

ORGANIC MATTERS

The Voice of Montana's Organic Community

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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

For those who missed the 3rd annual conference, you really missed something great. It was so inspiring to hear Mathew Dillon from the Organic Seed Alliance that I decided to attend the Organic Seed Growers Conference in Portland, OR. (Really worth my time!) And that's exactly the kind of networking many folks came away with. There was something for everyone. The only complaint I heard was that we offered so much; it made it hard to choose which session to attend.

Attendance was excellent. The conference started with a "Transition to Organic" workshop on Friday (Governor Schweitzer dropped in to show his support). The 50 attendees just would not quit! That so many people are interested in transitioning to organic production is a prime indicator of the direction organics is going.

Nancy Peterson, Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture, spoke sincerely on the future of farming and on her commitment to support the organic sector. More evidence of our own bright future was demonstrated in an MSU Research Panel presentation. It included the much awaited news that \$230,000.00 and four acres have been set aside for organic research.

Livestock producers had numerous sessions, from grass-fed beef to botanical medicines, and goat dairy. Farm sessions included grape production, soil fertility, alternative fuels, and so much more. It was all there. Nor did it stop during the breaks between sessions. The vendor displays alone were a lesson in products and services available.

I've always said MOA is my support group, my rejuvenation to go home and keep farming next year after a long year in the field. Needless to say, it has worked again! And the great, all organic, Montana-grown meals were an inspiration in themselves.

Next year's conference is already in the works. It will be held December 3 - 5, 2006 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Missoula. If you'd like to be involved in the planning of the '06 conference, or just have a thought or two to help make it better, please contact Lise Rousseau at (406) 887-2869 <moaconference@aol.com>

Look forward to seeing you there!

Judy Osowitz, MOA Board Chair

Interest in Organics Evident at MOA Convention

By MOA member, Jerry Habets, Conrad MT

"The fastest-growing sector of the food industry is organic," said Fraser McLeay, a Missoula-based marketing consultant. "And the profits are high. Organics brought in \$10.3 billion in sales in 2003, should reach \$15 billion in 2005 and could reach \$32 billion by 2009. Since 1997, organic-food demand has increased at the rate of 20 percent a year."

Nearly 200 individuals attended Montana Organic Association's third annual conference November 11-13, 2005, in Billings, Montana—117 had not attended the previous MOA conference. They came from all corners of the state (and other states), from all agricultural disciplines—grain growers, vegetable farmers, cattle and sheep ranchers, orchardists, food handlers and retail outlets. The convention provided a venue for an exciting and motivating exchange of ideas from researcher to farmer, farmer to vendor, and farmer to farmer.

The conference was organized into breakout sessions in various conference rooms and a vendor area with booths from local natural food stores, soil amendment producers, grain and cattle buyers, brewers, and seed growers. The breakout sessions covered a variety of topics:

• Educational sessions:

Introductory session on transitioning to organic agriculture
Diversified dry-land systems that work
Production of grass-finished beef
Growing organic grapes in Montana
Organic goat dairying and cheese making
Alternative fuels for the farm

Marketing sessions:

Organic marketing opportunities and challenges
Grains marketing panel
Vegetables, fruits, and herb marketing panel
Livestock marketing panel

Organic production science and economics:

Plant medicines for animals
Benefits of grass-finished beef
Economics of grass-finished beef
Soil fertility: Lessons in nitrogen cycling from natural ecosystems
continued on page 3

MONTANA ORGANIC ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Holiday Inn Grand – Billings MT, 11/13/05

Minutes from the February 2005, annual meeting were approved.

Chairperson Judy Owsowitz presented some accomplishments of the MOA since the last Annual Meeting. Among them were:

- Board retreat in Helena, 4/5/05 focusing on team building, developing strategies for accomplishing goals, and prioritizing work.
- MOA Brochure developed for outreach and events
- Community Food Co-op 4% day fundraising and outreach event
- Work on 501(c)3 status for the organization, which will allow donations to be tax deductible
- MOA resolution regarding recent events in Congress sparked by the Organic Trade Association
- Receipt of a grant from Patagonia

Members were encouraged to volunteer to help the organization move forward. Areas identified in particular need of help were:

- Grant writing
- Historian
- Committees: Membership, Newsletter, Finance and Fundraising, Agenda, Awards, and Convention & Conference

Treasurer Ole Norgaard presented the financial report.

