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# IOA Newsletter



Iowa Organic Association | Box 185 | Ames, IA 50010 | 515.291.5457 | [www.iowaorganic.org](http://www.iowaorganic.org)

## Special Interest Articles:

- Visit our booth at the Iowa State Fair August 9<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup>
- IOA sponsors PFI organic field days
- American Universities and growth of organics

## 2012 Advisory Board

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## Organic at the Iowa State Fair

For the 5th year in a row the Iowa Organic Association will have a booth at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines. Please stop by our booth on the second floor of the Agriculture Building as the State Fair celebrates the 100th Anniversary of the Bee Keepers Association. We are pitching in on the

"just label it" campaign for fairgoers information, and anticipating great educational discussions with lots of organic promotion and technical materials. We will also be featuring a post-fair PFI field day, "Improving Organics: Small Grains, Flame weeding, & Corn Hybrids". Please visit the

Iowa Organic Association during your day at our state's best summer extravaganza, the Iowa State Fair



## Please consider a membership in the Iowa Organic Association

Organic production is an important part of your life and business. The Iowa Organic Association is working for you to promote, educate and build the organic community in our state. We are asking for your financial support to continue this work. Our website, [www.iowaorganic.org](http://www.iowaorganic.org), keeps you up to date field days and other educational opportunities related to organic production. National Organic Standards Board activities are posted weekly as well as news

affecting organic growers in Iowa. We have had a busy winter and a productive spring. IOA held our annual State of Organics in Iowa Quadrant meetings in January and February of 2012. We visited Waukon, Fairfield, Emmetsburg and Atlantic. Information was provided in partnerships with NRCS, Organic Valley, Blue River Hybrids, Scoular Grain and Sunrise Food International. We now have a campaign for all Iowa's certified organic producers to be annually signed up for the IDALS

Sensitive Crop Registry. Plus we are maintaining a database of spray and drift incidents called to our attention. We provide helpful "what to do if you have been sprayed" information to those reporting.

Organic growers need a resource committed to organic production information and education. Please contribute to that resource with your new or renewed membership in the Iowa Organic Association.

Beth Larabee Director

## Practical Farmers of Iowa on-farm research program will feature 80 farmers participating in 53 projects in 2012




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*“To catch the reader’s attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here.”*

Practical Farmers of Iowa has finalized its Cooperators Program research and demonstration projects for 2012. This year, which marks the program’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, nearly 80 farmers and cooperators across Iowa are participating in 53 on-farm research and demonstration projects to answer questions they have about on-farm

challenges.

Cover crops, on-farm energy, fly monitoring in cattle and the feasibility of adding a third crop are among the research priorities identified by Practical Farmers of Iowa members at the annual Cooperators Meeting, held each winter in Ames. Farmers attend and guide the Cooperators Program by identifying their priority research and

demonstration needs for the year.

The Cooperators Program is supported by a competitive grant from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University.

Completed research reports as well as future reports can be viewed online at

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

## PFI field days announced

Practical Farmers of Iowa is holding a full schedule of more than 30 field days this summer and fall from June through November throughout the state.

- Organic farms participating in the field days include:
- TJ Family Farms, McCallsburg, July 7
- Rock Spring Farm, Decorah, July 15 
- DeCook Ranch, Lovilia, July 18
- Wills Family Orchard, Adel, August 3 
- Jeremy and Jodi Peake Farm, Waukon, August 4
- J&G Olson Farm, Winfield, August 9
- Wallace Farms, Keystone, August 17
- Shriver Farms, LLC and Custom Drying, LLC, Jefferson, September 13 
- Seven W Farm. Paullina, September 18
- New Shoots Farm, Emmetsburg, September 26 



There will also be a tour of PFI’s US Testing Network Test Plot in River Falls, WI on Friday, September 14. Charles Brown of Brownseed Genetics will discuss non-GMO and organic corn hybrids in development and on the market today.

 Sponsored by the Iowa Organic Association

For a complete schedule of PFI field days, visit [http://practicalfarmers.org/Field\\_Guide\\_2012.pdf](http://practicalfarmers.org/Field_Guide_2012.pdf)

## WSU announces \$5 million investment in organic agriculture program

Washington State University, developer of the nation's first four-year organic agriculture systems major in 2006, has received a large donation to expand its organic farm from four acres to almost 30 acres. The \$5 million gift from the Eggert family will create the largest organic teaching farm on a university campus in the US.

"This is a game changer for the program," said John Reganold, WSU Regents Professor of Soil Science and Agroecology. "This investment...greatly expands the opportunities provided by the Organic Farm and major for students."

WSU alumni Chuck and Louanna Eggert, founders of Pacific Natural Foods, wanted to help prepare "the future leaders in

agriculture, and in particular, those focused on organic agriculture, as they are vital to the continued innovation needed to advance the industry." Pacific Natural Foods has grown from a small soymilk production company to a global leader in natural food development, sustainable and organic farming, and land stewardship.



