



# Organic Matters

## EXPLORE "THE ORGANIC ADVANTAGE"

There are many advantages to being an organic farmer, producer, handler, or consumer, one of which is to join with like-minded folks each year at MOA's annual conference. This year we will be meeting in Missoula at the new Hilton Garden Inn from December 1-3, 2006.

The conference committee has been hard at work putting together a comprehensive agenda for our members and guests. Among the highlights are Dr. Stephen Jones (WSU) speaking on farmer-driven organic wheat development, and Kathryn Beagel, Ceres Organic, with John Foraker from Homegrown Naturals sharing their thoughts on the current state of organics, the organic consumer and what the organic future might hold. We also are pleased to bring you Jeffrey Smith, author of *Seeds of Deception*, and leading spokesperson on the health risks of genetically engineered foods and the controversies surrounding their approval. He will be joining our conference during a whirlwind speaking tour of western Montana (see page 2 for dates, times and details).

### MOA Board Elections

One of the most important ways to exercise your MOA membership is by attending the annual meeting and voting in new MOA board members.

Five new directors will be elected this fall at the annual meeting on December 3, 2006, in Missoula. Three will be elected for a 3-year term and one director for a 1-year term. The Nominations and Elections Committee has nominated Dee

Our schedule is chock-full of breakout sessions covering a wide diversity of subjects like seed production, research opportunities, fruit production, and grass-fed beef, just to name a few. At your request, we have invited back some old friends to lead our discussions like Jan Tusick from Mission Mountain Market Cooperative Development Center (farm marketing) and Sue and Melvyn Brown from Amaltheia Dairy (goats). And we are happy to introduce you to some new friends like Martin and Atina Diffley from Gardens of Eagan (farm equipment and post production handling), Becky Weed from Thirteen Mile Lamb & Wool Company (sheep) and Phil Unterschuetz from Integrated Fertility Management (the ins and outs of soil and foliar testing).

This year we will be offering a series of farm business-related sessions on financing, insurance, and planning and record keeping. For our finance session, we have lined up a great group of speakers that will address everything from gov-

*(Continued on page 2)*

Turner, Chaz Holt, Wes Henthorne, and Ole Norgaard for your approval. Additional nominations for the fifth director can be made from the floor at the annual meeting.

If you are interested in contributing to the development of MOA by serving on the board or by nominating someone, please contact Ole Norgaard at 406-538-3607.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

E. Coli, Organics & Food Safety .....	3
MT Certification Program.....	5
Organics & Nitrogen Leaching .....	6
Events .....	6
Farm Tours.....	7
MT Sends Organic Farmer to DC .....	10
Classifieds .....	10
View from the Chair .....	Back

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.

Organic Matters is published quarterly by the Montana Organic Association. Send queries, suggestions, letters, and requests to:

Organic Matters  
MOA  
PO Box 1675  
Polson MY 59860  
info@montanaorganic-association.org

Organic Matters occasionally includes guest articles and opinions. While we review these for relevance to our mission, the opinions in these articles may not reflect the opinions or policy of the Montana Organic Association.

(Continued from page 1)

ernment programs to research-related grants to old-fashioned farm loans. Don't miss this important session on Friday evening...dessert will be served!

By request, we have arranged for a special session on Friday afternoon to discuss the National Organic Program and have invited representatives from the USDA and NOSB to share with us the current state of the program as well as hear from us about how we feel the NOP is meeting the needs of Montana farmers.

If you are planning to attend Friday's "Organic University," please note that it will now start at 12 noon and it is "bring your own lunch."

The conference is not all work though, and we have added in a little time here and there for you to catch up with old friends, meet some new ones, enjoy a tasty organic meal, sip an organic wine or beer, visit with our exhibitors, and bid on the auctions.

To receive a conference registration form, please contact our conference coordinator, Lise Rousseau, at 406.871.0019 or by email at [conference@montanaorganicassociation.org](mailto:conference@montanaorganicassociation.org). You also can get all of the conference details from the website at [www.montanaorganicassociation.org](http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org). Sign-up soon to take advantage of early registration discounts and special sleeping room rates.

## We're Live!

MOA has finally launched its website. We are still in the building phase, but you can find all of the conference information there including a registration form. Visit us at [www.montanaorganicassociation.org](http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org). We'd love to hear from you about what you would like to see online in the future. Email your comments, suggestions, questions, etc., to: [info@montanaorganicassociation.org](mailto:info@montanaorganicassociation.org).