Sandi Shanks presented membership numbers. MOA currently has three lifetime members: Barry Flamm, Malcom Thompson, and Bob Quinn.

Open Board Positions

The nominating committee presented Steve Baril. Nominations were taken from the floor for Jim Lindquist, Jerry Habets, and Matt Johnson. After a motion and a second to close nominations, the nominees were approved unanimously.

New Business

Bob Quinn – Ag statistics is looking to the MOA for input as to what data organic producers might find useful.

Doug Crabtree – Request for a resolution for the MOA Board to appoint a liaison between MOA and the Director of the Montana Dept. of Agriculture. Resolution passed unanimously.

BACKROOM DEAL WEAKENS ORGANIC STANDARDS

by MOA member, Karalee Bancroft, Boulder MT

In a sneak attack on organic standards, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) managed to put the first major crack in the dike of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA). To understand exactly what happened, here's a brief history of what has led up to this point:

The OFPA (law) was passed in 1990. It took the USDA 10 years to draw up the regulations to enact the law. When it did, the regulations allowed irradiation, sewage sludge, genetically modified organisms, and other traditionally non-organic practices as part of the organic standards. The country went wild. The USDA received over 250,000 letters, emails, and phone calls protesting these obviously non-organic practices in the new organic regulations. It was the largest public response to a governmental action in history up to that time.

The regulations were rewritten and passed, but still were not consistent with the law (OFPA). A blueberry farmer in Maine named Harvey eventually sued the USDA because of these inconsistencies and won his case. The USDA was charged with rewriting the regulations once again, but this time, to make them consistent with the law.

Forward in time to October, 2005...the OTA, backed by large corporations such as Dean Foods, Kraft, Sysco, Organic Valley, Whole Foods, WalMart, and others, got a rider put on the Agricultural Appropriations Bill, completely

circumventing the organic community, public comment, or review by the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The rider allowed over 500 synthetic ingredients and processing aids in organic processed foods, allowed a percentage of non-organic food for organic dairy cows, and opened the door for decision-making authority for additives in organic foods directly by the USDA. The OTA was attempting to achieve consistency between the law and the regulations by changing the law to match the unrewritten regulations, rather than having the USDA rewrite the regulations to match the law. Large processors didn't want to give up the synthetic additives and processing aids they had already been using in organic products, nor did they want to follow the

process of public comment and review by the NOSB, knowing full-well what the response would be.

Again, there was a public outcry. The rider was attached to the Ag Appropriations Bill at the last minute before a congressional vote leaving almost no time to respond. Yet, 170,000 people found out about it, called their congressmen, and objected to both the action and these tactics. Many members of the OTA withdrew their membership in protest. Others vowed not to renew their memberships. And a number of individual companies and groups (including MOA) made public statements decrying both the OTA's proposals and their tactics. The rider was put on hold, and the OTA's proposal was put in committee for 90 days to be studied.

But in a late night deal, the language of the OTA's original proposal was reworded and slipped back into the Ag Appropriations Bill. By the time the vote was cast approving these changes, Congress had received over 370,000

letters and phone calls of protest, but to no avail. The bill passed and is now law. Net result of the changes:

- Numerous synthetic food additives and processing aids, including over 500 food contact substances, can now be used in organic foods without public review.

- Young dairy cows can now continue to be treated with antibiotics

and fed genetically engineered feed prior to being converted to organic production.

- Loopholes under which non-organic ingredients could be substituted for organic ingredients can now occur without any public notification based on 'emergency' decrees.

On October 19, 2005, MOA released a resolution decrying both the content of the rider and the method in which it was passed (see *Resolutions*, this issue). In a press release, MOA Chairperson Judy Owsowitz said, "It is of utmost importance that the OFPA remains strong to ensure that the public can trust the organic label. This action by the OTA and Congress amending the OFPA in this manner will have the opposite effect."

