

IOWA ORGANIC  
ASSOCIATION

SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:

- Organic grain and livestock outlook meetings to be held in January and February
- ISU names microbiologist to lead Leopold Center
- Long-running experiment shows organic farming more profitable than conventional
- OFRF report shows organic farming is good for health and jobs
- Seventy-eight percent of US families say they purchase organic foods
- Organic Grain Prices

# Iowa Organic Association

## Newsletter

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### Greetings IOA Members and Organic Enthusiasts!

Our first-in-the-nation Iowa caucuses have come and gone from our fine state leaving us to contemplate our role as citizens and as an organization. Who will serve as a voice for organic farmers in Iowa? The IOA board and I have been wrestling with this question. IOA was offered a scholarship for one of our members to attend an Organic Advocacy Training Session in September of 2011 hosted by the Organic Farming Research Foundation. Ten like-minded individuals, who actively advocate to meet the needs of organic farmers within their regions, met in Washington D.C. to acquire skills, tools and connections to aid our work within our com-

munities and with our policy makers.

David Hunt, Senior Faculty Trainer from Midwest Academy led us through the fundamentals of organizing, developing effective strategies for tactical development and peer recruiting, analyzing strengths and weaknesses of the issues and strengths and weaknesses of decision makers. We also learned how to refine an area of concern to specific issues and potential solutions. All of the participants emerged with new skills that we used during hill visits. I spoke with Jared Hill, Agriculture Staffer for Senator Tom Harken and Representative Leonard Boswell as well as his Agriculture Staffer Katy Sid-

dall. IOA concerns were well received but all the legislators we spoke to were adamant about how uncertain the future of agricultural policy is at this time. We have a new Farm Bill in 2012 and a potential opportunity to influence it. What are your needs as an organic farmer, processor or retailer for the new farm bill? Let us know what you think.

Best Regards

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## Organic grain and livestock outlook meetings to be held in January and February

In January the Iowa Organic Association will again host meetings on the outlook for organic grains and livestock for 2012.

The meetings aimed to give Iowa's organic farmers an overview of the demand for organic grains and livestock and to inform them about opportunities in those areas. This year's meetings will provide an overview of the organic industry for 2012 and discuss Farm Service Agency and Natural Resource Conservation Service programs for or-

ganic farmers as well as National Organic Standards Board actions.

Time and dates for the meetings are listed below:

- Waukon, IA (Farmers and Merchants Savings Bank 201 West Main) Thursday January 19, 7 pm
- Fairfield, IA (Festival Hall, 2nd floor of Argiro Student Center, Maharishi University of Management, Hwy 1 and Robert Keith Wallace Drive) Saturday January 21, 2 pm

- Atlantic, IA (Allen house, 1406 E 19th St.) Friday, February 3, 2 pm

- Emmetsburg, IA (New Shoots Farm, 1021 Broadway

Thursday February 16, 2 pm

Last year's meetings were very informative. We hope to see you there!

For more information call Beth Larabee at 515-291-5457 or email [blarabee100@gmail.com](mailto:blarabee100@gmail.com).

## Iowa State Fair

The Iowa Organic Association's booth was a big hit at the Iowa State Fair last August with around 60,000 people visiting the booth to ask and learn about organic foods.

Thanks to all volunteers who helped make our booth a big success!



**IOA executive director Beth Larabee and board member Dave Murphy work the IOA booth at the 2011 Iowa State fair.**

# 11th annual Iowa Organic Conference



**Joe Bennett of Cascadian Farms speaks at the Iowa Organic Conference**

The 11th annual Iowa Organic Conference was held in November at Iowa State University. Total conference attendance was 210, which was good given the difficult economic times.

Keynote speaker was Joe Bennett, organic agriculture manager at Cascadian Farms/Small Planet Foods. Bennett discussed how his company represents a prime example of how the demand for organic foods in the US propelled a company from a small,

backyard operation to a well-recognized food processor and national distributor, while remaining true to their original organic principles of growing and sourcing crops free of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers.

In addition, there were 12 workshop sessions, and a tradeshow with 25 educational and industry exhibits.

IOA held a session with executive director Beth Larabee discussing her recent trip to Washington DC to advo-

cate for organic agriculture with Iowa's representatives. IOA board member, Dr. Joe Ward, led a discussion on proposed poultry rules under consideration by the National Organic Standards. Ken Roseboro, also an IOA board member, updated members on GMO threats to organic agriculture. IOA member and advisor Dr. Margaret Smith provided information on recovering check off money paid by organic farmers.

