



**The Organic Specialists**

## June 2015 ORGANIC NEWS

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*“For neither good nor evil can last forever; and so it follows that as evil has lasted a long time, good must now be close at hand.”*

*Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Don Quixote*

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

### **WHICH WAY THE WIND BLOWS**

A decade ago we tore down the old barn on my new farm. It was sagging and had to go, but I kept the classic cast iron hay handling and tillage hardware for an amazing local sculptor to use in his [creative works](#). To celebrate the solstice I went to visit Mark and he created a wind vane and a farm entrance sign for me!! So, now I can see which way the wind is blowing from my kitchen window!

For the organic sector, the wind is in the sails of strong growth, but the infrastructure to support the industry is still lagging behind. Nevertheless, there are lots of new projects and initiatives emerging to strengthen the educational and training systems needed for successful change. This issue of our newsletter is full of great movement – from the creation of the first endowed university faculty seat for organic plant breeding, to a new dedicated organic dairy training center, to full funding of certification cost share, to NOP’s updated strategic plan, and much more.

With all this growth, the organic industry has an unprecedented number of job openings and not enough trained personnel, so these new educational and training programs are coming none too soon. To help point out the trends we’re posting examples of two job searches in this issue only. Finding experienced staff is a challenge for many of our clients and friends for now, but I like the way the wind is blowing.

***Bill Wolf***

***President***

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*\*Wolf, DiMatteo + Associates delivers the strategic expertise to help organic, socially, and Environmentally responsible products and projects reach their full potential—and flourish.*

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## **USDA NEWS**

### **Comment on proposed rules for origin of livestock for organic dairies**

Comment by July 27 on a proposed rule to clarify the requirements for the transition of dairy animals into organic production. The rule would update the USDA's organic regulations by requiring that milk or milk products labeled, sold, or represented as organic be from dairy animals that have been organically managed since the last third of gestation, with a one-time allowance for a producer to convert conventional dairy animals to organic milk production after a one-year transitional period.

Under the proposal, the producer, rather than the herd, becomes what is regulated, and allows a producer a one-time transition period of one year; all animals must end transition at the same time. After the transition, the producer would only be able to expand the number of dairy animals or replace culled dairy animals on any dairy farm in two ways: (1) Add dairy animals that had been under continuous organic management since the last third of gestation, or (2) Add transitioned dairy animals that had already completed the transition on another dairy farm during that producer's one-time transition. Breeder stock, however, may be brought from a nonorganic operation onto an organic operation at any time. Comment on Docket Number AMS-NOP-11-0009 at [regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).

### **Make a proposal for an organic promotion order**

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service extended the deadline for July 20 for alternative or partial proposals for a new industry-funded promotion, research, and information order for organic products. Expect an opportunity to submit comments after the submissions have been reviewed and a proposed promotion order is posted for review. Proposals may be submitted to Organic Promotion, Research, and Information Order; Room 3071-S, STOP 0201; Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW.; Washington, D.C. 20250-0201; telephone number (202) 720-5115.

### **Certification cost share funds available again**

Organic producers and handlers can request reimbursement for certification costs through their state departments of agriculture. The funding is provided on a cost share basis and is distributed by two programs. Through the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program, \$11 million is available to organic farms and businesses nationwide. Through the Agricultural Management Assistance Organic Certification Cost Share Program (AMA), an additional \$900,000 is available to organic producers (crop and livestock operators only) in Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. The covering up to 75 percent of an individual applicant's certification costs, to a maximum of \$750 annually per certification scope. [Find your state agency](#).

### **National Organic Program's Strategic Plan available**

The National Organic Program's [Strategic Plan](#) for 2015-2018 seeks to protect organic integrity, facilitate market access, create and implement clear standards, build technology that supports organic integrity, and develop a diverse team at USDA.

### **Get a sneak peek at materials slated for review**

You can read technical reports on over 30 materials slated for review at the upcoming National Organic Standards Board meeting on the NOP web site. Examples include soap, copper sulfate, hydrated lime,

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and whey protein concentrate. In addition, nine petitions for materials to be added to or changed on the National List are also available, including squid and squid byproducts, sulfuric acid, and flavors.

