

Summer 2013

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# IOA Newsletter



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

## Visit us at the State Fair

For the sixth straight year, the Iowa Organic Association will have a booth at the Iowa State Fair, which will be held August 8-18 at the Iowa State Fairgrounds in Des Moines.

Our booth will be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Agriculture Building. Please stop by and say hi!

### Special Interest Articles:

- Research shows soil benefits of organic
- Transplant decision tool available
- Organic exports increase

### 2013 Board

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### From the Director:

This spring, however challenging, should be a reminder of yet another reason to be in or support organics: system resilience and diversity. We are working toward a system where the soil is protected instead of lost in extreme rains, where nitrogen is released slowly instead of all being washed away by spring rains, and where more than one or two crops are relied on to support our farming families. Wishing you a healthy and productive rest of the growing season. Again, please feel free to contact me at [iowaorganic@gmail.com](mailto:iowaorganic@gmail.com) with your ideas and inspiration.



## Iowa State Study Shows Soil-Building Benefits of Organic Production

Producers making the switch to organic crops to meet growing market demand not only fetch premium prices, according to a recent study; they also build healthy soil and sequester carbon, making organic agriculture a useful strategy for dealing with climate change.

The study, published in *Crop Management* in April, summarizes results from the Long-Term Agroecological Research (LTAR) Experiment, one of the longest running replicated comparisons of organic and conventional agriculture in the country. The experiment began in 1998 with funding from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. The LTAR site also has been used as a demonstration plot for U.S. Department of Agriculture studies.

“Farmers interested in transitioning to organic production will be happy to see that, with

good management, yields can be the same, with potentially higher returns and better soil quality,” said Kathleen Delate, agronomy and horticulture professor at Iowa State University, who leads the project.

Although organic practices are not the only way to improve soil health, the ISU experiment showed that some of the biggest changes over time were in soil quality, particularly once the system was established.

Delate’s study found that soils in the organic plots (three- and four-year rotations of corn, soybean, oats and alfalfa) had significantly higher quality compared to the plots using a conventional two-year rotation of corn and soybeans. The organic plots had up to 40 percent more biologically-active soil organic matter, which is important for fertility and nutrient availability. Organic soils also had lower acidity and higher amounts of car-

bon, nitrogen, potassium, phosphorous and calcium.

Healthy soils also hold more water and improve water infiltration, increasing a farm’s resiliency to drought, heavy rainfall and extreme weather events. Farming practices that build soil health also increase carbon storage in soil, called carbon sequestration, which buffers climate change and contributes to better water quality.

The LTAR experiment is located on 17 acres at the ISU Neely-Kinyon Research and Demonstration Farm near Greenfield. The project compares four crop rotations using identical varieties that are repeated four times in 44 plots. The conventional rotation received synthetic nitrogen, herbicides and insecticides according to ISU recommended rates. The organic corn plots received composted manure from a local chicken op-

eration. Weeds are managed by timely tillage, longer crop rotations, cover crops and allelopathic chemicals from rye and alfalfa.

“Soil health is critical to any agricultural production system, and organic practices are among many ways to improve the health of our soils,” said Leopold Center Director Mark Rasmussen. “We hope that what we are learning from the LTAR experiment can be applied to other production models.”

Delate’s co-authors were Cynthia Cambardella, USDA Agricultural Research Service; Craig Chase, Leopold Center Marketing and Food Systems Initiative; and Ann Johanns and Robert Turnbull, ISU Extension and Outreach.



The Long-Term Agroecological Research experiment is located on 17 acres at the ISU Neely-Kinyon Research and Demonstration Farm near Greenfield, IA

## Lansink Family Receives Wergin Good Farm Neighbor Award

Roger & Amy Lansink, organic farmers from Odebolt, received the Wergin Good Farm Neighbor Award. The award is presented by the Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship (IDALS) and the Iowa Ag Radio Network to recognize Iowa livestock producers "for commitment and dedication to the environment, their community and their livestock". Steve Moline, Division Director at IDALS, presented the award to the Lansink family on June 14.

Roger and Amy have four children, Derek, Leighton, Ryan, and Janae. Derek and Leighton have joined the operation currently raising turkeys, corn, soybeans, oats, barley, and alfalfa. Their farm has been producing crops organically for twenty years. The transition to organic was made easier by a commitment to Amy's grandfather to keep pasture in place and a small grain in their rotation.

"We are honored to receive this award and it goes to show that all of our family's hard work and dedication can pay off," says Roger Lansink. "We do not want to be large farmers. We want to do the best we can at producing high quality products for the people who will be consuming it. We enjoy the community we live in!"

Congratulations to the Lansink Family!



*Roger Lansink, Sac County Organic Farmer and IOA Vice President with his family*

## Transplant Decision Tool Available for Growers

As demand for local and organic produce rises, vegetable growers face the challenge of scaling up the size of their operations. A new online tool provides information to growers in the Upper Midwest about the methods and equipment available for transplant production.