"Farmers, both conventional and organic, had many challenges in 2011," said Kathleen Delate, Iowa State professor of agronomy and horticulture and conference organizer. "The cold, wet spring delayed growth and the dry periods in the middle of the season affected corn pollination and overall crop production; but prices are high and organic promises an excellent return to management, with organic corn selling for \$12 a bushel and food-grade organic soybeans reaching \$22 a bushel. The demand for organic foods has not ceased, even during the recession."

## Organic Research

### ISU names microbiologist to lead Leopold Center

A microbiologist with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has been named the next director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University.

Mark Rasmussen, supervisory microbiologist and director of the Division of Animal and Food Microbiology at the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine in Laurel, Maryland, will begin work no later than June 1.

At the FDA, Rasmussen has provided

technical guidance and research support for regulatory decisions on drugs, feed additives and contaminants in animal feeds. He also worked 18 years as a scientist and research leader at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Disease Center in Ames, including service as a collaborating faculty member in Iowa State's animal science and biomedical sciences departments. He has held research positions in private companies and has farmed full-time in Nebraska.

Rasmussen was raised on a farm in northeastern Nebraska. He earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture and a master's degree in animal science from the University of Nebraska, a Ph.D. in dairy science from the University of Illinois and a master of business administration degree from Iowa State University.

*Long-running experiment shows organic farming more profitable than conventional*

Organic crop systems can provide similar yields and much higher economic returns than a conventional corn-soybean rotation, according to thirteen years of data from a side-by-side comparison at Iowa State University's Neely-Kinyon Research and Demonstration Farm.

The Long-Term Agroecological Research Experiment (LTAR) began in 1998 with support from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. The LTAR is one of the longest running replicated comparisons in the country. Kathleen Delate, professor in ISU Agronomy and Horticulture, leads the project.

The LTAR experiment shows

that organic crops can remain competitive with conventional crops even during the three-year transition. Averaged over 13 years, yields of organic corn, soybean and oats have been equivalent to or slightly greater than their conventional counterparts. Likewise, a 12-year average for alfalfa and an 8-year average for winter wheat also show no significant difference between organic yields and the Adair County average.

Organic crops fetch a premium price on the market and eliminate the need for expensive inputs like herbicides and synthetic fertilizers. As a result, they are far more profitable than conventional crops. On average, organic systems re-

turn roughly \$200 per acre more than conventional crops.

In addition to its profitability, organic agriculture helps build healthy soils.

LTAR's findings concur with recently published results from the Rodale Institute's 30-year Farming Systems Trial in Pennsylvania. The Rodale Institute also concluded that organic systems can provide similar yields and greater profits. In addition, they calculated that organic crops required 45 percent less energy, and contributed significantly less to greenhouse gas emissions. Organic corn proved especially profitable during drought years, when its yields jumped up to 31 percent higher than conventional.

*Organic farming superior to conventional, says 30-year Rodale study*

In recently released findings of its rigorous 30-year side-by-side comparison of organic and conventional farming practices, the Rodale Institute concluded that organic methods are superior. The study looked at soil quality, productivity, energy, and economics as it surveyed the transition from conventional to organic.

Results show that: organic yields match or surpass conventional yields; organic yields outperform in drought years; organic systems build rather than deplete soil organic matter; they are more profitable than conventional; and organic farming uses 45% less energy. In addition, conventional sys-

tems produce 40% more greenhouse gases.

"The Farming Systems Trial shows that organic farming is the healthiest and safest way to feed the world, provide much-needed jobs, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and protect precious natural resources," said Mark Smallwood, executive director of Rodale Institute.

"The Farming Systems Trial clearly documents in a replicated, scientific fashion, that many of the current myths are not true. Organic agriculture does not result in the grower losing money, does not result in lower yields, or more expensive

management practices," says Dr. Elaine Ingham, chief scientist at Rodale.

The trial will continue, with a new focus on nutrition and human health. "We have shown that organic can feed the world," Smallwood said. "Now it is time to take on the matter of feeding the world well."



# Poultry farms that go organic have fewer drug-resistant bacteria

Poultry farms that have adopted organic practices and ceased using antibiotics have significantly lower levels of drug-resistant enterococci bacteria that can potentially spread to humans, according to a groundbreaking new study led by a researcher in the University of Maryland's School of Public Health.

The study, published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* (online August 10, 2011), is the first to demonstrate lower levels of drug-resistant bacteria on newly organic farms in the United States and suggests that removing antibiotic use from large-scale US poultry farms can result in immediate and significant reductions

in antibiotic resistance for some bacteria.