*Organic bean field at Full Circle Farm, Carnation, WA*  
<http://www.wsu.edu/>

## Study says organic agriculture will help feed the world

Can organic agriculture feed the world? Although organic techniques may not be able to do the job alone, they do have an important role to play in feeding a growing global population while minimizing environmental damage, according to researchers at the University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment and McGill University.

A new study published in *Nature* concludes that crop yields from organic farming are generally lower than from conventional agriculture. That is particularly true for cereals, which are staples of the human diet—yet the yield gap is much less significant for certain crops, and under certain

growing conditions, according to the researchers.

The study, which represents a comprehensive analysis of the current scientific literature on organic-to-conventional yield comparisons, aims to shed light on the often-heated debate over organic versus conventional farming.

"To achieve sustainable food security we will likely need many different techniques—including organic, conventional, and possible 'hybrid' systems—to produce more food at affordable prices, ensure livelihoods to farmers, and reduce the environmental costs of agriculture," the

researchers conclude.

Overall, organic yields are 25% lower than conventional, the study finds. The difference varies widely across crop types and species, however. Yields of legumes and perennials (such as soybeans and fruits), for example, are much closer to those of conventional crops, according to the study, conducted by doctoral student Verena Seufert and Geography professor Navin Ramankutty of McGill and Prof. Jonathan Foley, director of the University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment.

What's more, when best management practices are used for organic

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*"Yields of legumes and perennials (such as soybeans and fruits), for example, are much closer to those of conventional crops,*

## Iowa farming women participate in DC roundtable about antibiotics in agriculture



According to Webster's Dictionary a *Locavore* is one who eats foods grown locally whenever possible.

Iowa farmers and mothers, Cynthia Madsen of Audubon, and Maria Rosmann of Harlan traveled to Washington, DC in May to advocate for stronger antibiotic policies in industrial farming.

The US Food and Drug

Administration is taking steps to rein in the overuse of antibiotics on America's industrial farms.

Madsen and Rosmann participated in a roundtable discussion about the use of antibiotics in agriculture

organized by The [Pew Campaign on Human Health and Industrial Farming](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) are hosting a roundtable to hear directly from the people to whom these measures matter most

## Iowa ranks 2nd in US in local food availability

The Strolling of the Heifers announces the Locavore Index: an indicator of how states compare in their commitment to raising and eating locally grown food. In the 2012 Locavore Index, Iowa ranked second just below Vermont among the fifty states.

Using data exclusively from government

sources (principally USDA and US Census data) dating from 2010 and 2011, the Locavore Index measures the commitment of states to locally-sourced foods by measuring the per-capita presence of Community-Supported Agricultural enterprises and Farmers Markets, each of which is an

indication of both the availability and demand for locally-produced food.

The top five states for locavorism, according to the Index, in order, are Vermont (No. 1), Iowa, Montana, Maine and Hawaii, while the bottom five are Florida (No. 50), Arizona, New Jersey, Nevada and Louisiana

## Organic Growth put America's universities to the test

According to a report released in May by the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF), Land Grant universities and Cooperative Extensions in the US need to do "a great deal more in order to meet the growing needs of organic demand."

The organic food industry has more than quadrupled in growth in the last decade, and OFRF sheds light on America's ability to meet growing consumer

demand with trained organic farmers and useful research. This first Organic Land Grant Assessment Report ranked institutions on organic activity, including maintaining organic research land, cultivating student organic farms, offering an organic minor, major or certificate, and employing a dedicated organic faculty or staff member.

The top six campuses scoring a perfect '8'

include: Colorado State University, University of Florida, Michigan State University, University of Minnesota, University of Tennessee (the newest addition to organic), and Washington State University.

The report illuminates the need for public investment in organic research and education in order to prepare the US for future organic food production challenges and access to healthy, safe food.

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## Seed Matters grants nation's first organic plant breeding fellowships

Clif Bar Family Foundation recently announced it has awarded the first fellowships in organic plant breeding ever granted in the United States. Funded through its organic seed initiative known as Seed Matters, the foundation issued \$375,000 in grants to fund three Ph.D. fellowship students for

five years in organic plant breeding at two public land grant universities. Seed Matters selected land grant universities in recognition of their historical commitment to serving rural communities and the public good, and to support a Seed Matter's goal of reinvigorating public

seed research and education. In addition to providing organic farmers with new varieties of seed adapted to organic systems, these fellowships will cultivate the next generation of thought leadership in organic research, education and entrepreneurship.



### Organic farming improves pollination success in strawberries

A newly published study has found that pollination success on organic strawberries was higher than on conventional strawberries.