## Jeffrey Smith in Montana

Jeffrey Smith, our Saturday mid-day keynote speaker will be making several other speaking stops while he is in Montana. Check him out at the following locations prior to the conference:

- November 28th- Great Falls, MSU campus at the College of Technology, 7pm
- November 29th- Bozeman, Emerson lecture room, 7pm
- November 30th- Missoula, Dr. Vicki Watson's class of Environmental Studies, University of Montana, 3:45pm
- November 30th- Missoula, University of Montana, North Underground Lecture Hall, 7pm
- December 1st- Pablo, Salish/Kootenai College, room to be announced, 2pm

## Home of the Kamut Brand

Montana Grown High Protein Grains and Whole Grain Flour

*Buying all classes of organic wheat*

**Andre Giles**

P.O. Box 517  
2502 Choteau St  
Fort Benton MT 59442  
406.622.5436  
406.622.5439 fax  
[montanafLOUR.com](http://montanafLOUR.com)  
[info@montanafLOUR.com](mailto:info@montanafLOUR.com)



Your Certified Organic Source

# E. coli, Organics, and Food Safety

By Sean Mulla, Organic Agricultural Specialist, Montana Department of Agriculture

## Success, Failure, and Misconceptions

The recent E. Coli Spinach contamination issue has revealed both successes and failures in United States food production and handling systems, and state and federal regulatory programs. It has also spurred misconceptions.

The most notable success is the fact that as a nation, suppliers, distributors, store chains and producers were able to coordinate a massive re-call in a short period of time that probably saved lives.

The failures are that this is the twentieth E. coli contamination from the Salinas Valley in a decade, and those regulatory programs such as Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices did not prevent the spinach from getting contaminated.

One of the biggest misconceptions (perpetuated by the media on TV, radio, and in news print) was that "organic" spinach carried the bacteria. This is false.

The spinach that was infected was conventionally produced and handled. Furthermore, there is a valid argument to be made that food grown in a Certified Organic operation is safer than conventionally grown food, and not just from bacteria contamination, but also in other areas of food safety.

## Could Organic Certification have prevented this E.Coli outbreak?

For a farm to be awarded Certified Organic status, it must adhere to a set of regulations administered by the National Organic Program (NOP). There are some NOP rules which were designed specifically to address E. coli contamination. If the rules had been applied to Growers Express and Natural Selection Foods (the spinach growers implicated in the contamination) they may have prevented the incident.

Of course, the *precise* cause of the recent E-coli outbreak may never be known. But, it is well known that Salinas Valley is a concentrated agricultural area with lots of produce growers in the valley and livestock growers in the surrounding hills. The FDA has detected the deadly strain of E-coli in cattle feces on one of the implicated ranches and in the soil of the four production sites targeted by the investigation. Many observers have come to the [unsubstantiated] conclusion that the outbreak was probably caused by contaminated irrigation water. The source, possible contaminants, and climate and geography all con-

tribute to the quality of irrigation water.

First, there is a lot of tertiary (grey) water used to irrigate crops in Monterey County, California, which is where the Salinas Valley is located and which is where the spinach was grown. I do not know if these specific farms use tertiary water, but if they had been inspected to NOP standards, the water source would have been verified at the organic certification inspection, and water quality tests would have been submitted.

Second, upland from the Salinas Valley floor where salad greens are grown, there are many irrigation ditches and streams flowing out of the mountains through livestock operations with pasture land and CAFO's – Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (known as a feedlot in Montana). At an organic certification inspection, the proximity of an organic farm to non-organic operations would be mapped out, and the creeks and irrigation ditches used by the farm would be scrutinized as to what types of con-

taminants it may have been exposed to upstream.

And third, irrigation water is often held in manmade ponds from which water is pumped onto the fields. In this part of California these ponds flood on a seasonal basis with rain run-off from neighboring farms, and overflowed ditches and creeks that run through upland livestock operations. Like-

wise, I do not know if the farms mentioned above use holding ponds, or not. But, an organic inspection would examine land contours, erosion, run-off problems, and holding ponds.

If a farm with these types of water quality issues applied for Organic Certification, the certifying agency would direct the inspector to scrutinize these issues as potential non-compliances because, in this situation, the farm would not be in compliance with 7 CFR, NOP § 205.203: *Fertility and Nutrient Management Practice Standard*. In particular, section (c) states:

- (c) The producer must manage plant and animal materials to maintain or improve soil organic matter content in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil, or water by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals, or residues of prohibited substances. Animal and plant materials include:
  - (1) Raw animal manure, which must be composted unless it is:
    - (i) Applied to land used for a crop not intended for human consumption;

"Consumers who ate Certified Organic spinach grown in Montana could rest easy knowing that their spinach was clean and healthful."

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

- (ii) Incorporated into the soil not less than 120 days prior to the harvest of a product whose edible portion has direct contact with the soil surface or soil particles; or
- (iii) Incorporated into the soil not less than 90 days prior to the harvest of a product whose edible portion does not have direct contact with the soil surface or soil particles.

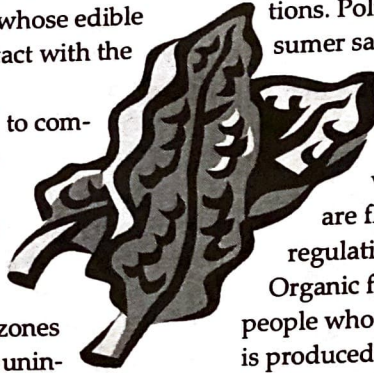
Furthermore, organic farms also need to comply with 7 CFR, NOP § 205.202. *Land Requirements*, which states: Any field or farm parcel from which harvested crops are intended to be sold, labeled, or represented as "organic," must:(c) Have distinct, defined boundaries and buffer zones such as runoff diversions to prevent the unintended application of a prohibited substance to the crop or contact with a prohibited substance applied to adjoining land that is not under organic management.