### **NOP's database of certified operations expected in September**

Part of an effort to reduce fraud and facilitate trade, NOP's Organic Integrity Database, which will replace the current annual list of certified operations, will give certifiers the opportunity to update certification status of organic operations in real time. Certifiers interested in assisting with the development and testing of the database can contact [Jennifer.Tucker@ams.usda.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Tucker@ams.usda.gov). The database is slated for release in September.

## **INTERNATIONAL REGULATORY NEWS**

### **EU's AGRIFISH Council compromises on proposed organic farm regulation revisions**

On June 16, the European Union's Agrifish Council reached what Latvian Minister of Agriculture Jānis Dūklavs called a 'political agreement' on a general approach for revised organic farming regulations which underscores the importance of working with the organic sector. IFOAM-EU reports a last minute amendment to the council proposal will ensure that organic farmers won't be punished for contamination to organic products resulting from activity on nearby conventional farms or from the environment. In addition IFOAM-EU said the Council's compromise improves the initial proposal in most critical areas and "neutralized many of the dangerous elements." For example, specific control requirements remain under the organic regulation; in trade with third countries regional standards have to be considered; the number of delegated acts has been reduced; the regulation's scope has been clarified and extended; bureaucratic rules for retailers have been avoided and member states maintain a limited flexibility on production rules. According to IFOAM-EU work still needs to be done to ensure the technical soundness of any changes, to combine risk-based control with annual control, and to develop genuine equivalency in trade with third countries. [More](#).

### **Canada's Safe Foods for Canadians Regulations to encompass organic standards**

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is holding a special consultation concerning how small and very small businesses could be affected by the upcoming Safe Foods for Canadians Regulations (SFCR), which will encompass Canada's organic standards (see Part 15, page 115-123 and 165). See the [proposed changes](#). Draft legislation, which could have broad impact on all imports, exports and food business in Canada, is expected January 2016.

### **Canadian General Standards Board Technical Committee meeting concludes**

Despite extensive line-by-line discussion on integrating [organic aquaculture standards](#) into Canada's organic standards, the Canadian General Standards Board Technical Committee did not do so at this time, reported the Canada Organic Trade Association (COTA). Meanwhile, the committee reviewed the results of the last ballot submissions and research on GMO preventive measures and mitigation strategies.

### **Canada encourages organic trade**

Canada will invest CAN\$785,660 as part of the AgriMarketing Program to develop global market opportunities. Canada's organic exports are estimated at over \$550 million per year. Meanwhile, Canada Organic Trade Association (COTA) will oversee a four-year \$1.5 million program to increase the

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visibility and positioning of the Canadian organic brand in export markets. COTA will also receive support to provide the government and industry with technical assessments of new and emerging markets with strong potential for Canada's growing organic sector. The domestic component of the program will focus on building consumer awareness and support for Canadian organic options within the Canadian domestic market.

## **NEWS AND NOTICES**

### **Organic businesses lead in sustainability efforts**

Sustainable Food Trade Association (SFTA) members are leading the organic food industry when it comes to innovative sustainability initiatives, according to the new SFTA 2015 Member Sustainability Progress Report. The [report](#) addresses initiatives undertaken in 11 areas from farm to retail in 2013 and 2014.

SFTA member companies not only sell or produce organic products, but also address animal care, climate change, distribution/sourcing, education, energy, governance, labor, organic, packaging, water, and waste – the 11 areas in the organization's "Declaration of Sustainability." SFTA members measure, analyze, and report on their sustainability activities, and have been doing so since 2008. Wolf, DiMatteo + Associates' own Katherine DiMatteo serves as Executive Director of the group.

Among the [highlights](#) for 2015: SFTA reporting members increased their purchases of organic products by 25 percent in the past year; 91% of reporting members measure greenhouse gas emissions; 80% of companies' electricity use is derived from renewable resources, up 23% since last year; and 83% of reporting members that sell animal products have developed strict internal animal welfare production or purchasing guidelines that include open grazing for poultry, humane housing and slaughter, responsible fishing, and habitat regeneration.

