 2% of the land, produce 6% of the economic value in the food market. What that proves is that growing organic crops and livestock provides an opportunity to make a better and more stable living from the land. Organic farmers also practice an agriculture that improves the land and natural resources that we manage. Organic is the ONLY system of agriculture that legally requires producers to improve soil and increase its organic matter. By building organic matter in our soils, organic farmers and ranchers are also sequestering carbon and mitigating the impacts of the changing climate. Organic was regenerating soil long before “Regenerative Agriculture” became a popular (and often mis-used) term.

Given the growth in demand and obvious benefits of organic agriculture, what does the future look like in Montana? Here are a few of my own visions for organic agriculture in Montana by 2030:

- 10% of Montana cropland, nearly 2 million acres, will be certified as organic;
- 3,000 Montana farmers and ranchers, over 10%, will be certified organic;
- 25% of farm revenue, over \$1 billion, will come from sales of organic crops and livestock; and
- The average age of organic farmers and ranchers in Montana will remain below 50.

As more and younger farmers and ranchers in Montana respond to the growing market for organic food, they will turn to MOA for support and grow our association.

By 2030, MOA will include:

- Over 1,500 members, 50% of whom are farmers and ranchers;
- A \$250,000 annual budget, allowing more education, advocacy and celebration;
- 1,000 attendees at the annual MOA Conference; and
- Active programs to support transition, succession, and mentoring.

Thank you all for making this and more possible. We can do it! We will do it and we will all be better for it! MOA will continue to foster the thriving community that is organic in Montana and “promote organic agriculture for the highest good of the people, the environment and the State economy.”



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