A farm with the types of water quality issues mentioned above would need to install and maintain run-off diversions and buffer zones to prevent the holding ponds from becoming flooded with contaminated water from irrigation ditches and neighboring operations. If the farm operation is applying tertiary water or water from a flood prone holding pond, the farm would have to provide proof that the water is free of contaminants and pathogens, especially if the water was from urban area water treatment facilities or rain run-off from cattle operations. Untreated tertiary water is not permitted in organic production. If the farm could not correct water quality issues, it would not be awarded Organic Certification.

**Consumers: The real driving force behind food safety**

Ultimately, consumers will decide what constitutes "safe food" with brand loyalty, label recognition, and the willingness to pay more for higher quality food. On a local scale, restaurants and private citizens turned to local farmers for spinach, and spinach growers sold out. Spinach became a hot commodity for a while. The incident boosted local farm sales. Consumers who ate Certified Organic spinach grown in Montana could rest easy knowing that their spinach was clean and healthful.

This E. coli situation has spurred calls for more regulatory oversight in food production. However, regulations such as GAP and GHP are different from the Organic Certification standards in that they have little or no value-added benefit for the producer. And, there is no consumer label recognition associated with them. On the contrary, the Organic label has gained recognition value, which pro-



vides the producer with monetary incentives and the consumer with a sense of safe, healthful food that is produced and handled in compliance with a set of detailed standards.

As a result of the recent E. coli contamination, almost certain is the implementation of new food safety regulations. Policy and law makers will need to address consumer safety, production methods, incentives, and penalties. State and federal lawmakers need to take a look at why organic agricultural markets are expanding at 15-20% per year and why local farmers' markets across the country are flourishing before throwing blanket food safety regulations on every producer.

Organic food is not just for hippies anymore. It is for all people who want the added benefit of knowing their food is produced using safe and sustainable methods and has been thoroughly inspected and certified to comply with production and handling standards.

*Editors Note: At this time there are no comprehensive regulations that control or monitor the use of manure, compost or sewage sludge in conventional farming operations.*

## Sustainable Agriculture Solutions



Chaz Holt, CCA  
cdholt77@yahoo.com

**CONSULTING-SERVICE-SUPPLY**  
*Specializing in Organic and Sustainable  
Farming Supplies and Practices*

P.O. Box 131 Joliet, MT 59041  
www.holtheritagefarm.com 406-962-3058

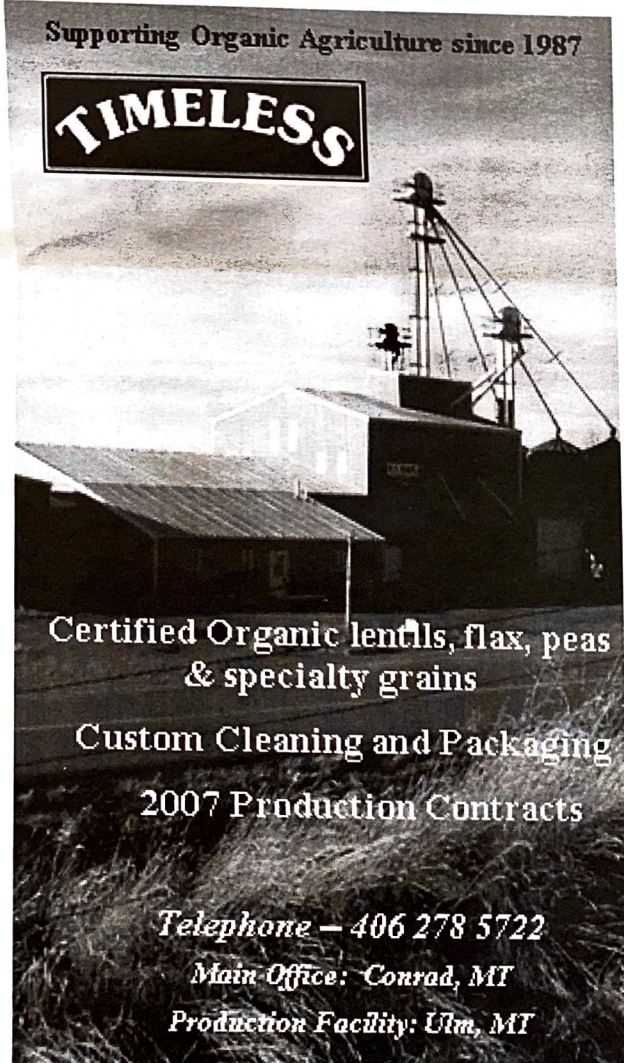

**Farmers, Gardeners, and Homeowners alike;  
we have all your organic growing supply needs  
for the greenhouse and field!**

## Growth (and a few pains) in the Certification Program:

By Doug Crabtree, Organic Certification Program  
Montana Department of Agriculture

Organic agriculture continues to grow in Montana as more producers and handlers take advantage of strong demand and premium prices offered for organic food products. The Montana Department of Agriculture has certified 12 new operations in 2006. Another six have applied and are pending certification. It is likely that a few more will apply before the year ends. These 18 new organic operations include three handlers and 15 producers. Diversity is the hallmark of organic agriculture and these new entrants are a diverse group. They include seven grain growers and a grain elevator; three livestock producers; three hay growers; a sprout grower; a research farm and a coffee roaster.