The study published in PLoS ONE suggests that conversion to organic farming may rapidly increase pollination success and hence benefit the ecosystem service of crop pollination regarding both yield quantity and quality. Pollination of insect pollinated crops has been found to be correlated to pollinator abundance and diversity.

Organic farming has the potential to mitigate negative effects of agricultural intensification on biodiversity, and, as this study showed, it also benefits crop pollination. (Source: *PLoS ONE*)

## Growing opposition to 2, 4-D GM corn

Over 140 groups and more than 365,000 citizens from across the country are urging the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to reject a Dow Chemical application seeking approval of "Enlist," a controversial genetically engineered corn that is resistant to the hazardous herbicide 2, 4-D. In addition to the public comments, 143 farm, environmental, health, fisheries groups and companies will submit a letter to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack expressing their overwhelming

opposition to this crop, which has become known as "Agent Orange" corn.

The introduction of Dow's new 2, 4-D tolerant GM corn is likely to lead to a 73-fold increase in the amount of 2, 4-D herbicide used by US farmers by 2019, according to Charles Benbrook, research professor at Washington State University.

The Save Our Crops Coalition (SOCC), which includes 2,000 vegetable farmers, filed petitions with the USDA

and the EPA, asking USDA to conduct a thorough environmental review of 2, 4-D tolerant corn and EPA to convene an advisory panel to examine impacts from increased application of the herbicides

"2, 4-D drift and volatilization has caused substantial damage to my farm, and this damage has now become an annual occurrence," said Dave Simmons, a family farmer and SOCC member based in Indiana.

## Organic corn scam brings prison sentence

An Oregon man who pocketed thousands of dollars by passing off 4.2 million pounds of conventional corn as certified organic was sentenced in April to 27 months in federal prison. The sentence for 55-year-old Harold Chase was based on charges of fraud and actions harming the integrity of the USDA's National Organic Program.

US District Judge Ann Aiken emphasized the insult to Lane County, its farmers, and a strong commitment to pesticide-free foods as factors in the sentence.

"The food supply and the water supply of this country... is sacred," Judge Aiken said. "It is to be respected, period. ... It's going into the bodies of our children."

(Source: *The Eugene Register-Guard*)

### Non-organic lecithin banned in organic foods

*Lecithin becomes first non-organic ingredient to be removed from the National List*

In February, the US Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program (NOP) published a rule that removed non-organic fluid lecithin from the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances.

The rule means that organic food companies that use fluid lecithin must now use only the organic version. Prior to the new rule they could use a non-organic, non-GMO fluid lecithin.

The only exception is that non-organic de-oiled or granular lecithin may be used but only when an organic form of de-oiled lecithin is not commercially available. This isn't likely to happen too often since the vast majority of lecithin used in food products is fluid.

Lecithin is used in organic processed products as a natural mixing agent (emulsifier) or lubricant

The new rule took effect on March 15. It marks the first time that a non-organic ingredient has been removed from the National List, which contains non-organic or synthetic ingredients that organic food companies can use in their products.

## Organic equivalency established between EU and US

*The world's two largest markets for organic food expand organic market access*

At a press event at the BioFach World Organic Trade Fair, European Commissioner Dacian Ciolos for the European Union's (EU) Agriculture and Rural Development and Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan of the US Department of Agriculture announced the signing of an organic equivalence arrangement between the world's two largest markets for organic food. Under the proposed arrangement, the EU and United States will work together to promote strong organic programs, protect organic standards, enhance cooperation, and facilitate trade in organic products.

Officials noted the EU - US organic equivalence cooperation arrangement will expand market access for organic producers and

companies by reducing duplicative requirements and certification costs on both sides of the ocean while continuing to protect organic integrity.

"This monumental agreement will further create jobs in the already growing and healthy US organic sector, spark additional market growth, and be mutually beneficial to farmers both in the United States and European Union as well as to consumers who choose organic products," said Christine Bushway, Executive Director and CEO of the US-based Organic Trade Association (OTA). She added, "Equivalence with the EU will be an historic game changer."

As a result, certified organic products as of June 1 can move freely between the United States and EU borders provided they meet the terms of the new arrangement. Under the

agreement, the EU will recognize the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) as equivalent to the EU Organic Program and allow products produced and certified as meeting USDA NOP standards to be marketed as organic in the EU. Likewise, the United States will allow European products produced and certified under the EU Organic Program to be marketed as organic in the United States.

Additionally, both programs have agreed to exchange information on animal welfare issues, and on methods to avoid contamination of organic products from genetically modified organisms.

## US organic market surpasses \$31 billion, creates 500,000 jobs

The US organic industry grew by 9.5% overall in 2011 to reach \$31.5 billion in sales, the highest total ever. Of this, the organic food and beverage sector was valued at \$29.22 billion, while the organic non-food sector reached \$2.2 billion,

according to findings from the *Organic Trade Association's (OTA's) 2012 Organic Industry Survey*.