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture awarded a grant to the Iowa Organic Association in 2010 to compile the online tool. Chris Blanchard, organic farmer and consultant at Flying Rutabaga Works, visited nine organic and conventional operations of different sizes to interview growers about their transplant systems.

Producing transplants is one way for a farm to mitigate risk and extend the growing season. Transplants are germinated and grown in a con-

trolled environment and then replanted in the field. The online tool provides information about options, challenges and costs for every step of this process, from choosing a growing tray to designing an irrigation system to ‘hardening’ the plants for field conditions.

“I’ve noticed that as vegetable growers scale up their production, they often move through several different transplant production systems—and the components of their old systems often aren’t compatible with their new systems,” Blanchard said. “I hope that this tool helps expanding produce growers in Iowa and other states to forecast the transplant system they want to end up with, so that they can make the appropriate investments.”

Amber Anderson Mba, executive director of the Iowa Organic Association, said the

tool will help its members meet the needs of expanding markets for local foods. “We hope this tool will help their growing farms to be more productive and profitable,” she said.

The tool includes profiles of six vegetable farms in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa, as well as photo galleries of infrastructure, equipment and crops. A one-page matrix summarizes the costs, skill level, benefits and drawbacks of various options for transplant equipment.

The Transplant Production Decision Tool is on the Leopold Center website at: [www.leopold.iastate.edu/cool\\_tools/transplant-production-decision-tool](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/cool_tools/transplant-production-decision-tool). It also can be found on the Iowa Organic Association website at: [www.iowaorganic.org/transplant-decision-tool](http://www.iowaorganic.org/transplant-decision-tool)

### New Tool from the Organic Trade Association Features:

- Import/export data
- World organic regulations
- World market data

Check it out at

[www.globalorganictrade.com/](http://www.globalorganictrade.com/)

## USDA lists 17,750 certified organic operations

As of the end of 2012, 17,750 organic farms and processing facilities in the US were certified to the USDA organic regulations. That’s approximately a 240 percent increase since the agency’s National Organic Program (NOP) began tracking in 2002.

Most U.S. certified organic operations are on the west coast, in New England

and the North Atlantic region, and in the upper Midwest. 2012 saw a significant growth in the number of operations in California, Iowa, and New England.

2012 saw only slight growth in the number of operations in the southeastern US, and there were decreases in part of the Midwest and some Mountain states. Since 2010, there has been a de-

crease in the number of operations in areas with equivalency agreements (Canada, European Union), as operations in these countries no longer need dual certification.

Globally, there are close to 25,000 certified organic operators across 100 countries.

## Eight in ten US parents report they purchase organic products

US families are increasingly embracing organic products in a wide range of categories, with 81% now reporting they purchase organic at least sometimes. This finding is one of many contained in the Organic Trade Association's (OTA's) newly released *2013 U.S. Families' Organic Attitudes and Beliefs Study*, conducted Jan. 18-24, 2013.

"More and more parents choose organic foods primarily because of their desire to provide healthful options for their children," said Christine Bushway,

OTA's CEO and Executive Director.

Not only are more consumers choosing organic products at least sometimes, but the majority of those buying organic foods are purchasing more items than a year earlier. New entrants to buying organic now represent 41% of all families—demonstrating interest in the benefits of organic food and farming is on the rise.

Produce continues to be the leading category of organic purchases, with 97% of organic buyers saying they had purchased organic fruits or vegetables in the

past six months. Breads and grains, dairy and packaged foods were also frequently cited (all scoring above 85%) among those who purchase organic.

Consistent with findings from previous studies, nearly half (48%) of those who purchase organic foods said they do so because they are "healthier for me and my children."

Awareness of the USDA Organic seal has also grown, with more consumers more likely to look for the seal when shopping for organic products.

## US organic exports grow, organic soybean imports double

Exports of US organic products grew to nearly \$450 million in 2012, dominated by the organic apple market. As the price premium for organic apple exports dropped in 2012, the organic market share doubled to 9%, according to a new report from the USDA. Numbers of conventional shipments stayed the same. In addition, organic soybean imports have more than doubled, reflecting a high volume coming from China.

Most US organic export products go to Canada and Mexico, staying in North America. More than 75% of organic vegetables went to Canada. Half of the organic fruit went to Mexico. Apple exports tripled in 2012, and grape, pear, and cherry markets to Mexico more than doubled.

An "Organic Equivalence Arrangement," under which organic products certified under either country's system can be

sold as organic in both markets, fortified US export deals. Such an arrangement, begun in June 2012, should increase the number of exports to Europe; organic equivalence arrangements are also being sought with Japan and South Korea.

Organic imports took a hit overall last year, as organic coffee imports dropped nearly 45%.

