

Spring 2014

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IOA Newsletter



Iowa Organic Association | Box 185 | Ames, IA 50010 | www.iowaorganic.org

IOA tour of Grain Miller's Inc. processing plant a success

Special Interest Articles:

NOSB Highlights

IOA receives grant

Organic farms support biodiversity

Organic acreage increasing

2014 Board

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Cindy McCollough

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Over 50 individuals participated in a tour of the St. Ansgar small-grain processing facility and an educational afternoon workshop on growing small grains.

Grain Millers is the world's largest organic oat processor. This plant processes 85% oats as well as other small grains. Their facility includes 100,000 square feet of warehouse, and employs 143 people.



Matt Miller, IOA Vice president and attendee, commented that the meeting and tour indicated that "food manufacturing companies are clearly committed to using organic ingredients, we just need to make sure farmers have the tools they need to grow organically. Iowa farmers are fortunate to have a processor here in Iowa to utilize the small grains that are an integral part of the organic rotation."



IOA Board and staff at Grain Millers: (L-R) Margaret Smith, Tyler Frazenburg, Amber Anderson Mba, Roger Lansink, Cindy McCollough, and Matt Miller

"High-quality food begins on the farm, so farmers learning about the next step in the process from farm to plate can only help improve the product received by the consumer", shares Amber Anderson Mba, IOA director.

From the Director:

As the last weeks of a long winter (hopefully) come to a close, we prepare for a busy year. We are excited to welcome new board members Rob Faux, Tyler Franzenburg, Cindy McCollough, and Phil Forbes to the board as new farmer, handler, and processor representatives. I am excited about the energy and new ideas they bring to the organization. View their bios at iowaorganic.org. Again, please feel free to contact me at iowaorganic@gmail.com or with your ideas and inspiration.

From the President:

What is organic?

Ask this question to different people and you are likely going to get as many responses.

Organic to a producer may mean producing a crop using natural methods. Processors and handlers of organic crops may say that organic crops are a small niche market that allows them to meet a demand that large companies cannot. Consumers may say organic food is produced without pesticides and is healthier for them. It is only when you put these pieces together that you get a true sense of organic.

My friends, to me organic agriculture is being able to leave the land to the next generation in better shape than we got it in addition to producing healthy food for consumers. Organic farming has allowed me and my family to stay on the family farm and increase our financial health.

This would not have been possible without the help of other organic farmers helping us get started. I will never be able to thank these people enough.

My hope is for the IOA to work hard to mentor the next wave of organic agriculture to thrive in Iowa into the future.

Thank You to those of you who have become members and I would like to encourage those of you who have not please consider doing so. It is a pleasure serving the organic industry in Iowa.

**Thanks Again,
Roger Lansink**

Susan Jutz Receives 2014 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award from Practical Farmers of Iowa

Susan Jutz of Solon has been chosen as the recipient of the 2014 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award, granted annually by Practical Farmers of Iowa to someone who has shown exemplary commitment to sustainable agriculture, generously shared his or her knowledge with others and been influential in efforts to foster vibrant communities, diverse farms and healthful food. The award was presented to Susan at a dinner on Friday, Jan. 24, during Practical Farmers' 2014 Annual

Conference, "Well Grounded," in Ames.

Susan owns and operates ZJ Farm, an 80-acre diversified vegetable and sheep farm located between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids. In 1996, she co-founded Local Harvest CSA, a three-season Community Supported Agriculture program that was one of the first CSAs in Iowa, and which helped pave the way for this model of community-centered farming to take root and flourish in the state. Since then, Susan has been a principal partner and vegetable grower

for the CSA, which now supplies more than 200 families with a wide variety of fresh vegetables and herbs grown using organic and sustainable practices.

"Susan has always been willing to share her expertise in farming with anyone," says Dan Wilson, president of Practical Farmers' board of directors. "Her commitment to making agriculture more sustainable is leaving an impact on Iowa's agricultural landscape, and she is blazing a path for other women to follow."

Leopold Center awards 2014 research grants

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture has awarded grants to 24 innovative research and demonstration projects that will help Iowa farmers improve soil health, take advantage of opportunities related to local foods and fine-tune alternative practices that protect the environment while using fewer outside inputs. The projects fall under

all four of the Leopold Center's initiatives – Ecology, Marketing and Food Systems, Policy and Cross-Cutting.

