



ORGANIC MATTERS NEWSLETTER SPRING 2025



WHAT'S INSIDE



- Policy Update
 - MOA Policy Committee
- Food & Health
 - **Consumer vs. Customer** by Jane Smith, MD
- Organic Research
 - **Organic Farming Enhances Nutritional Value of Quinoa**
- Update From the Farm
 - **Growing Forward: Kokoro Farm**

SAVE THE DATE

2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

DECEMBER 9-11, 2025

**MANSFIELD CONVENTION CENTER
GREAT FALLS, MT**



POLICY UPDATES

MONTANA ORGANIC ASSOCIATION POLICY UPDATE BRIEFS:

MONTANA



New Secretary of Ag Appointee has strong ties to organic community

Governor Greg Gianforte announced the appointment of Jillien Streit as the new Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA). As the founder of Stricks Ag in Chester, MT, Ms. Streit has deep connections to the organic farming community. The Montana Organic Association (MOA) welcomes her to the role and looks forward to collaborating with her as Secretary of Agriculture to expand opportunities for organic farmers and ranchers across Montana.

MOA works with the department of ag to improve legislative role advisory role

In 2025, the Montana legislature passed HB269 which updates the state code to direct the Montana Dept of Agriculture to seek input from the Montana Organic Association, retiring the Organic Commodity Advisory Council. MOA members John Wicks and Nate Powell-Palm actively advised and worked with the MT Dept of Ag to finalize language that improves the flow of communication from the Montana Organic Community to the MT Dept of Ag. MOA extends sincere thanks to the Dept of Agriculture for a robust and open dialogue on the bill text and the opportunity to offer input.

NOSB Spring Meeting is back on!

After much input from the organic community, the Spring 2025 NOSB Meeting will be held virtually from April 29 to May 1. Oral public comments are scheduled for April 23 and 24 on a first-come, first-served basis—sign up by April 9. Written comments are due by April 28. Access the agenda and materials [here](#). Montana Organic Farmers should contact Nate Powell-Palm for any questions regarding how to comment and participate on the NOSB. With a new administration in DC, it's important to make our voices heard and educate all policy makers on how organic is the answer.

Montana Organic Farmers share the organic message to the new Trump administration in DC

In early March, Montana Organic Association members Bob Quinn and Nate Powell-Palm joined 35 organic farmers from across the U.S. for the Organic Farmer Fly-In in Washington, DC. With a new administration in place, it's crucial for farmers to educate lawmakers on the vital role organic farming and ranching play in strengthening Montana communities. The event garnered coverage from the [Washington Post](#) and other media outlets. Key priorities presented to lawmakers included:

- Ending the federal funding freeze
- Tailoring USDA insurance programs for organic farmers
- Fully funding conservation programs
- Protecting organic integrity to stabilize domestic markets
- Reauthorizing and securing the organic certification cost-share program in the Farm Bill
- Codifying infrastructure grants for farm viability and economic growth
- Supporting organic research benefiting all farmers

FOOD & HEALTH



CUSTOMER OR CONSUMER: THE CHOICE IS OURS

I don't remember when being called a consumer rubbed me the wrong way, but it certainly started soon after we started raising organic beef.

Working in nature has a way of clarifying life. Our cattle consume grass to make magnificent meat. Our chickens consume bugs to produce orange egg yolks. Earthworms consume debris to produce rich soil. These are all processes we agies understand. But to apply this concept to people buying and selling goods lowers the value of human life.

According to the Etymology Online Dictionary, using the term "consumer" started in the 15th century as, "one who squanders or wastes, one who uses up goods or articles, one who destroys the exchangeable value of a commodity by using it. This, my friend, is not a compliment. By 1890, the United States adopted its use as "consumer goods," and by 1919, our government tracked the Consumer Price Index.

So, what were we before 1890? People were customers. The 1828 Websters Dictionary describes us as, "One who frequents any place of sale for the sake of purchasing goods." It is a subtle but important distinction. A store owner developed a relationship with his or her customers. In this bond, people exchanged goods and services for mutual benefit. A lumber mill owner knew his customers and saw the home they built with his enterprise. A farmer knew his customers and saw how healthy and strong his neighbors became as a result of his toil. The business owner/customer bond benefited entire communities because people focused on a higher good.

The word customer encourages people to create, to connect, to build. The word consumer does the opposite. In 2012, Northwestern University studied people in four scenarios, which used the word consumer or focused on being a consumer. The outcome demonstrated that materialistic cues triggered increased selfishness and decreased trust in the groups, which the authors tied to negative personal and social consequences in our society.