MOA CREATES RECOGNITION PROGRAM

The MOA Board voted to create a recognition program to honor members of the organic community in the areas of service and leadership. A Lifetime of Service Award will be presented to an organic producer, handler, researcher, service provider (or other) who has demonstrated a long-term commitment to organic agriculture in Montana. A Leadership in Organics Award will be presented 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.

Recipients of the awards will receive a framed Certificate of Recognition, and their names are included on a plaque on display at the MOA office which lists all award recipients. Award recipients will be announced each year at the MOA Conference. If you wish to nominate an individual for one of the awards, contact Steve Baril (406) 458-4981 <barils@ixi.net>

Boettcher, Scoles Honored

Bob Boettcher receives MOA's Lifetime of Service Award

The awards committee selected Bob Boettcher (Big Sandy MT) to be the first recipient of its Lifetime of Service Award. Bob was chosen to receive this honor because he has been a pioneer of organic farming in Montana for over 30 years and a mentor to new organic growers. Bob has been involved in organics at the local, regional and national levels as a member of many organizations and has received numerous awards for his contributions. He started a rotation of sunflowers, wheat, barley, and summer fallow in 1978 and certified his first organic field (spring wheat) in 1986. Bob feels that improved soil health is the most positive outcome of organic practices on his farm. On receiving the Lifetime of Service Award, Bob said that being recognized by his peers was a moving experience and a great honor.

Margaret Scoles receives MOA's Leadership in Organics Award

The awards committee selected Margaret Scoles (Biddle MT) as the first recipient of its Leadership in Organics Award. Margaret was chosen to receive this honor because of her leadership in helping create the Montana Organic Association and her commitment and energy in building the organization. She serves as Executive Director of the Independent Organic Inspectors Association and has been inspecting organic operations, primarily in Montana, since 1988. Margaret also trains organic inspectors and has apprenticed many new inspectors over the years. Upon receiving the award, Margaret said, "I've received some other awards in my life, but never one that meant more than this one. It is like receiving an award from the family for being a valued and appreciated part of the family".

No occupation is so delightful to me
as the culture of the earth, and no culture
comparable to that of the garden.

-Thomas Jefferson, ca. 1811

NEW BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED

Matt Johnson, a family farmer of wheat, barley, and flax, joins the Board from Hinsdale (northwest of Glasgow). Matt, his wife Sojna and two boys, started changing their eating habits to more healthy choices which led them to organics. He believes that organic production offers a viable means for family farmers to stay in farming. "By being a MOA Board member," Matt says, "I hope to help preserve the sense of unity and cooperation within the organic community that has made it a strong and viable agricultural alternative."

Jim Lindquist is relatively new to farming, growing spring wheat, barley, alfalfa, and running a few cows in Bloomfield, north of Glendive. He and his wife, Sharon, have always been interested in eating right. But working with a neighbor who was pretty careless with chemicals prompted him to move into organic production. His impetus for joining MOA was education. "I have a lot to learn," said Jim. "As a Board member, I want to help get the message out there that organic is a healthier way to go."

Jerry Habets is an irrigated farmer just northwest of Conrad who completed his transition to organic production in 2005. He grows a variety of lentils, sainfoin seeds, barleys, flax, milk thistle and alfalfa hay. He became a member of MOA to increase his knowledge of organic farming and marketing, and to network with other organic farmers and handlers. "I feel I can contribute to the Board just by being a new member," says Jerry. "It takes a diverse group to bring ideas and policy together that will represent all members of the organic community. As a new member, I have a fresh perspective to share."

Steve Baril, whose term expired this year, has graciously agreed to serve another term. Steve recently retired from the Montana Dept. of Agriculture as Chief of Field Services Bureau which included responsibility for Montana's Organic Certification Program. He and his wife, Cindy, now operate a certified organic vegetable garden near Helena. Their goal is to grow wholesome produce in a healthy environment and maintain a connection with the land and the community of Helena. "As a Board member, I hope to use my skills and experience to help build a sustainable organization that serves Montana's organic community," Steve stated.