"This year's grants represent a broad array of science-based projects that will continue to build the sustainability of Iowa's agriculture and food systems," said Leopold Center director Mark Rasmussen.

All grants are for one year, totaling

\$731,817. In addition to the new projects, work will continue on a number of other multi-year projects already in progress and supported by the Leopold Center's long-running competitive grants program. The new grants bring the Leopold Center's current investment in research on agricultural alternatives to nearly \$1.16 million.



News from the NOSB by Francis Thicke

I have been on the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) for about a year now, and the learning curve has been steep. At the request of the IOA board, I will be writing a regular column covering some of the key issues of the NOSB and the National Organic Program (NOP). In this first column I would like to focus on things I have learned about the NOP, particularly how the NOSB functions.

The NOSB is a 15-member citizen board appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to represent the broad range of stakeholders in the organic community. The role of the NOSB is to advise the Secretary on the NOP and to review and make recommendations on each material that is petitioned for inclusion on or exclusion from the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. The Secretary then makes a decision based on the recommendation of the NOSB. Very significantly, the Secretary cannot put any material on the National List unless the NOSB recommends it be listed. Another key element is that it takes a two-thirds majority of NOSB members to recommend that a material be added to the National List. Also, all materials on the National List sunset five years after being listed and need to be reconsidered by the NOSB in order to stay on the List.

The NOSB primarily works through subcommittees that review materials in specific areas. For example, I am on crops, livestock and materials subcommittees. Subcommittees meet by teleconference twice a month to review materials peti-

tioned for the National List.

Each petitioned material is assigned to an appropriate subcommittee for review. First, the subcommittee reviews the petition to determine if it is sufficient and complete. If not, the petitioner is asked for clarifications until the petition is approved by the subcommittee. Next, the NOP staff contracts with an independent contractor for a Technical Review (TR) of the petitioned material in the light of key questions on the appropriateness of the material for organic production. The subcommittee reviews the TR to make sure it adequately addresses key issues and answers all questions subcommittee members may have about the material under consideration. If not, the TR is sent back with questions for further clarifications until the TR is approved by the subcommittee. The subcommittee vote serves as a recommendation to the full board – although it is not unusual for the full board to vote contrary to the subcommittee recommendation.

All votes by the full board are made during in-person national meetings that are scheduled for twice per year and are open to the public. Before the full board votes on any petitioned material, the public has two opportunities to provide input to the board: 1) before each national NOSB meeting a Federal Register notice announces all petitions for the National List that will be voted on in the next national meeting and solicits public comments on each petition. NOSB members review comments from the public in preparation for the national meeting in which those petitions will be voted on, 2) during the national meeting there are additional opportunities for citizens to make public comments on the petitions, before the public board votes.

The next NOSB meeting will be held April 29 – May 2, 2014 in San Antonio, Texas. There are always controversial issues and votes that come up at national NOSB meetings. Some representatives of the organic community argue that organic farmers and processors should have as many “tools in the toolbox” as possible, and so favor approval of most petitioned materials. Others argue that we need to keep the organic label as “pure” as possible, and favor approving only those few materials that they deem absolutely essential. For example, in the April NOSB meeting, a vote that will likely be controversial will cover the use of the antibiotic Streptomycin for the control of fire blight in organic apple and pear production.

Another controversial NOP issue is the recent decision by USDA to change the rules for relisting materials when they sunset from the list after five years. In the past, a two-thirds-majority vote of the full NOSB was required to relist a material, and each sunset material had to be voted on by the full board. Under the new USDA procedure, the full board will not get an opportunity to vote on materials that sunset unless the subcommittee that the material is assigned to refers it to the full board, instead the material will stay on the National List by default. Further, if the full board does take a vote to relist a sunset material, USDA is now requiring a 2/3rds-majority vote to take the sunset material off the list, instead of a 2/3rds-majority vote to keep the material on the list, as was the procedure in the past. This is a major procedural change that the USDA made without NOSB consultation.

