



*Iowa Organic Association Box 185 Ames, IA 50010 [www.iowaorganic.org](http://www.iowaorganic.org)*

FALL 2014

## IOA HELPS EDUCATE PEOPLE ABOUT ORGANIC AT THE IOWA STATE FAIR

For the 7th year in a row, the Iowa Organic Association helped introduce organic food and farming to visitors at the Iowa State Fair this past August. Thousands of people stopped by IOA's large booth on the second floor of the Agriculture Building.

Our booth volunteers handed out lots of literature about organic food and farming as well as 1000 packets of seed from Seed Savers Exchange and 6500 organic lollipops!

IOA president Roger Lansink said that people who stopped by the booth wanted to know more about organics.

"The attitudes of people coming by our booth changed since the first time we were at the State Fair in 2008," Lansink

said. "People are more receptive to organics. We also had a lot of people who stopped by the booth to thank us for what we are doing with organics."

IOA plans to have an even bigger booth at the State Fair next year and to attract more corporate participation.

IOA would like to thank our corporate sponsors: Grain Millers, Organic Valley, and Farmers Hen House for their participation. Thanks also to booth volunteers from Practical Farmers of Iowa, the National Center for Appropriate Technology, and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. We want to thank all our great IOA volunteers who worked in the booth over the 10 days of the fair. ■



**IOA board member Scott Ausborn works in IOA's booth at the Iowa State Fair.**

## 2014 IOWA ORGANIC CONFERENCE—NOVEMBER 16-17

The 14th Annual Iowa Organic Conference will be held November 16–17 at the University of Iowa Memorial Union in Iowa City.

The conference, titled "Re-kindling the Light Within: The Art and Science of Organic Farming," will feature a keynote address by Mary Berry,

Executive Director of the Berry Center, New Castle, Kentucky. Mary Berry is the daughter of Wendell Berry, novelist, poet, environmental activist, cultural critic, and farmer. She speaks all over the country as a proponent of agriculture of the middle, in defense of small farmers, and in the hope of restoring a culture that has

been lost in rural America.

The conference will also feature educational sessions on a wide range of topics related to organic agriculture. These include organic dairy, crop insurance, grain production, weed management, local organic food production, and others.

A highlight of the conference

will be an all-organic lunch, featuring local/regional organic produce, meat and dairy products transformed into a gourmet meal by the UI Dining Services chef, Barry Greenberg and his staff.

**To register, go to [www.signmeup.com/102901](http://www.signmeup.com/102901).** ■

## Iowa Organic Association coordinates new study of organic small grain profitability

By Margaret Smith, Ph.D.,  
Value Added Agriculture Extension  
Program, Iowa State University

Small grains—oats, wheat, barley and rye—are critical components of organic grain crop rotations for biodiversity, breaking disease cycles, and soil quality and structure. Unfortunately, little or no profit from small grains in Midwestern organic crop rotations limits organic farm income, the supply of organic small grains for a growing market, and the ability to attract new farmers to an organic farming.

The Iowa Organic Association, in collaboration with Iowa State University, began a two and a half year study in 2014 to investigate the constraints to profitability of organic oats and winter wheat in Iowa.

David Weisberger, graduate student in Agronomy and Sustainable Agriculture has joined Iowa State University Drs. Mary Wiedenhoft, Agronomy and Margaret Smith, Value Added Agriculture, to measure yield components, soil fertility status, and weed populations on certified organic farms throughout the state. David will use this field data, information from farmer surveys of their practices, such as crop rotation, fertility and machinery use and harvest timing and methods, and information from farmer focus groups to design on-farm trials. Ten on-farm field trials, conducted on organic farms in the next two years, will help answer farmers' questions and production issues about how to increase yield and profits of these small grains..

Results of both segments of the study will be used to update organic oat and winter wheat production recommendations in our region. The study is funded by the Ceres Foundation, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. ■

## ISU research shows that prairie strips can reduce soil and nutrient loss, improve water quality, increase biodiversity

*ISU STRIPS team encouraging new conservation practice around the state*

**A** RESEARCH project at Iowa State University is encouraging the state's farmers to plant native prairie strips on their farms as a way to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and provide habitat for native species—all while not impacting crop yields.

A new publication "Small Changes, Big Impacts: Prairie Conservation Strips" takes into account Iowa's historic land use changes to explain why the new conservation practice is important for the future of agriculture in the state, says Mary Harris, an Iowa State adjunct assistant professor and biodiversity specialist for STRIPS (Science-based Trials of Row-crops Integrated with Prairie Strips).

She explains, "Iowa's natural resources are crucial to an agriculture-based economy, and watershed pollution from topsoil erosion and nutrient runoff are both local and national concerns. Prairie strips enhance modern agriculture so that the land meets production and conservation needs at the same time."