Retiring from their service on the Board are Barry Flamm, Jon Kvaalen, and Linda McKinney. The Board wishes to thank them for their many hours of service, and dedication to helping achieve the goals of the Montana Organic Association.

Interest in Organics... continued from page 1

The MOA conference was joined by Montana officials: Governor Brian Schweitzer, State Senator Jon Tester, State Auditor John Morrison, and Montana Department of Agriculture Director Nancy K. Peterson who gave an inspiring talk on the opportunities for family farms in organic agriculture.

All convention meals were made with a diverse range of organic ingredients, most of which were from Montana organic producers and handlers. The Saturday evening dinner was capped off with an inspirational presentation "25 Farms that survived and thrived because they went organic" by Eric Newman and Allen Moody—representatives of CROPP/Organic Valley, Wisconsin. The program consisted of the history of CROPP Cooperative and a personal profile slide presentation of various family farm members from coast to coast and from Canada to Texas. The story encompassed the many challenges faced by organic family farms as well as the many successes.

Virtually everyone who attended the conference left with a renewed sense of purpose and a desire to share what they had learned. Post-conference comments included the words: wonderful, excellent, visionary and entertaining, first rate, thought provoking, insightful, informative and applicable, awesome.

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NEGOTIATING THE NONPROFIT MAZE

by MOA member Steve Baril, Helena MT

In a December 15, 2005 opinion from the IRS, MOA's Articles of Incorporation were deemed to not meet the organizational test for a 501(c)(3) organization. This was the latest IRS position on MOA's January 31, 2005 application for status as a 501(c)(3) [public charity] nonprofit. Instead, the IRS stated that MOA's application described the activities of a 501(c)(6) [trade association] organization.

Legal experts consulted by the Board appeared to support the IRS position. Variously worded opinions generally state that MOA's Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws appear written to promote the organic sector, rather than the broader public, as would be the case with a 501(c)(3) charitable, educational, or religious organization. The key distinction between the two types of nonprofits is whether the organization's benefits are available primarily to members, or primarily to the broader public. Many of MOA's activities appeared targeted to members. Both types of organizations are nonprofit and exempt from income tax. However, there are two key distinctions between them: 1) contributions to a 501(c)(6) are not tax deductible as charitable donations but can be deducted as business expenses, and 2) foundation grants are generally not available to 501(c)(6) groups, but are usually available to 501(c)(3) groups.

In a January 2, 2006 decision, the MOA Board voted to modify its original application and seek 501(c)(6) status, based on the value of the organization's current structure to its members. However, in recognition of goals to educate the broader public on the benefits of organic agriculture, the Board voted to prepare an application for a 501(c)(3) companion organization. While the goals of this organization have yet to be written, it would educate the broader public on the health, environmental, economic, and social benefits of organic foods. This companion organization would be able to receive gifts that are tax deductible by the donor and would be eligible for foundation grants.

The IRS ruling on MOA's 501(c)(6) application status is not expected for several months.

MONTANA ORGANIC ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership Fees:

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributing	\$120
<input type="checkbox"/> Household/Business	\$35	<input type="checkbox"/> Life	\$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$60	<input type="checkbox"/> Lightweight	\$15

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How to Go Organic Within Your Budget

by MOA member Karalee Bancroft, Boulder MT



One of the key concerns for most of us who would like to eat healthier and support sustainable farming methods is the cost. Organic food just costs more. But does it really? Regardless of the impact of hidden costs of conventionally produced foods, one still has only so much to lay out for groceries each week. And if you have a growing family, a sudden switch to 100 percent organic fare can really impact your finances. But don't despair. Here are nine tips to help you put more healthy food on your table.