Supporting Organic Agriculture since 1987



Certified Organic lentils, flax, peas  
& specialty grains

Custom Cleaning and Packaging

2007 Production Contracts

Telephone — 406 278 5722

Main Office: Conrad, MT

Production Facility: Ulm, MT

The newly certified are geographically diverse as well. Ten are from central and eastern Montana; six from western Montana and two are from neighboring states.



While it is exciting to count the new certified operations, there have been losses, as well. Eighteen previously certified entities have "left the fold" in 2006. Of these 18, six cited the cost of certification as a primary reason for surrendering their certifications. Most of these are "exempt" growers, with sales of less than \$5,000 per year and who are not legally required to certify. Another five operations simply gave up growing or processing organic products. One operation had its certification revoked. Another (from Idaho) chose to certify closer to home with the Idaho state program. Finally, five organic growers left agriculture entirely (retired, sold the farm or moved) in 2006.

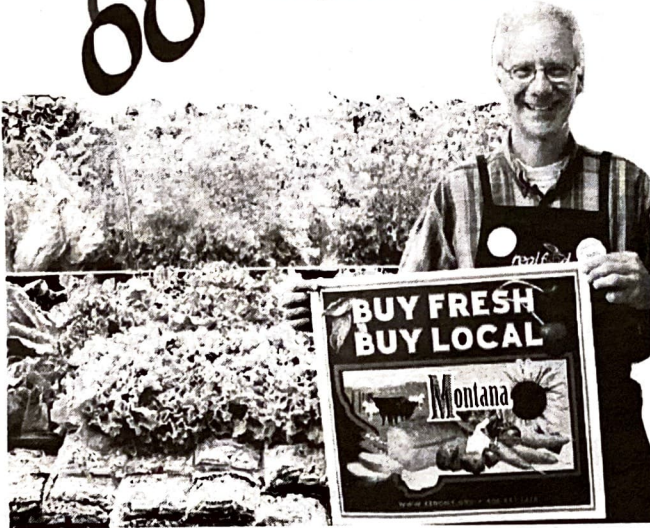
Since the largest number of those no longer certified cited cost as a primary factor in their decision, that brings us to the topic of the Federal Cost Share program. The 2002 Farm Bill included a Cost Share program to offset the costs of organic certification under the new National Organic Program (NOP) regulation. Each state was allocated a limited amount of funds, based on the estimated number of certified organic operations, to distribute to certified producers and handlers. The program was designed to reimburse 75% of the total certification cost up to a maximum of \$500 per operation each year. This was especially helpful to the smaller operations, for which the cost of NOP certification is a substantial portion of their income. The program was authorized for four years, ending in 2006. Unfortunately, funds were exhausted long before all eligible applicants had been reimbursed. The department, which administers the program in Montana, funded all applicants in 2003 and 2004 but only about half of the eligible applicants in 2005. No additional funds were available for 2006. The problem of inadequate funding was compounded by inflexible rules, which mandated that funds be disbursed on a first-come-first-serve basis and that each applicant be given the maximum entitled payment. So, some applicants received full (\$500) payments, while many others received no reimbursement. At least it was more equitable in 2006, since there was no money for anyone.

It's no secret that Montana is an "export state" when it

*(Continued on page 6)*



Feed your dreams...with Real Food.



**We carry local Montana . . .**

- Fruits & Vegetables
- Beef, Pork, Lamb & Buffalo
- Eggs, Honey & Bread
- Natural Remedies & Supplements
- Tea, Herbs & Spices
- And More!

1096 Helena Ave. • Mon-Sat 8-8, Sun 9-7  
 www.realfoodstore.com • 443-5150

**Please sign me up as a MOA member!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Farm or Business: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Levels:**

- Living Lightly .. \$15
- Individual ..... \$25
- Household ..... \$40 (includes 2 memberships)
- Business ..... \$50 (5% discount on newsletter ads)
- Contributing . \$120
- Lifetime ..... \$500

Please make checks payable to **MOA** and mail to:  
**MOA, PO Box 1675, Polson MT 59860**

(Continued from page 5)

comes to agriculture. Our vast acreage and relatively small population means that we produce far more food than we consume. This is also true in organic agriculture. Many organic producers depend on export markets to earn the substantial premiums offered for organic grains and pulse crops. Access to these international markets helps to maintain the organic premiums that many growers depend on to earn a living and stay on the farm. Organic wheat grown under the "big sky" may be consumed as flour, bread or pasta in Japan, Italy or Switzerland, for example. In order to facilitate the export of organic products, the department now offers certification and compliance verification for a number of international standards in addition to the "basic" NOP certification. For producers or handlers needing to export to Europe, we offer certification to the European Organic regulation. Those needing to ship to Japan can request verification of compliance with the special "export arrangement" between the US and Japan. The department has been recognized by authorities in Quebec, Canada and Switzerland to certify compliance to organic standards in those counties. Wherever our certified operators need to export, we are working to make it possible.