This practice takes small patches of prairie and interlaces them into row crop fields.

The STRIPS team's innovative research project shows that strategically converting just 10 percent of a crop field into perennial prairie can reduce offsite sediment export by 95 percent, phosphorus loss by 90 percent and nitrogen loss by almost 85 percent. Additionally, the prairie patches create vital habitat for native plants, pollinators and birds. The prairie is planted along the contour of a slope, at the drainage site for a field's watershed, or other areas where crop yield already is low.

The upshot is that without affecting yield on the remaining 90 percent of a field, prairie strips improve the condition of waterways, cut back soil and nutrient loss, and revitalize Iowa's natural heritage by providing habitat for native species—including natural predators of crop pests.

STRIPS field tests are being planted at 11 sites around Iowa with another nine possible sites in the works.

For more information visit <http://www.nrem.iastate.edu/research/STRIPS/>. ■



# ORGANIC RICE IN IOWA?

## Actor Jim Carrey plants rice at Iowa university to promote System of Rice Intensification



**Actor Jim Carrey and Dr. Appachanda Thimmaiah plant SRI rice at Maharishi University of Management's Sustainable Living Center**

Iowa is most known for its corn and soybeans, but actor Jim Carrey was in the state recently to promote

rice, in particular a growing method called the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). In May, Carrey was the

commencement speaker at Maharishi University of Management, based in Fairfield, IA. While there, Carrey visited the school's Sustainable Living Center where he helped plant 100 SRI seeds in a test plot.

Carrey's non-profit Better U Foundation addresses global food security by supporting SRI, an innovative, sustainable method for growing rice that increases yields and uses less water, inputs, and seeds, while helping farmers to earn a better living.

According to the Better U Foundation, SRI produces over 50-150 percent more yield while using 50 percent

less water, 90 percent less seed and no fertilizer or pesticides.

US-based Lotus Foods sells organic rice from farmers practicing SRI.

According to Dr. Appachanda Thimmaiah, associate professor in MUM's Sustainable Living program, the SRI rice plants are flourishing in the Iowa summer.

Dr. Thimmaiah plans to harvest the rice and cut back the plants to see if it is feasible to grow rice in Iowa.

Dr. Thimmaiah plans to collaborate with the Better U Foundation on SRI programs in the future. ■

## IOA is hiring!

The Iowa Organic Association (IOA) is currently seeking a qualified candidate for Executive Director (ED) to provide leadership in developing and implementing statewide programming to address the needs of organic producers, processors and consumers in Iowa. Responsibilities will include: administering programs to support long-term change in organic food and agriculture with farmers and local, state

and regional organizations, securing funding through grant writing and membership recruitment, and representing IOA regionally and nationally. The ED will conduct all activities related to daily operation of IOA and will also work with other non-profit organizations and local businesses. The ED must have access to a fully functional business or home office, and related insurance. The successful candidate will

have excellent verbal and written communications skills, the ability to work independently, will exercise a high level of attention to detail and will be able to quickly identify and solve problems.

This contract position requires about 10 hours per week at \$15.00 per hour.

Candidates must have a bachelor's or master's degree. Experience is preferred with non-profit organization(s), or-

ganic agriculture, sustainable agriculture, grant writing, and project management.

There is an opportunity and expectation to grow this position.

Send letter of application and resume before November 26, 2014, to Roger Lansink, president of the Board, at email: ral@netins.net or by mail at Iowa Organic Association, P.O. Box 185 Ames, IA., 50010 ■



## USDA Organic News

### Farm Bill funding available to organic producers and handlers

**T**he US Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced that approximately \$13 million in Farm Bill funding is now available for organic certification cost-share assistance, making certification more accessible than ever for small certified producers and handlers.

The certification assistance is distributed through two programs within the Agricultural Marketing Service. Through the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program, \$11.5 million is available to all 50 states, the District of

Columbia, and five U.S. Territories. Through the Agricultural Management Assistance Organic Certification Cost-Share Program, an additional \$1.5 million is available to organic operations in Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

These programs provide cost-share assistance through participating states to USDA certified organic producers and handlers for certification-related expenses they incur from October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014. Payments cover up to 75 percent of an individual producer's or handler's certification costs, up to a maximum of \$750 per certification. To receive cost-share assistance, organic producers and handlers should contact their state agencies.

State contact information can be found on the NOP Cost Share Website, [www.ams.usda.gov/NOPCost-Sharing](http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOPCost-Sharing). ■

### USDA invests \$52 million in organic and local food economies

**R**eflecting an appropriate (if delayed) response to the boom in farmers markets and organic food sales since the last farm bill of 2008, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced \$52 million in grant support for the organic industry and local and regional food systems.