1. Don't go "Cold Turkey". Change over gradually, fitting items into your menu and your budget as you can.

2. Start with the worst offenders that you use regularly.

For most people that would be chicken and apples. Conventional chicken production uses 10.6 million lbs. of non-therapeutic level antibiotics annually just to speed growth. Eighty five percent of all non-therapeutic use of antibiotics is used in chicken and pork production, alone. If you can only afford to pick one meat item to switch to organic, make it poultry. When you can, switch over to pasture raised pork, and finally, as you can afford it, grass-finished beef and other meat proteins grown organically. For produce, apples are by far the worst offenders (especially for children) that are used regularly by most families. Substitute organic apples first. In descending order, conventional produce with the highest toxicity are peaches, winter squash, apples, green beans, pears, spinach, celery, grapes, and lettuce. (See "When it Pays to Buy Organic", *Consumer Reports*. Feb. 2006 issue). Especially if you have children, steer clear of rBGH bovine growth hormone in dairy products. Try to find dairy products which claim "no rBGH". Do what you can afford to do. Any change is better than no change.

3. Buy local organic products whenever you can. Every time you buy something organic, you are sending a message to the retailer who sold it to you and to the grower who produced it, that you support organic products. Your purchase will help keep up the demand, which results in greater supply. But organic foods should never "commodify". Currently, corporate farming practices return only 19¢ of every food dollar you spend to the farmer. All the rest goes to middlemen, packaging and handling, warehousing, and transportation. To keep organic farmers in business, buy locally-produced foods whenever possible. Then, many of those middlemen dollars can go directly to the farmer providing him a living wage, rather than to corporate conglomerates who undercut independent farmers ultimately putting them out of business.

4. Make bulk purchases whenever possible. Most natural foods grocers offer a wide selection of kitchen staples (beans, peas, cereals, flours, pastas, honey, peanut butter, etc.) in bulk form for

considerably less than in prepackaged form. Bulk purchases can really stretch your food dollars. But watch labeling. Not every item in your local health food store is certified organic. Make sure your bulk purchases are certified organic, and preferably, locally produced.

5. Grow your own. While it would be impractical to expect each of us to grow or raise our own entire food supply, it's amazing how much you can supplement your food purchases with home-grown spinach, green beans, and lettuce - all easy to grow here in Montana and all three on the top 9 list of high-toxicity produce. Develop a little backyard patch for some items you like, or join a community food garden or a CSA if you are a city dweller with no soil to call your own. For every bunch of radishes you grow yourself, you have a little more money to spend on items you can't grow yourself.

6. Buy a deep freeze. It may seem like a big expense at first, but it will pay for itself within one year by enabling you to take advantage of bulk purchases, freezing produce in-season for off-season use, and buying organic meat when it's on sale or by the whole or half animal rather than by the cut. Many appliance retailers offer small six or seven cubic-foot chest freezers (which are far more energy efficient than uprights) for under \$200. Watch for sales. They can fit in a corner somewhere and really help you reduce your organic food costs.

7. Put up your own veggies. Hand in hand with your new freezer, you can blanch and freeze some of that garden produce you've raised (or bought in-season when prices were lower) and enjoy later. It really isn't difficult, and blanching and freezing retains far more vitamins, flavor, and texture than canning. Directions for blanching and freezing are in most cookbooks.

8. Cook from scratch. A dying art, to be sure, but really valuable in terms of keeping food costs down. Ingredient costs are far less than prepackaged, premeasured, precooked foods. Even if you don't have time to cook from scratch all the time, doing it frequently can help the bottom line. Many folks cook their favorites (soups, stews, chili, spaghetti sauce, etc.) in large quantities and then freeze in smaller, meal-sized batches for quick meals that don't break the bank.

9. Eat less, but eat the best. Sounds funny coming from a meat producer, but most people in this country eat far too much meat anyway. Our recommendation to people wanting to eat organic meats but feel they can't afford them is to eat smaller servings and buy the best you can afford. Some preliminary research suggests that many people who have made the switch to organic foods (which are nutrient dense) are satisfied with less and actually lose weight. And eating less sure helps with the food budget!



BOARD and COMMITTEE UPDATES

Membership Report

As of January 2006, the membership committee reports approximately 190 MOA members. Renewal letters are being sent out each month as renewals come due. A sizable number of renewals are coming up this month (February). Please don't forget to renew your membership. This is your organization. MOA needs your financial and physical support to make it work for you.