**Organics Superior in Lowering Nitrogen Leaching**

Researchers at Washington State University have found that organic farming methods can help reduce the amount of nitrogen draining into ground water, which is harmful to the environment and poses a potential health risk.

Researchers at WSU, Stanford University, and The Land Institute examined the use of organic fertilizers on nitrate leaching in soils. They examined nitrate leaching in an apple orchard under three management systems: organic, conventional and integrated. During the yearlong experiment, organically grown trees were fed either composted chicken manure or alfalfa meal, while conventionally raised trees were given calcium nitrate, a synthetic fertilizer widely used by commercial apple growers. Trees raised using the integrated system were given a blend of equal parts chicken manure and calcium nitrate. All trees were given the same amount of nitrogen, no matter what the source. The study found that annual nitrate leaching was four to five times higher in the conventional treatment than in the two organic treatments, with the integrated treatment in between.

For the full story visit [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/newsroom/news/2006news/nitrogen\\_organic.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/newsroom/news/2006news/nitrogen_organic.html).

**Upcoming Events**

December 7-9, 2006 — ACRES-USA, St. Paul, MN  
<http://www.acresusa.com/events/events.htm>

January 13-14, 2007 — MOA Board Retreat, Helena, call 406.871.0019 or email [info@montanaorganicassociation.org](mailto:info@montanaorganicassociation.org)

## MOA & AERO Team Up On 2006 Farm and Ranch Tours

By Steve Baril and Jim Barngrover

MOA collaborated with the Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) to sponsor summer tours of three certified organic farms and ranches, Terrapin Farm, McAlpine Ranch, and the Cook Ranch (C-5 Organics). These operations share common goals to produce certified organic food and feed and improve their biological systems. Each has diverse cropping systems that are evolving with the experience and knowledge gained by the operators, and producing exceptional quality food through sustainable and creative stewardship.



Judy Owsowitz demonstrates her tractor-drawn basket weeder.

### Terrapin Farm Tour

On July 30 over 60 people gathered at Terrapin Farm near Whitefish for a tour hosted by owner and hands-on operator, Judy Owsowitz. A lively tour covered the entire eight cultivated acres, greenhouse, and processing facilities; and participants saw most of the 500 plus varieties of vegetables, medicinal and culinary herbs, bedding plants, and seeds produced on Terrapin Farm. "We grow everything from artichokes to zucchini," said Judy, who began farming organically over 30 years ago. "We farm in a way that leaves the earth in better condition than when we started."

An evergreen forest surrounds the cultivated fields at Terrapin Farm. Elevation and low-lying farmland create a microclimate where frosts can occur any month of the year. Bedding plants are started in a greenhouse, and the season is enhanced with hoop houses and row covers like Remy and IRT ground covers.

Much of the production occurs in raised beds where crops like carrots and lettuce are close-spaced five rows per bed. The farm recently acquired a custom-made, ground-drive basket weeder to help weed the close row

*(Continued on page 8)*

# STICKING TO OUR ROOTS...

*Celebrating organics for 25 years.*

Open every day to everybody  
908 West Main in Bozeman  
[www.bozo.coop](http://www.bozo.coop)



(Continued from page 7)

spaces. With a cloud of dust, Judy demonstrated the operation of the basket weeder and her tractor-drawn bed shaper. Weed management is a huge issue for Terrapin Farm, involving lots of hand weeding. The basket weeder and pre-emergent flame weeding help to reduce labor, especially in carrots, a main crop for the operation.

Cover crops and living mulches help improve the soil and provide plant nutrients. New Zealand white clover is used for permanent ground cover, and living mulches, such as buckwheat, provide row cover, weed suppression, and organic matter. Judy works hard to eliminate bare ground, and she encouraged farmer participants to "do as much as you can to leave a living mulch."

Terrapin Farms continually experiments with varieties and companion planting. New varieties of peppers and cucumbers were being tested in cooperation with Cornell University.

Production is marketed through community shares, farmers' markets, health food stores, restaurants, and when time allows, a self-service farm stand. Judy said, "We strive to include the community in the farm through our CSA, involvement in the schools and local farmers' markets, and in seeking to educate folks in how and where their food is grown." Terrapin Farms has an intensive apprenticeship program offering hands-on learning, room, board, and a stipend.

After the tour, participants gathered at the home for a delicious meal prepared with produce from Terrapin Farm and other organic, locally grown produce.

### McAlpine Ranch Tour

Clay (Tuna) and Ann McAlpine hosted a tour of their operation, the McAlpine Ranch near Valier, on July 31. Twenty-six people met for a morning meeting of the AERO Agriculture Task Force; an organic lunch of Tuna's BBQ pork and beef; salads by Angela and Jim Barngrover; and a caravan tour of the ranch.