If you have questions about the NOSB, or would like to give me input on issues facing the NOSB, please contact me at fthicke@iowatelecom.net or 641-919-8554

Iowa Organic Association receives grant from Ceres Foundation

The Iowa Organic Association (IOA) has received a three-year grant to work on yield-limiting factors in organic small grains. The project "Constraints to Profitability of Small Grains in Iowa and the Upper Midwest" will focus on direct with organic farmers to identify factors that may impact yields and quality, and then implementing on-farm trials to on certified organic farms to test possible solutions.

"The small-grain year of organic rotations is usually the least profitable, but valuable to the organic rotation as a whole, says Amber Anderson-Mba, Executive Director of the IOA. The IOA is hopeful that overcoming this ob-

stacle will allow smoother transitions to organic for those interested in organics as well improve profitability for existing organic operations.

Dr. Margaret Smith, specialist with the Value Added Agriculture Program at Iowa State University, an IOA advisor and investigator on the project shared her enthusiasm about the project: "It is exciting to have the opportunity to help solve some issues for organic growers surrounding their small grain yields and profits. I think that insights from this study will also shed light on issues for other crops within overall organic rotations that may be addressed in the future. Many thanks to the Ceres

Foundation for supporting research for and with organic farmers that takes place on their certified organic farms".

Others involved in the project will include Dr. Mary Wiedenhoeft, Professor of Agronomy and Director of the Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, Grain Millers, Inc. organic oat processors, and approximately 60 certified organic small grain growers in Iowa. If you receive a letter requesting your participation, we hope that you will be willing to help with this project. Contact Amber Anderson-Mba at info@iowaorganic.org for more information.

Study finds diverse non-GMO crop system reduces herbicides, enhances soils, increases yields

What happens when you add diversity to Iowa's conventional corn-soybean cropping system? An Iowa State University agronomist has found that you can reduce herbicide inputs, maintain and even improve weed suppression, enhance soil quality by several measures, plus boost grain yields. The study also found that non-GMO crops performed better than genetically modified varieties.

The cropping system research began in 2002, conducted by ISU agronomy professor Matt Liebman at the ISU Marsden Farm in Boone County. This 22-acre field

experiment assesses agrichemical input use, yields, weed dynamics, economic characteristics and soil functions of diversified and simpler (two-year) crop rotation systems. The diversified corn-soybean systems are three- and four-year rotations that include oats and organic matter amendments, such as manure. In 2008, the experiment added a comparison of genetically modified and non-GMO corn and soybeans.

Results of this study indicate that the diversified three- and four-year crop rotation systems produced high yields of corn and soybeans and suppressed weeds ef-

fectively, while receiving only a fraction of the synthetic nitrogen fertilizer and herbicides used for a conventionally managed corn-soybean rotation. Among the six rotation systems and technology package combinations evaluated during 2008-2012, the highest level of profitability was obtained from the 3-year corn-soybean-oat/red clover rotation that did not employ GM crops.

The study was funded as part of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture's long-running competitive grants program.

Check out our supporters:

[Farmer's Hen House](#)



Farmers Hen House is a family owned business that packages and sell organic eggs. The eggs are produced on family farms in area around Kalona, IA and Bloomfield, IA. Farmers Hen House eggs are sold across the Midwest and as far as Georgia and California.

The Organic Group:
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Researchers see added nutritional benefits in organic milk

A team led by a Washington State University researcher has found that organic milk contains significantly higher concentrations of heart-healthy fatty acids compared to milk from cows on conventionally managed dairy farms.

The study is the first large-scale, US-wide comparison of organic and conventional milk, testing nearly 400 samples of organic and conventional milk over an 18-month period. Con-

ventional milk had an average omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acid ratio of 5.8, more than twice that of organic milk's ratio of 2.3. The researchers say the far healthier ratio of fatty acids in organic milk is brought about by a greater reliance on pasture and forage-based feeds on organic dairy farms.

A large body of research has shown that grass and legume forages promote cow health and improve the fatty

acid profile in organic dairy products. Still, said WSU researcher Charles Benbrook, the study's lead author, "We were surprised by the magnitude of the nutritional quality differences we documented in this study."

After fruits and vegetables, dairy products are the largest category of the growing, \$29 billion organic food sector, according to the Organic Trade Association's 2013 Organic Industry Survey.