***Remember to register your certified organic crop ground, apiary, or fruit and vegetable site with IDALS before spraying season is in full swing***

## Check out our supporters:

[CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley](#)

[Frontier Coop](#)

[American Natural Soy](#)

[Grain Millers, Inc](#)

[Campbell's Nutrition](#)

[Metro Waste Authority](#)

[Cashton Farm Supply](#)

[Farmer's Hen House](#)

## Whole Foods Market® names Frontier Natural Products *Supplier of the Year*

Whole Foods Market recognizes the winners of its 2013 *Supplier Awards*, spotlighting natural and organic suppliers who best exemplify the grocer's mission and core values.

Frontier Natural Products Co-op, a top

supplier of organic herbs and spices based in Norway, Iowa, recently earned Whole Foods Market's highest honor of *Supplier of the Year*.

Frontier received the award for outstanding overall product performance, exceptional quali-

ty, commitment to transparency and strong contribution to Whole Planet Foundation, a non-profit that funds poverty alleviation in communities where Whole Foods Market sources products.



## Frontier's Aura Cacia® Launches 1% Organic Fund, Builds School in Madagascar

Aura Cacia®, America's leading essential oil brand, is celebrating the launch of its 1% Organic Fund. 1% of the sales of all Aura Cacia organic products funds projects that aid farmers and their communities.

Aura Cacia is a brand of Frontier Natural Products Co-op based in Norway, IA.

The first project associated with this fund is the Ambohimena School — a preschool for the children of families who pick organically grown

ylang ylang flowers near the village of Ambohimena, Madagascar. Before the school was built, the nearest option for early childhood education was more than seven miles away. Aura Cacia worked with local educators and social workers to make the school a reality.

The Ambohimena School has two rooms, one for 2- and 3-year olds and one for 4- and 5-year olds, and accommodates up to 60 children. The first year salaries for the school's two teachers are

also paid for by Aura Cacia's 1% fund.

The program promotes the sustainable production of natural and organic products and creates partnerships built upon a mutual respect for quality botanicals and sound social and environmental principles. By bringing high quality, socially responsible products to the marketplace, the program gives consumers the opportunity to use their purchases to influence the way the world does business.

## Lehigh University partners with Rodale on organic education

Rodale Institute and Lehigh University are partnering to bring organic education to Bethlehem.

In collaboration with the College of Education at Lehigh, Rodale Institute will create and maintain an organic garden on Lehigh University's Mountaintop Campus where they will conduct

monthly workshops for all community members. Staff members of Rodale Institute will share information about the various components of organic gardening.

"We are excited to work with Lehigh to help them incorporate organic practices on their campus," said Mark "Coach" Smallwood, Rodale Insti-

tute's Executive Director. "It provides us with access to a great space and a new audience with whom we can share our work."

Workshops are free to the public. For more information and to register for the workshops, visit <http://rodaleinstitute.org/visit/calendar-of-events/>.

## New Farmland Owner Award Recognizes landowner efforts:

With the growing distance between farmers and landowners, PFI has begun a new landowner award to recognize sustainable agriculture efforts by landowners. The 2013 recipient is Helen Gunderson, Ames, who owns land near Rolfe. Gunderson's land is partially farmed by beginning organic farmer, Betsy Dahl.



Roger Lansink, Joe Ward, and Amber Anderson Mba (with son Elijah) met with Indonesian food safety officials on Iowa State's campus

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

**Want to do more?** We have openings on our Board of Directors. Email Amber at [iowaorganic@gmail.com](mailto:iowaorganic@gmail.com) with an interest statement.

**Thanks** to Ken Roseboro of the Non-GMO Report for compiling articles for this newsletter.

### 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.

Visit us on the Web!

[www.iowaorganic.org](http://www.iowaorganic.org)

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## Veterans seed the future in farming with Newman's Own Foundation Grants

Thanks to grants generously awarded by Newman's Own Foundation, the Farmer Veteran Coalition can provide even more support to returning military veterans who want to enter the field of food and farming!

The grants will help the young men and women who bravely served in Iraq and Afghanistan who want to channel their sense of purpose, and their desire to nurture, into sustainable farming. The grants, which will be awarded in the

amount of \$100,000 over 2 years, will help these farmer veterans come closer to realizing their dream of sustainable farming by getting the support they need to start.

## Organic Trade Association plants "seeds" for active farmer involvement

The Organic Trade Association (OTA) has formally established a Farmers Advisory Council to provide input from small- to medium-sized organic farmers, ranchers and growers to the trade association on matters geared to advancing organic agriculture.

"One of OTA's Core Values is the understanding that organic farms are the foundation of the organic industry. This advisory

council will give organic farmers a vehicle to influence OTA's policy and advocacy work," said Perry Clutts of Pleasantview Farm, who holds the first designated Farmer Seat on OTA's current Board of Directors and co-chairs the council.

Making up the new advisory council will be active farmers of small and medium-size operations serving as representatives of sector, state and regional or-

ganic farming organizations. CCOF Inc.

(California Certified Organic Farmers) is a founding member of the advisory council, with CROPP Cooperative and the Organic Egg Farmers of America also signing on board

Interested organic farmers and organic farming sector, state and regional organic farming organizations should contact OTA's Executive Vice President Laura Batcha.