The ranch supports the McAlpines and their four children. They apply creativity, persistence, and constant pursuit of knowledge. The landscape of their farm is alive and provides exceptional quality organic food to loyal customers.

The ranch emphasizes grass-fed, organic beef and pork. They raise 300 head of hogs (three Berkshire boars, 40 sows and 257 piglets) and 80 head of yearling steers and heifers. Tuna uses a rotational grazing system adapted from the Savory method. Hogs and cattle are rotated among pastures and contained by single strand electric fence. Pastures consist of permanent grass and various combinations of barley, oats, Austrian winter peas, Ber-

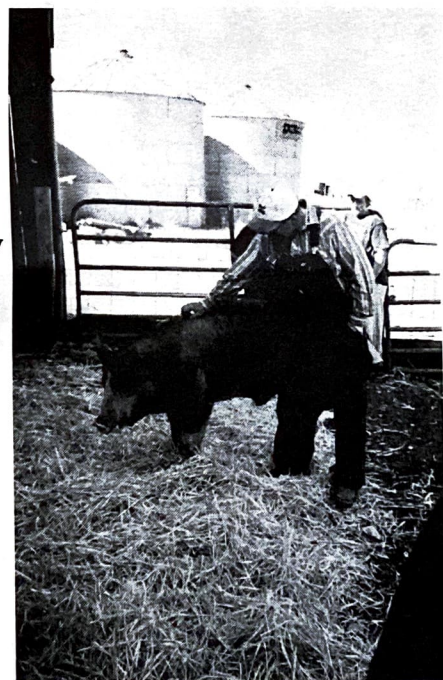
seem clover, and turnips.

McAlpine Ranch grows a variety of perennial and annual crops. The primary rotation is alfalfa followed by annual crops. These include winter wheat, barley/peas, oats/peas, plain peas, hay, CRP, and fallow land. The peas, depending on circumstances, are grown to maturity for seed or feed, used as pasture, or turned under as a green manure crop.

A pivot system irrigates alfalfa and Berseem clover/oat mix. Corrals at the pivot point allow rotational grazing after crops are harvested. Grazing livestock follow, by several days, the pivot line. Geothermal cattle waterers reduce dependence on energy to heat water during freezing weather.

Management practices increase species diversity by creating a healthy system and habitat. Clay visualizes a landscape that has more trees and habitat for beneficial insects and birds, and he is committed to a diverse, non-toxic system that produces healthy food. An example of his efforts include intentionally flooded lowlands that create aquatic areas and riparian habitat for waterfowl, birds, and a diversity of plant and animal species. Tree rows include species like buffalo berry, chokecherry, snowberry, plum, sand cherry, rose, Russian olive, and caragana which create habitat and food for wildlife and improve the soil.

A success story for the ranch is the reclaimed riparian land along Birch Creek. This land was rendered nearly useless by a 1964 flood that scarified topsoil and created conditions favorable for spotted knapweed. Tuna restored this area by planting perennials such as cicer milkvetch, alfalfa, sanfoin, and birdsfoot trefoil; introducing biological control; and carefully rotating cattle grazing. Data gathered over the years shows species succession toward more favorable plants, diversity and biomass. Riparian



Tuna McAlpine with one of his Berkshire boars



vegetation is returning and capturing more topsoil, narrowing the floodplain channel, and deepening and cooling Birch Creek.

The McAlpines market their certified organic pork and beef around Montana under the McAlpine Ranch label. Some of the McAlpine pigs and cattle are shipped live to Iowa to supply a natural whole food market chain.

### Cook Ranch and C-5 Organics Ranch Tour

On August 13, over 170 people gathered at the Cook Ranch near Belgrade for a ranch tour and a celebration of organic and local foods and an appreciation for local producers. Brian and LaVerne Goldhahn hosted the tour, which was sponsored by MOA, AERO, the Community Food Cooperative, and the Chef's Collaborative. Financial support came from the National Center for Appropriate Technology, Planet Natural, Murdoch's, and the Montana Outdoor Science School (MOSS).

The Chef's Collaborative organized a meal prepared by various area chefs using organic and locally produced foods. MOSS held activities for the young and young at heart that included ice cream, butter, and mask making. Tom Robson and other local musicians entertained with their fiddles, violins, and guitars.

Brian and LaVerne and their three children operate C-5 Organics and lease the Cook Ranch in the Springhill area near Bozeman. Their scenic 1200 acre ranch is on the west slope of the Bridger Mountains and Reese Creek runs through the hay and pasture meadows. They are committed to organic and sustainable practices that improve pastures and hay meadows and maintain a healthy environment that produces quality food and feed.