"Local and regional food systems are one of the pillars of our efforts to revitalize rural economies," Vilsack said. "Consumers are increasingly demanding more local and organic options."

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Services was awarded \$27 million for the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and Local Food Marketing Promotion Program (LFPP), to promote food hubs, local processors, and aggregation businesses. More than \$19 million will go to the Organic Research and Extension Initiative to help market high-quality organic

products. Community Food Projects (CFP) will use its \$4.8 million to promote food access for low-income families and individuals.

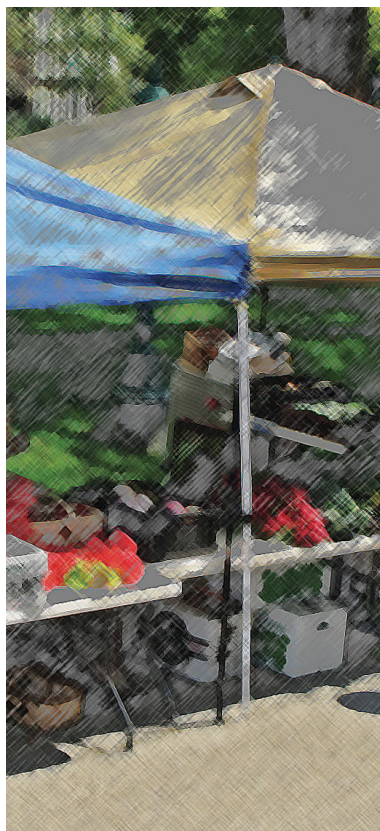


According to Willy Blackmore of *TakePart*, larger certified growers may be better positioned to take advantage of the federal money. "Small growers are limited to selling at farmers markets or maybe to ...nearby restaurants," he wrote. Although the funding is a positive shift, \$44.4 billion will go to commodity programs and \$89.8 billion to crop insurance subsidies for industrial agriculture. ■

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*"Consumers are increasingly demanding more local and organic options."*

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## Research News

## CONCLUSIVE STUDY FINDS BIG NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS FOR ORGANIC

A major new study from the United Kingdom finds conclusive evidence that organic crops, and the food made from them, are nutritionally superior to their conventional counterparts, corrects many of the shortcomings of earlier studies and should put to rest any doubts about the benefits of organic, said the lead scientist of The Organic Center in responding to the landmark study.

"This is a ground-breaking study," said Dr. Jessica Shade, director of science Programs for The Organic Center (TOC).

"This important research should help greatly to dispel consumer confusion about the benefits of organic."

"The nutritional differences between conventional and organic crops have always been a much debated topic," said Shade. "This significant study reevaluates the issue from a more inclusive, statistically accurate standpoint and strongly shows that organic fruits and vegetables have definite health benefits to conventionally grown products."

Analyzing 343 studies in what was the largest research effort of its kind,

an international team of experts led by Newcastle University found that organic crops and crop-based foods are up to 60 percent higher in a number of key antioxidants than conventionally grown crops, showed that pesticide residues are found much more frequently in conventional foods, and revealed significantly lower levels of a toxic heavy metal in organic crops. The report was published in the July 15 issue of the prestigious *British Journal of Nutrition*. ■

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*"This important research should help greatly to dispel consumer confusion about the benefits of organic." — Dr. Jessica Shade*

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## ORGANIC CENTER LAUNCHES MAJOR RESEARCH EFFORT TO FIGHT CITRUS GREENING

A devastating bacterial disease known as citrus greening is now threatening the livelihood of America's citrus growers and the healthy diets of millions.

To answer that threat, The Organic Center has kicked off a major multi-year study and a \$310,000 fundraising campaign to find organic solutions to ward off citrus greening and help organic

citrus growers fight the deadly disease without resorting to dangerous chemicals or genetic engineering.

A \$45,000 grant from the UNFI Foundation has laid the foundation for the drive. The UNFI Foundation is concerned that the bulk of research thus far to control citrus greening disease, or Huanglongbing (HLB), has focused on conventional strategies that have had

only limited success in the short-term, and are not allowed—and thus not even an option—for the organic citrus growers struggling with the disease.

The Organic Center is inviting individuals to help the effort by donations through crowdfunding at <http://www.rkthb.co/44990>. ■



## Weed blaster shows promise for reducing weeds without herbicides

If Frank Forcella's invention keeps working, herbicides might become a thing of the past.

The USDA research agronomist has been blasting weeds in Minnesota with corncob grit, getting season-long weed control of about 80 to 90 percent—not perfect, Forcella said, but numbers most organic farmers would be happy with. “It obliterates the weed, especially if it’s a small broad-leaved weed like Lamb’s

quarters or pigweed,” he said. The taller, thicker corn plants can handle the blast.