Organic farms support biodiversity, bees

On average, organic farms support 34% more plant, insect and animal species than conventional farms, say Oxford University scientists.

Researchers looked at data going back 30 years and found that this effect has remained stable over time and shows no signs of decreasing.

"Our study has shown that organic farming, as an alternative to conventional farming, can yield significant long-term benefits for biodiversity," said Sean Tuck of Oxford University's

Department of Plant Sciences, lead author of the study. "Organic methods could go some way towards halting the continued loss of diversity in industrialized nations."

For pollinators such as bees, the number of different species was 50% higher on organic farms, although it is important to note that the study only looked at "species richness."

"Species richness tells us how many different species there are but does not say anything about the total number of organisms," said Mr Tuck. "Broadly speaking, high species richness usually indicates a variety of spe-

cies with different functions.."

The study, published in February in the *Journal of Applied Ecology*, looked at data from 94 previous studies covering 184 farm sites dating back to 1989. The study was carried out by scientists at Oxford University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, and was partly funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

The impact of organic farming on total species richness varied significantly across the data, with the average gain in species richness varying between 26% and 43%.

Organic is the way forward for the future of family farming

With the launch of the United Nations International Year of Family Farming 2014, International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) is calling for concerted action to support and strengthen family farming. Smallholder farmers grow 70% of the world's food but 50% of the world's hungry are small farmers. Climate change induced weather extremities such as droughts, floods, de-

structive rains and winds threaten their farms and livelihoods. Organic agriculture and other agro-ecological models provide science-based solutions to these challenges and can bring prosperity to family and small farmers.

The United National Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reported on results from 114 organic agri-

culture projects in Africa covering 2 million hectares and 1.9 million farmers showing a 116% higher average crop yield on average for all African projects and 128 higher for the projects in East Africa. The UN agencies concluded that “organic agriculture can be more conducive to food security in Africa than most conventional production systems, and that it is more likely to be sustainable in the long term.”

US certified organic acreage increasing

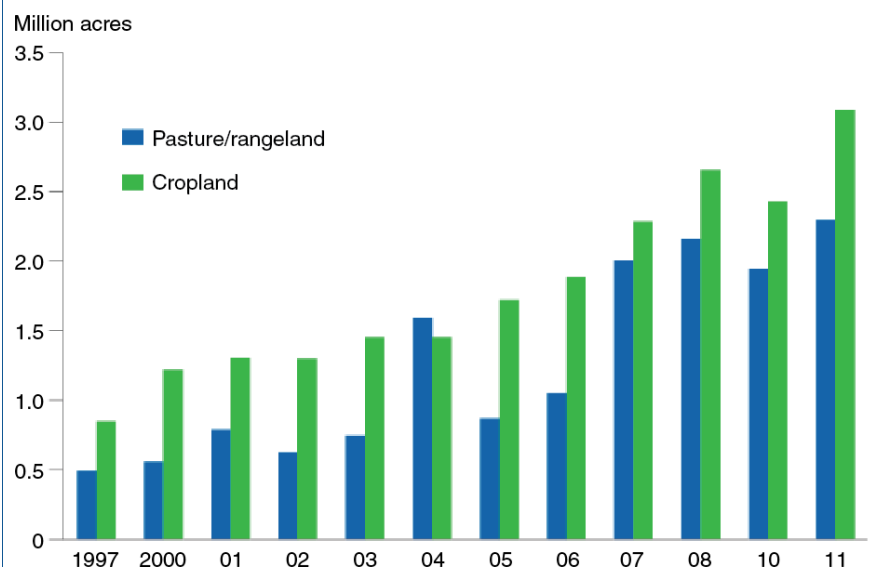
According to the US Department of Agriculture, the U.S. had 3.1 million acres of certified organic cropland in 2011 and 2.3 million acres of certified organic pasture and rangeland, continuing the long-term growth trend in this sector.

Certified cropland and pasture dipped between 2008 and 2010 as sluggish growth in consumer demand during the recession dampened the short-term outlook for organic producers. However, the growth in certified acreage of both cropland and pastureland has more than recovered those losses and has reestablished its upward trajectory. This chart appears in “[Growth Patterns in the U.S. Organic Industry](#)” in

the October 2013 *Amber Waves* and is based on data found in the ERS data product [Organic Production](#), updated September 2013.