They began managing the ranch in 1988 for Lou and Marian Cook, two environmentally conscientious individuals, who according to Brian, "put their money into grass" by purchasing and renovating ranches. They were supportive of sustainable agricultural practices promoted by Brian. In 2005, they supported his idea to begin organic management. Brian found that Bozeman area ranchers needed organic hay, and when he looked into certification standards, he found that his practices were already organic. Brian certified the hay and pasture in 2005 through the Montana Department of Agriculture and in 2006 certified his Angus calves and contract grass fed yearlings. In 2006 Brian and LaVerne took a big step and leased the ranch from the Cooks.

Participants were seated on hay bales on two goose necked trailers for Brian's tour of his operation. The tour featured yearling cattle in a polywire-fenced pasture, dryland hay pasture land in the grazing rotation, a close up look at camelina (an oil seed crop), and oats underseeded



Organic neighbors Becky Weed from Thirteen Mile Farm and Brian Goldhahn

with yellow blossom sweet clover.

The ranch produces grass-finished, certified organic beef. Cattle are grazed entirely on sub-irrigated pastures that have various mixes of alfalfa, sanfoin, orchard grass, birdsfoot trefoil, and other grasses and forbes. Birdsfoot trefoil, a long-lived, nutritious legume not commonly planted in Montana, is one of the successes of the ranch. Rotational grazing methods adopted by the Goldhahns brought this desirable legume back from old plantings. The Goldhahns own their own certified organic herd, and they "sell the grass" by custom feeding organic cattle.

One of the main crops is organic hay, but the valley and hilly bench ground includes plantings of organic barley, Austrian winter peas, oats underseeded with yellow blossom sweet clover, and camelina. The crop rotation includes legumes like Austrian winter peas and yellow blossom sweet clover to fix nitrogen and improve soil tilth. The barley and oats can be cut for hay and the yellow blossom sweet clover over-wintered and cut for hay or tilled in as green manure the following crop year. Austrian winter peas are harvested for seed, and the nitrogen fixing qualities will improve soil fertility and tilth. Camelina, a relatively new oil seed crop, has potential as a cooking oil, source of biodiesel, and industrial oil.

### MOA Acting Board of Directors

Judy Owsowitz, Chair 406.862.6362	Chaz Holt, Vice Chair 406.962.9062	
Ole Norgaard, Treasurer 406.53803607	Karalee Bancroft, Secretary 406.225.4280	
Glen Babcock 406.626.5757	Matt Johnson 406.648.5407	Sandi Shanks 406.862.4934
Steve Baril 406.458.4981	Rob Knotts 406.774.3778	Dee Turner 406.937.3765
Jerry Habets 406.278.3477	Jim Lindquist 406.583.7722	

# MT Sends Organic Farmer to US Senate

Guest Opinion by David Oien, Timeless Seeds

The week following the November 7 elections, found U.S. Senator-elect Jon Tester doing dozens of interviews for national—indeed international—media. The pinnacle piece was probably a front page feature article in the New York Times titled “Fresh off the Farm in Montana,” which, like all the others, focused on his part in bringing about the political sea change in Washington, DC. The New York Times, among the most prestigious papers on the planet, is read by heads of state, as well as, policy and business decision makers around the world. And like most other media pieces, this one also gave considerable mention to the fact that “Mr. Tester” is an organic producer and a third generation farmer.

We should not overlook the exposure, the significance, and the opportunity Jon’s election brings to the organic community. Not only his accomplishment and his physique, but also his rural roots and his organic livelihood, will continue to give him celebrity status. Over time, his authenticity, intelligence, and quiet diplomacy will likely give him stature our state hasn’t witnessed since Mike Mansfield. The organic community in Montana is part of the history and can be part of the future.

As every MOA member probably knows, Jon has been an organic farmer for nearly 20 years and has been an unwavering advocate for family farming, small business and sustainable agriculture throughout his tenure in the Montana Senate. He’s been a critical player in every piece of organic legislation and non-GMO effort that’s ever been launched in this state. He’s never been afraid of the “O” word, and if asked will reply (in his trademark style): “The fact of the matter is, if it weren’t for converting to organics, I wouldn’t be farming today.” The New York Times said: “[MR. Tester] is most likely the only person in the world’s most exclusive club who knows how to butcher a cow or grease a combine.” That isn’t the half of it. He’s also the only one who plants green manure crops, applies rhizobia inoculant, and understands firsthand the importance of nutritional quality in food for human health and the contribution organic agriculture can make to rural economies and the environment. To have this person in the U.S. Senate gives us—MOA and each of us personally-- the opportunity to be on legislative and policy radar screens otherwise beyond our reach. To some degree or other, Jon will now have direct input and influence on the direction of US farm policy, the NOP, the World Trade Organization and Free Trade negotiations, on biotechnology and the battle between family farm vs. industrialization of agriculture.

We will have Jon’s ear. We can call him up, and he’ll actually call us back.

With the opportunity will come responsibility. U.S. Senator Tester will be bearing burdens beyond anything Montana Senator Tester could imagine—international war and peace, nuclear proliferation, trillion dollar budgets, the nation’s health care. It is our responsibility, as the organic community in general and as MOA in particular, to choose our battles wisely and to offer whole-baked, not half-baked, ideas and requests. Being who he is, Jon will seek our advice, our feedback, our input. We need to be a respected and respectable resource, not a special interest lobby.