An air compressor mounted on a tractor blasts the weeds four rows at a time, from eight nozzles. Although the technology is about five times the cost of herbicides, it could make sense for higher-value crops such as fruits and vegetables. One application reduced weed density for a tomato crop by 75 percent.

Organic farmers see another exciting

prospect—simultaneously nourishing the crops while killing weeds, using granular fertilizers such as corn gluten and soymeal in “weed and feed” treatments. For only \$2000 to \$3000, a farmer can create his own blasting kit.

“It’s not anything that’s wide-scale yet for sure, but we’re hoping,” Forcella said. (Source: *Minneapolis Star Tribune*) ■

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*“It obliterates the weed, especially if it’s a small broad-leaved weed like Lamb’s quarters or pigweed.”—Frank Forcella*

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## Consumer Attitudes

### Forty-Five percent of Americans seek out organic foods

A little less than half of Americans, 45 percent, actively try to include organic foods in their diets, according to a new Gallup poll.

This is the first year Gallup has asked about eating organic foods in its annual Consumption Habits survey. Forty-five percent actively try to include organic foods, putting such foods in the middle of the list of 12 others measured—trailing fruits and vegetables by a wide margin, but well ahead of fat, soda, and

sugar. Meanwhile, 38 percent say they “don’t think either way” about organic foods and 15 percent say they actively avoid them.

There are more organic buyers in the West (54 percent) and fewest in the East (39%).

Americans who live in a big or small city are more likely to eat organic foods than those who describe their location as a town or rural area, 50 percent versus 37 percent respectively, while those who

live in suburban areas fall between these two groups.

More than half of 18- to 29-year-old Americans actively try to include organic foods in their diets, compared with one-third of Americans who are 65 and older.

In analyzing the survey findings, Gallup stated, “Organic food could soon become more easily accessible and more affordable, and this in turn could encourage more Americans to include it in their diets.” ■



### More parents choosing organic for their kids, says new study

In households across the US, parents are in growing agreement that organic food is the most healthy choice for the meals they are in charge of, shows a new study by the Organic Trade Association (OTA).

OTA’s *U.S. Families’ Organic Attitudes*

& Beliefs 2014 Tracking Study, a survey of more than 1,200 households in the United States with at least one child under 18, found that eight out of ten American families have bought organic products one or more times in the past two years. In nearly half of those families,

*Con’t*

concern about their children's health is a driving force behind that decision.

Ninety percent of parents report that they choose organic food products for their children at least "sometimes," with

almost a quarter of those parents saying they always buy organic.

Moms and dads purchasing baby food are even more committed to organic; more than a third of those parents say

they always choose organic for their infant or toddler. Meanwhile, 74 percent of daycares throughout the country now offer organic options for the children they serve. ■

## Market News

### Rodale Institute and St. Luke's University Health Network partner to provide organic options to patients, staff and visitors

St. Luke's Anderson Campus, based in Bethlehem Township, Pennsylvania, is one of the few hospitals in the nation to offer patients organic produce grown at an organic farm located on the hospital campus. In addition, organic produce is now available to the employees, visitors and caregivers to offer healthy options for health and healing through the hospital's food services vendor, Sodexo Inc.

The hospital teamed up with the Rodale Institute on the organic produce project. "Working with the Rodale Institute to develop an organic, working farm onsite will allow St. Luke's to continue providing patients with a holistic health care experience that creates a positive atmosphere for health

and healing," said Ed Nawrocki, president, St. Luke's Anderson Campus. "By providing patients with locally-grown organic produce, St. Luke's is showing a commitment to the environment and promoting the health of its patients and the community."

The farm at St. Luke's will



allow the network to raise community awareness about the importance of healthy eating and the impact of food choices on overall health and well-being.

Rodale Institute has developed a 5-acre tract into a produce farm on the 500-acre St. Luke's Anderson Campus.

St. Luke's Rodale Institute Organic Farm will offer organically grown local produce that will be distributed to all six St. Luke's hospitals to be used in daily food preparation by Sodexo Inc. for patients, as well as offered in the hospital cafeterias for staff and visitors. ■

### Kroger's organic brand nears \$1 billion mark

The recent, steady growth in sales of organic foods at Kroger grocery chain confirms a trend: organics are no longer the domain of an elite, affluent population. With lower

prices cropping up for organic breads, dairy and cereals, Kroger officials see a "blurring of groceries and natural foods," with most shoppers buying a combination of organic and non-organic items.

Kroger's Simple Truth brand for natural and organic foods has already gone beyond \$1 billion. "We're really just answering the customer's call for more and better," said President Michael Ellis. The

chain offers more than 35,000 natural or organic items in its 2,600 stores throughout 34 states, one-sixth of which were added in the last year. (Source: *Business Week*) ■

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