Sales of organic products topped \$28 billion in 2012 and are projected to top \$35 billion in 2014.

Certified organic cropland and pasture, 1997-2011



Note: Data not collected in 2009.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, based on information from USDA-accredited State and private organic certifiers.

New campaign to highlight organic benefits, debunk misleading “natural claims”



A public education campaign was recently launched to highlight the benefits of organic food and to help consumers understand the difference between products labeled organic and those that are labeled as “natural.”

“Foods made with the use of toxic persistent pesticides and even genetically engineered ingredients are being labeled as natural,” said Gary Hirshberg, Chairman of Stonyfield Farm. “Only organic guarantees that food is produced

without the use of toxic persistent pesticides, hormones, antibiotics or genetically engineered ingredients. Only organic gives you complete piece of mind.”

The public education campaign will include videos and social media.

The videos, which can be viewed at: <http://www.onlyorganic.org/pretenders/>, help consumers understand the how the “natural” label can be used to confuse shoppers.

While the Food and Drug Administration and USDA discourage companies from including “natural” claims on processed foods containing synthetic or artificial ingredients, there is no official definition of

“natural” and little enforcement of misleading claims.

The public education campaign is being launched by Organic Voices, a non-profit organization, and is supported by organic companies and other companies, including AllergyKids, Annie’s, Earthbound, Happy Family, INFRA, Late July, Nature’s Path, NCGA, Organic Valley, Rudi’s, and Stonyfield.

A recent survey found that consumers commonly believe that “natural” foods do not contain artificial ingredients.

Do you support what we are doing? Join us by becoming a member today!

Want to do get involved?

Email Amber at iowaorganic@gmail.com

Thanks to Ken Roseboro of the [Organic and Non-GMO Report](#) for compiling articles for this newsletter.

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Which Describes you:

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Retailer/wholesaler
Consumer
Other _____

About the IOA

The Iowa Organic Association is a non-profit group of like-minded individuals, organizations, companies and associations dedicated to the advancement of Iowa's organic production and industry. The IOA has come together to serve as an umbrella association whose goal is to represent all facets and concerns of Iowa's organic farmers, wholesalers, retailers, processors, handlers, educators, researchers, consumers and advocates.

2014 Farm Bill a victory for organic farming

The organic food business has grown dramatically in recent years, and the US Senate's recent passage of the 2014 Farm Bill validates that growth. "The Farm Bill ... demonstrates that the organic sector is an important part of US agriculture," said Laura Batcha, CEO and Executive Director of the Organic Trade Association.

If signed into law,

the bill will provide significant funding increases for the Organic Extension and Research Initiative (OREI), the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program, the National Organic Program (NOP) and the Organic Data Initiative (ODI).

Funding for OREI is now \$20 million annually for five years, 28% higher than the 2008 Farm Bill. The bill also includes one-

time appropriations of \$5 million for both the NOP and ODI which will enable USDA to better serve certified operations.

On the down side, the bill cuts billions from conservation programs that help farmers address production challenges and protect natural resources and the environment.

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Corn farmers turning to lucrative vegetable and fruit markets

A number of factors—including the potential to significantly increase income—are driving some Midwestern farmers to begin growing produce other than just field corn.

John D. Jackson, a Southern Illinois farmer, recently added 48 apple trees on 10 of his 700 acres—and he's planning on adding blackberries and maybe other vegetables. Field corn, used for ethanol and cattle feed, will net \$284 per acre (just \$34 on rented land) after expenses. But an apple orchard can bring in \$2000 per acre. If plastic plant covers such as high tunnels are used, a veggie operation can bring in over \$100,000.

"The children of corn farmers are coming back to the farm, and carving out five or ten acres to grow fruits and vegetables," said Craig A. Chase, the local food and farm coordinator at Iowa State University. "They can easily make \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year."

Classes are being held across Illinois to teach farmers how to grow produce. The Department of Agriculture, and organizations such as School Food Focus, are helping coordinate farmers' efforts to expand regional food systems.

(Source: *The New York Times*)