You don't have to look far to see this play out in our communities. Low trust, competitiveness with resources, and selfishness plague our culture, a trend that can be traced from the 1800s. But we are not victims. Those of us who create food can also create a culture where humans return to their highest good by simply calling our clientele...customers.

Jane H. Smith, M.D. is a co-founder of Aspen Island Ranch and President of Cadia Book House publishing. Copyright 2025.

Resource: Bauer, M. A., Wilkie, J. E. B., Kim, J. K., & Bodenhausen, G. V. (2012). Cuing Consumerism: Situational Materialism Undermines Personal and Social Well-Being. *Psychological Science*, 23(5), 517-523. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611429579>



Organic Farming Enhances Nutritional Value of Quinoa

A healthy, balanced diet is crucial for overall well-being, helping to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and improve metabolic health, such as insulin sensitivity. A key element to achieving this is incorporating nutrient-dense foods that meet daily macro and micronutrient needs. The nutritional quality of foods depends on the type and quantity of nutrients they contain, and how effectively these nutrients are digested, absorbed, and utilized by the body. Foods with diverse nutrient profiles and higher nutrient content are generally considered of better nutritional value. Quinoa, for example, is known for being a nutritionally dense food rich in protein, fiber, and essential minerals. It is also a hardy crop, resilient to many agriculture challenges.

In order to understand factors that impact the nutritional value of certain foods, researchers have taken a look back at the source. Research comparing organic and conventional farming practices has shown encouraging results that organic farming produces foods with greater nutritive value compared to conventional methods. This has been linked to the absence of synthetic fertilizers and other additives in conventional practices that hinder plants' ability to absorb nutrients from the soil. A recent study supports this idea, showing that organic farming practices enhanced the nutritive value of white quinoa.

This study found that organic quinoa contained more proteins, and a greater variety of protein types compared to conventional quinoa. Specifically, organic quinoa had more proteins related to protein synthesis, a vital cellular function that supports overall health. This is indicative that organic farming can enhance the health benefits of quinoa. This study utilized mass spectrometry—an analytical technique that identifies specific compounds in food. Unlike other analyses focused on the protein and amino acids content of food, this method is able to detect and identify all of the proteins in a given sample, as well as the metabolic functions associated with those proteins.

These findings highlight two key points: farming practices do influence the nutritional value of quinoa, and organic farming can produce quinoa with more metabolically beneficial proteins, supporting the overall health of the consumer.

Meghan L. Spears

PhD Student in Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, Montana State University

To read more about these findings:

*Galindo-Luján, R., Pont, L., Minic, Z., Berezovski, M. V., Quispe, F., Sanz-Nebot, V., & Benavente, F. (2025). Comprehensive Characterization of Raw and Processed Quinoa from Conventional and Organic Farming by Label-Free Shotgun Proteomics. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, 73(4), 2669–2677. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.jafc.4c08623>*

UPDATE FROM THE FARM

Growing Forward: Kokoro Farm Expands with New Infrastructure

Spring is in the air at Kokoro Farm, and owners Travis and Meara are gearing up for another busy season. With seeding already well underway since late February, their greenhouse is filled with cold-hardy greens like baby lettuces and salad mixes. Montana's unpredictable spring weather means careful planning, but they're making the most of their hoop houses to protect and nurture these early crops.

This year marks a big step forward for the farm. Travis and Meara are expanding their covered growing space with low tunnels and high tunnels, creating more opportunities to extend the season and protect crops. Additionally, a new processing facility is under construction. Once completed, it will streamline vegetable and flower washing, storage, and market prep—a welcome upgrade from their barn-based setup.

Managing the land thoughtfully remains a top priority. Faced with significant perennial weed pressure from Canada thistle and bindweed, they're scaling back some outdoor plots. Instead, they're moving toward low-till practices and exploring the use of a roller crimper to manage cover crops and improve soil health. It's a long-term strategy aimed at building resilience and productivity.

The team at Kokoro Farm is also growing. With nine crew members this season, including both returning staff and new hires, there's a strong mix of experience and fresh energy. The additional hands will help keep up with the demands of the season and bring new perspectives to the operation.

While farming always brings its share of challenges, Travis and Meara are optimistic about what's ahead. With infrastructure improvements, organic practices, and a dedicated team, they're ready to tackle whatever the season has in store.

Follow Kokoro Farm on social media for updates and a glimpse of the vibrant blooms and fresh produce coming soon.



 @kokoroflowers

www.kokoroflowers.com

Want to be a featured farm in a MOA newsletter?

Contact our communications committee at moamembership@gmail.com