Senator Tester is now part of an institution with over 200 years of history and tradition—part of one of the most powerful legislative bodies in the world. He’ll be hobnobbing with the likes of Ted Kennedy and Dick Cheney, so we also need to keep him grounded! He may be “Mr. Tester” to the New York Times and, beginning in January, will be “Senator Tester” to Presidents and Prime Ministers. But he’ll always be “Jon” to us.

Congratulations, Jon. Congratulations, MOA. Now, let’s get on with it.



Senator-elect Jon Tester poised to “make the US Senate look a little more like Montana”

## Classifieds

**Summer Employment Opportunity**—Ranch hand on a certified organic ranch raising grass-finished Galloway beef

Ferry Creek Ranch, Livingston, Montana  
Mid May - Mid September 2007

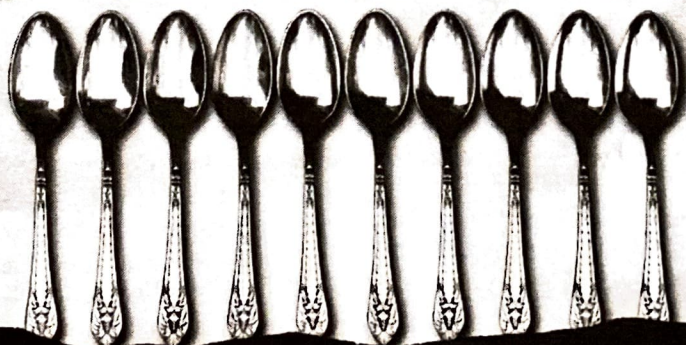
Work will include all aspects typical of summer ranch work including, but not limited to: moving and handling cattle, irrigating, haying, barbed wire fence building & repair, polywire electric fences, & machinery maintenance.

I am seeking a summer employee who has a strong interest in this type of work and who has experience in some of these areas. A typical week will include approximately 40-50 hours of work with a minimum of one full day off.

Housing is in a two bedroom stylishly renovated granary on the ranch compound near Livingston. Salary: \$350/week plus housing. For more information please contact me, (406) 222-4835, or visit my website, <http://montanagrasslandsbeef.com>.

Rob Forstenzer, [rob@montanagrasslandsbeef.com](mailto:rob@montanagrasslandsbeef.com)  
Ferry Creek Ranch  
177 Old Clyde Park Rd.  
Livingston, MT 59047

TEN SPOON  
ORGANIC  
WINE  
MADE IN  
MISSOULA  
MONTANA



RATTLESNAKE CREEK is now TEN SPOON  
[tenspoonvineyard.com](http://tenspoonvineyard.com) 406/549.8703

PRST  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Polson, MT  
Permit No. 273

## Montana Organic Association

PO Box 1675  
Polson MT 59860

406.871.0019  
info@montanaorganic  
association.org

**We're now on  
the web!**

www.montanaorganic  
association.org



## A View from the Chair

By Judy Owsowitz, MOA Board Chair

Here in northwest Montana we have been quite fortunate to receive a bit of moisture, which has made for one of the most beautiful autumns I can remember. The tamaracks just started carpeting the ground with yellow needles today! For those of you in the open expanse of grain and cattle country (i.e., treeless) that is about three weeks later than usual.

MOA had our share of sunny days this summer. We co-sponsored, with AERO and others, our first Farm Tours. They were a resounding success—well attended, informative, and a whole lot of fun. I had the privilege of hosting one here at Terrapin Farm with all the great help from Sandi Shanks, Steve Baril, Jim Barngrover, and Cori Ash. I think I learned as much from the fascinating group of folks that attended as I hope they did from me. Watch for more of these wonderful collaborations next year.

We also received a small grant for our logo and brochure development. So that means that a new MOA brochure is also in the works.

We hired our first contractor. For those of you who haven't had the pleasure of meeting her, Lise Rousseau is now the oil can (organic Montana grown vegetable oil, of

course) that keeps the MOA machine running smoothly. And we are sure lucky to have her aboard. She also continues as our conference coordinator, and we all know how successful those conferences have been.

The board, Lise, and the conference committee have been hard at work putting together a great offering of workshops, food and fun for us for *Gathering Montana's Organic Community: The Organic Advantage*. We are fortunate to have some first-rate speakers, including Jeffrey Smith, author of *Seeds of Deception*. If you haven't read it yet, grab a copy at the library. It just may grab you. There are workshops planned to interest everybody where you can learn about everything from transitioning to organic, to research, to seed production to marketing. There will even be some information about financing your operation!

Please be sure to attend the annual membership meeting on Sunday. It is your opportunity to get involved in *your* organization. MOA has made some amazing progress in a short time due to our strong level of participation, and I know that there are lots of you out there with the drive and energy to continue propelling us forward. We have some ambitious plans that need you! Consider signing up for one of the committees or to work with the mentoring program. There is a niche for everyone.

I look forward to seeing you all in Missoula!!! *Judy*