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Growing Organic Expertise in Iowa

Virtual Organic Workshops for Iowa Agriculture Service Providers January and February 2021

Des Moines, Iowa -- As the organic market continues to grow, Iowa farmers, producers, landowners and businesses are looking for opportunities to participate in this movement. The Iowa Organic Association (IOA) and regional partners will deliver a series of virtual “Growing Organic Expertise in Iowa” workshops to provide the information, tools and resources needed for agriculture service providers and consultants to support farmers interested in organic transition, diversification and production.

This three-hour virtual workshop will provide information from organic experts about the National Organic Program, organic certification and transition, organic standards and production practices and insight into current organic market trends and demands. The target audience for the workshop includes: NRCS, Extension, IDALS, FSA, SWCD, RC&D, County Conservation, crop insurance agents, farm lenders, farming organizations, farmers, agriculture educators and students, and others interested in learning more about organic opportunities.

Currently, Iowa ranks sixth in the U.S. and represents five percent of the nation’s certified organic farms, and yet less than 1% of Iowa’s agriculture production is organic. Rosalyn Lehman, IOA executive director shares that “many of Iowa’s farmers and landowners struggle to find reliable support as they explore new organic production systems and land uses.” These workshops will provide guidance and tools to adequately assist organic and transitioning farmers and landowners.

Today, the organic market is a \$55 billion industry. “As the market continues to grow, and demand for domestic, organic products continues to exceed supply, it is necessary that Iowa service providers are skilled and knowledgeable about organic agriculture to help Iowa farmers diversify and grow organic acres,” said Kevin Kuhn, Iowa NRCS Resource Conservationist. Expanding organic production in Iowa is as much an opportunity for farmers to diversify production and income streams, as it is for businesses supporting those producers.

IOA began delivering the “Growing Organic Expertise in Iowa” workshop across Iowa in October 2019. Prior to COVID, IOA delivered eight full-day workshops at various locations around the state, reaching 165 participants. This winter workshop series will be delivered virtually through Zoom. It has been modified to three hours to reduce time in front of the computer – we hope that we can follow these virtual workshops with an in-person farm visit next summer in these regions.

Though these workshops are virtual, we are still trying to keep a regional focus to encourage some networking among community members (i.e. field staff, farmers, consultants, etc.) and is why you will see cities tied to the dates. Anyone can attend any program; just note we are targeting folks in these areas to participate during those dates/times, if available. We welcome you to participate in the workshop when it best fits your schedule.

The locations/times for the 2021 workshops are as follows:

Tuesday, January 26th – 12-3pm - Sioux City, IA

Tuesday, February 2nd – 12-3pm - Seymour, IA

Tuesday, February 9th – 12-3pm - Hazelton, IA

Tuesday, February 16th – 12-3pm - Kalona, IA

To register, visit **<https://www.iowaorganic.org/calendar>** or call 515-412-4802. There is no cost to participate, however, you **must RSVP** at the link above to join these workshops.

IOA's "Growing Organic Expertise in Iowa" workshop training series is made possible with grant support from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE).

The Iowa Organic Association (IOA) is a statewide, 501(c)3 non-profit organization committed to advancing organic agriculture and food systems in Iowa. For more information, visit www.iowaorganic.org.

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