"The U.S. organic sector continues to show steady and healthy growth, for the first time, surpassing the \$30 billion mark," She

added,

"Overall organic product sales growth of 9.5 percent continued to outpace total sales of comparable conventionally produced food and non-food items, which

## US organic market surpasses \$31 billion, creates 500,000 jobs continued

experienced 4.7 percent growth. The growth in organic sales is proof the consumer is willing to pay for value-added products," said Christine Bushway, OTA's Executive Director and CEO.

The organic food sector grew by \$2.5 billion during 2011, with the fruit and vegetable category contributing close to 50 percent of those new dollars.

Organic food sales now represent 4.2 percent of all U.S. food sales, up from 4 percent in 2010.

Prospects for 2012 and 2013 indicate that organic food and non-food sales will continue to sustain growth levels of nine percent or higher.

Meanwhile, a new OTA report shows the organic food industry generated more than five hundred thousand

American jobs in 2010.

"The organic food processing industry is creating jobs, stimulating our economy and delivering the products that consumers increasingly demand. This report is only the latest testament on why supporting organic is a no-brainer," said Congressman Sam Farr (CA-17).

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*Atrazine in drinking water basic information at <http://water.epa.gov/drink/contaminants/basicinformation/atrazine.cfm>*

## Minnesota Congressman reintroduces bill banning atrazine

US Congressman Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) has reintroduced legislation (H.R.4318) to ban the herbicide atrazine, a potent toxin that is the most prevalent herbicide found in Minnesota's waters.

Atrazine is used nationwide to kill broadleaf and grassy weeds, primarily in corn crops. The US Geological Survey has found atrazine in

approximately 75% of stream waters and 40% of ground waters sampled near agricultural areas. However, atrazine has found to be harmful to humans, mammals, and amphibians even when the amount used is less than the government allows. What's more the chemical has only moderate agricultural benefits.

"No one should ever

have to worry if the water they drink is making them sick or affecting fertility," said Rep. Ellison.

"Germany and Italy banned atrazine use in 1991 and Euro zone health officials banned its use in 2003. Yet, almost 10 years later the United States is still using it. We need to remove toxins like atrazine from our waterways."

## Number of US certified organic operations increasing

The number of certified organic farms and processing facilities increased by 2.7% in 2011, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

At the end of 2011, there were 17,673 certified organic farms and processing facilities in the United States, an increase of 478 over 2010 and a 240% increase since the National Organic Program (NOP) started tracking the

number of certified operations in 2002.

Worldwide, there are now 28,779 operators certified to the USDA-NOP standards across 133 countries.

The slight decrease in the number of international operations from 2010 reflects fewer certified operations based in Canada due to the US/Canada Organic

Equivalency Arrangement. Since products certified by one country may be sold as organic in the other, Canadian operations no longer need to maintain certification to the NOP organic standards in order to sell organic products in the US.

Beginning June 1, 2012, this will also be true for operations in EU member states.

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*"...2011, there were 17,673 certified organic farms and processing facilities in the United States."*

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**We're on the Web!**

See us at:  
[www.iowaorganic.org](http://www.iowaorganic.org)

## 2, 4-D killed Iowa's grape production

Fred Kirschenmann, distinguished fellow at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, says that 2, 4-D was the main cause for destroying the grape industry in Iowa, which in the 1940s was the fourth leading grape producing state in the US.

Klaas Martens, an

organic farmer in Penn Yan, New York, says he suffered temporary paralysis in his right arm from using 2, 4-D when he farmed conventionally. Martens converted to organics because the chemicals were making him sick. "I suspect that this will turn out to be a

very foolish move on the part of the biotech industry," Martens says. "This will not be mild, invisible, or ambiguous damage like pollen drift or chemical drift from materials like Roundup. It will be easily detected, ugly, and smelly. The health risks of 2, 4-D are well known.

## Study says organic agriculture will help feed the world continued

crops, overall yields are just 13% lower than conventional levels. "These results suggest that today's organic systems may nearly rival conventional yields in some cases—with particular crop types, growing conditions and management practices—but often they do not,"

### ***About Our Organization...***

The Iowa Organic Association is a non-profit group of like-minded individuals, organizations, companies and

the researchers write. Improvements in organic management techniques, or adoption of organic agriculture under environmental conditions where it performs best, may help close the yield gap, they indicate.

Prof. Foley adds. "By

associations dedicated to the advancement of Iowa's organic production and industry. The IOA has

combining organic and conventional practices in a way that maximizes food production and social good while minimizing adverse environmental impact, we can create a truly sustainable food system."

come together to serve as an umbrella association whose goal is to represent all facets and concerns of

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