"We initially thought we would see some differences in on-farm levels of antibiotic-resistant enterococci when poultry farms transitioned to organic practices. But we were surprised to see that the differences were so significant across several different classes of antibiotics even in the very first flock of birds that was produced after the transition to organic standards," explained Amy R. Sapkota, an assistant professor with the Maryland Institute for Applied Environmental Health. "It is very encouraging"

Sapkota and her team, which

included R. Michael Hulet (Pennsylvania State University), Guangyu Zhang, Sam Joseph and Erinna Kinney (University of Maryland), and Kellogg J. Schwab (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health), investigated the impact of removing antibiotics from US poultry farms by studying 10 conventional and 10 newly organic large-scale poultry houses in the mid-Atlantic region. They tested for the presence of enterococci bacteria in poultry litter, feed, and water, and tested its resistance to 17 common antimicrobials.

While all farms tested positive for the presence of enterococci in poultry litter, feed, and water

as expected, the newly organic farms were characterized by a significantly lower prevalence of antibiotic-resistant enterococci. For example, 67 percent of *Enterococcus faecalis* recovered from conventional poultry farms were resistant to erythromycin, while 18 percent of *Enterococcus faecalis* from newly organic poultry farms were resistant to this antibiotic.

Sapkota said she expects that reductions in drug-resistant bacteria on US farms that "go organic" are likely to be more dramatic over time as reservoirs of resistant bacteria in the farm environment diminish.

## OFRF report shows organic farming is good for health and jobs

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) recently unveiled a report, "Organic Farming for Health and Prosperity," documenting extensive scientific support for the conclusion that organic farming practices are overwhelmingly beneficial for consumers, farmers, the economy, and the environment. Further, it highlights the urgent need for more research to address an expanding market.

Citing many published papers, the report details the multiple benefits of organic farming. Human health benefits because organic farming avoids the use of toxic pesticides. Organic farming continues to grow and add jobs despite the recession. Research has shown that organic farming is profitable. Organic farming improves soil and water quality, enhances biodiversity, and slows climate change.

"Our data will provide even more impetus for Congress to advance organic farming initiatives in the upcoming 2012 Farm Bill and beyond," said Maureen Wilmot, OFRF Executive Director. "To date, only modest public resources have been directed toward funding and support of programs for organic farming. We would like to see that change immediately."

## Consumer attitudes

More than half  
of Americans  
prefer organic  
foods over  
conventional

Fear of toxins, support of local markets at the heart of consumer sentiment

When given a choice, American consumers prefer to purchase organic foods, according to the Thomson Reuters-National Public Radio Health Poll.

In the survey, 58% of Americans say they choose organic over conventionally produced foods when they have the opportunity,

a number that spikes higher among both young and highly educated respondents. Sixty-three percent of respondents under the age of 35 prefer organic foods, as do 64% of those with a bachelor's degree or more.

Among those who prefer organic foods, 36% said they do so to support local farmer's markets and 34% said they wanted to avoid exposure to toxins in

non-organic foods.

Complete survey results are available at: [http://www.factsforhealthcare.com/pressroom/NPR\\_report\\_OrganicFoods.pdf](http://www.factsforhealthcare.com/pressroom/NPR_report_OrganicFoods.pdf)

## Seventy-eight percent of US families say they purchase organic foods

Seventy eight percent—more US families than ever before—say they are choosing organic foods, according to a study published recently by the Organic Trade Association (OTA).

“In a time when the severity of the economy means making tough choices, it is extremely encouraging to see consumers vote with their values by including quality organic products in their shopping carts,” said Christine Bushway, OTA’s

Executive Director and CEO. The finding is one of many contained in OTA’s newly released 2011 U.S. Families’ Organic Attitudes and Beliefs Study. “It’s clear that with more than three-quarters of U.S. families choosing organic, this has moved way beyond a niche market,” Bushway added.

According to the study, four in ten families indicate they are buying more organic products than they were a year ago. The findings are in

line with those in OTA’s 2011 Organic Industry Survey, which revealed that the U.S. organic industry grew at a rate of nearly eight percent in 2010. Fueled by consumer choice and demand, the organic sector is one of the few components of the U.S. economy that continues to add jobs.

**According to the study, four in ten families indicate they are buying more organic products than they were a year ago.**

## Organic News

### Gene-blocking non-GMO corn varieties available for 2012 planting

New corn hybrids containing a trait that allows the plant to block pollen from neighboring genetically modified corn are available for farmers planting non-GMO and organic corn this year.

Kelley, Iowa-based Blue River Hybrids plans to offer three corn varieties, 47PM37cnv, 58PM36cnv, and 71PM50cnv, which contain the PuraMaize gene-blocking trait.