MOA Resolutions Adopted

Adopted February 6, 2005

Resolution 1. – MOA supports the GMO liability for either the company who produces, develops, or releases those organisms or livestock products.

Resolution 2. – MOA supports the establishment of organic acres at the Montana Research Centers.

Resolution 3. – MOA urges the USDA to provide funding to assist the MT Dept. of Agriculture to become an ISO 65 accredited certifier.

Resolution 4. – MOA supports the inclusion of mobile slaughter units in the definitions in the Montana Codes of licensed, inspected slaughter establishments.

Resolution 5. – MOA supports a preference for Montana grown or processed food for State funded institutions.

Adopted October 19, 2005

Whereas MOA supports strong organic regulations and integrity in the organic certification process, we support leaving the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) intact at this time, including its prohibition of synthetics in foods labeled organic or 100% organic. We oppose the

proposal by the Organic Trade Association to amend the OFPA. All proposals for changes to OFPA must allow for transparency in the process and public comment from all stakeholders. Recent requests of Congress to change OFPA were:

- premature and imprudent
 - did not adequately represent all sectors of the organic community
 - did not allow adequate time for the USDA to exhaust other post-Harvey lawsuit regulatory remedies before opening OFPA
 - unfairly favored the manufacturing sector
 - failed to respect the role of the National Organic Standards Board
- The result has been confusion and division within the organic community, to its detriment. In this charged climate, the dangers of opening OFPA far exceed any perceived benefit.

2006 Conference Planning Teams Being Formed

Mark your calendars for MOA's 2006 conference slated for December 3-5 at the Holiday Inn Garden in Missoula! Join in the planning process by volunteering for one of the following conference subcommittees:

AGENDA – develops conference program by identifying topics and engaging speakers

FOOD – creates a conference menu that highlights Montana's organic growers

VENDOR – recruits organic and farming-related vendors to display their wares and services

AUCTION – gathers exciting items for MOA's quarter, live, and silent auctions

You can help plan MOA's next conference on any of the subcommittees from anywhere in the state. Interested? Contact Lise Rousseau at (406) 887-2869 <moaconference@aol.com>

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Feb. 22: Montana Organic Commodity Advisory Council (MOCAC) conference call (406) 444-9421
- Feb. 23-26: Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference, LaCrosse WI, (715) 772-3153 <www.mosesorganic.org>
- Mar. 4-5: MOA Board retreat (open to members), White Sulphur Springs MT, (406) 862-4934
- Mar. 15: MDA Organic Certification renewals due, (406) 444-9421
- Mar. 23-26: Natural Products Expo West, Anaheim CA <www.expowest.com>
- Mar. 30-31: Elaine Ingham on Soil Biology, Edmonton, Alberta, (780) 657-2275
- Apr. 22: Earth day
- May 1: OCIA North Central MT new member certification applications due, (406) 434-2195
- May 5-9: All Things Organic Trade Show & Conference, Chicago IL, (972) 620-3021 <www.organicexpo.com>
- Jul. 14-16: NNFA Natural Products Convention & Trade Show, Las Vegas NV <www.nnfa.org>
- Oct. 4-7: Natural Products Expo East, Baltimore MD <www.expoeast.com>
- Dec. 3-5: MOA Conference, Holiday Inn Garden, Missoula MT, (406) 887-2869 <moaconference@aol.com>

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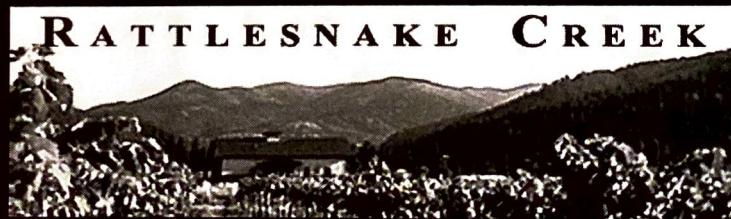
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