PuraMaize is a natural gene blocking system which blocks fertilization from GM pollen by favoring its own PuraMaize pollen.

With increasing acreage of GM corn in the US, organic and non-GMO farmers face increasing challenges keeping their corn pure from GM pollen. GMO contamination can cause farmers

to lose premium prices paid for organic and non-GMO corn.

Blue River Hybrids has been field testing the PuraMaize system for the past four years, says company president Maury Johnson. Field trials show that PuraMaize eliminates GMO contamination, according to company sales literature.

However Johnson cautions PuraMaize is not a silver bullet. “This is a tool for the non-GMO or organic grower to use. But there is other things farmers will need to do (to reduce contamination), such as cleaning out combines and trucks.”

One of the challenges was to develop PuraMaize hybrids that also produce good



**New PuraMaize corn hybrids can block GMO pollen**

yields for farmers. “It’s one thing to do the breeding work but you also need good hybrids that will perform for farmers,” Johnson says.

Blue River Hybrids will have 1500 to 1800 bags of PuraMaize seed available for sale.

For more information, call 800-370-7979 or email [info@blueriverorganicseed.com](mailto:info@blueriverorganicseed.com).

## Minnesota court rules that pesticide drift is trespassing

After chemical drift from pesticides contaminated Oluf Johnson’s 12,000-acre organic farm on five separate occasions, the Johnsons can now sue for damages, says the Appeals Court in Minnesota.

The court ruled in late July that allowing dangerous chemicals to cross property lines amounts to trespassing, affording a legal avenue for any victims of contamination from spraying.

The ruling also applies to homeowners who have experienced damage to

their property from a neighbor’s spraying of Roundup, for example.

The pesticide company responsible for the repeated spraying, Paynesville Farmers Union Cooperative Oil Co., caused great detriment each time, the Johnsons had to burn fields, or plow under crops, or remove contaminated fields from production.

In 2009, they sued for negligence and trespassing, but the district court rejected the suit, claiming that the state didn’t recognize trespassing “by

particulate matter.”

The recent ruling puts the decision “in line with how other jurisdictions have dealt with this,” said Alexandra Klass, a professor of environmental law at the University of Minnesota. “The vast majority of jurisdictions find that pesticide drift is a trespass.”

In fact, an organic farmer in California recently won \$1 million in damages when pesticide drift destroyed his organic herbs.

(Source: Minneapolis Star Tribune)

## Organic Grain Prices

## Upper Midwest Monthly and Quarterly Organic Prices

	Nov 11	Oct 11	Nov 10	3rd Qtr 2011
Feed Grade Corn	11.24	11.22	5.89	12.40
Food Grade Soybeans		22.45		20.41
Feed Grade Soybeans	19.69	19.28	16.36	19.05
Soybean Meal (ton)	821.25	833.08		802.20
Feed Grade Oats	5.50			4.74
Feed Grade Barley	8.71	5.11		8.28
Food Grade Brown Flax	25.34	26.11		26.49
Food Grade Golden Flax		26.29		
Food Grade Wheat (HRS)	15.00	12.84		13.66
Feed Grade Wheat (HRS)		11.31		
Feed Grade Wheat (SRW)	9.05	8.18		8.92
Food Grade Wheat (HRW)		12.41		12.00
Feed Grade Wheat (HRW)	9.48	9.17		8.25
Food Grade Wheat (HWW)		15.81		
Feed Grade Rye				8.41
Feed Grade Peas	11.12			11.51

## Eastern Cornbelt Monthly and Quarterly Organic Prices

	Nov 11	Oct 11	Nov 10	3rd Qtr 2011
Food Grade Corn			6.84	
Feed Grade Corn	12.12	11.90	6.43	12.64
Food Grade Soybeans	23.15	22.02	21.26	20.34
Feed Grade Soybeans	20.22	19.64	16.53	19.12
Roasted Soybeans (ton)	968.00			
Soybean Meal (ton)	850.00	835.00	737.50	
Feed Grade Oats	5.83	5.50	2.88	4.35
Feed Grade Barley	10.00		4.75	8.66
Food Grade Brown Flax	27.95			26.75
Feed Grade Brown Flax		26.50		
Feed Grade Golden Flax		29.50		
Food Grade Wheat (SRW)	9.99	10.00		
Feed Grade Wheat (SRW)	8.62	8.78	6.49	9.10
Food Grade Wheat (HRW)		11.50		
Feed Grade Wheat (HRW)		9.51		8.58
Food Grade Wheat (SWW)		11.50		11.50
Food Grade Wheat (HWW)		12.25		
Feed Grade Rye				7.50

(Source: US Department of Agriculture)



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