### **Farmers reap financial benefits from going organic**

A study from Washington State University found that profit margins for organic agriculture were significantly greater than for conventional agriculture, despite lower yields. Scientists David Crowder and John Reganold analyzed costs, gross returns, benefit/cost ratios and net present values across 44 studies in what is believed to be first large-scale synthesis of economic sustainability of organic farming compared to conventional agriculture. The study results showed actual premiums paid to organic farmers ranged from 29 to 32 percent above conventional prices, and the break-even point was five to seven percent even taking into account differences in yield. [More](#).

### **Clif Bar and Organic Valley encourage organic plant breeding research**

The University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) is the site of the nation's first endowed chair focused on plant breeding for organic crops. An endowed chair provides permanent research support to a faculty member from the interest income that is earned from an endowed investment fund specifically designated for that purpose. The chair position will be awarded to a faculty member with an established record of crop development under organic conditions. In addition to conducting research, the faculty member will mentor students interested in organic agricultural systems. Funded in perpetuity with \$1 million from Clif Bar and Organic Valley and \$1 million from University of

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Wisconsin graduates John and Tashia Morgridge, the chair is the first of five organic research chairs to be led by Clif Bar.

### **Dairy farmer training program offers paid training**

Thanks to a major grant from the Danone Ecosystem Fund and Stonyfield Farm, Wolfe's Neck Farm in Freeport, Maine, launched a two-year residential Organic Dairy Farmer Training Program to increase the production of organic milk while fostering the next generation of organic dairy farmers. New, transitioning, and existing organic dairy farmers can attend to improve their practices and ensure long-term sustainability and organic dairy production in the Northeast. The first class of four students will attend the two-year program tuition-free. [Application details](#).

### **Organic cotton production increased in 2014**

Globally organic cotton production, estimated at 116,794 metric tons, was up 10 percent in 2014 after three years of steady decline, according to the latest market report from The Textile Exchange. The world's organic cotton market is valued at \$15.7 billion. Leading organic cotton users by volume include C&A, H&M, Tchibo, Decathlon and Nike. Meanwhile, the number of facilities using certified organic processing methods is up 22%. The report also considers barriers to growth of the organic textile industry, including Lack of non-GMO seed; shortage of organic cotton, supply chain challenges, better market access for farmers, and the need for consumer education. [More](#).

### **Fund your conservation projects**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is accepting pre-proposals for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program until July 8. The program has up to \$235 million for projects that improve the water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat, and protect agricultural production. [More](#).

### **Learn more about organic farming's environmental benefits**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is hosting a four-part webinar series exploring the environmental benefits of organic agriculture. Moderated by Betsy Rakola, Organic Policy Advisor, US Department of Agriculture, the series features sessions on soil (Aug. 27), water quality (Sept. 23), biodiversity (June 17), and energy and climate change (May 21). Sessions on biodiversity and energy and climate change have already taken place, and all completed [sessions](#) are archived online.

### **IFOAM forms North American Regional Group**

As part of developing a North American Regional Group, IFOAM is seeking volunteers for a Steering Committee to guide activities until the IFOAM North America General Assembly is formed. Producers, processors, distributors, retailers and representatives from Canada are particularly encouraged to volunteer. Steering Committee activities are expected to conclude before the end of 2015. Contact: David Gould, [D.Gould@ifoam.bio](mailto:D.Gould@ifoam.bio), IFOAM Value Chain Facilitator & North American Representative.

### **Exhibit in Korea for free**

IFOAM Asia seeks applicants for a free booth at the Goesan Organic Expo in Korea for either September 18-23 or October 6-11. U.S. businesses can apply for the offer, which also includes airfare, lodging for six nights, and some meals. The expo in Chungbuk Province is expected to attract 600,000 people, and includes both a trade fair and exposition open to the public with over 10 themed

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exhibition halls, outdoor exhibitions, multiple conferences, and more. To apply for the free booth offer, submit an application with the booth fee blank and do not submit payment. [Details](#).

### **OTA plans social media festival**

Organic Trade Association will be hold a 30-day social media festival in September to unify the organic industry around a common theme to correct myths and misconceptions about organic. Activities will include daily giveaways of organic products. Sign up to participate in communication activities or to provide prizes by contacting Kelly Taveras, OTA's Digital Communications Manager, [ktaveras@ota.com](mailto:ktaveras@ota.com), (802) 275-3814.

### **Organic seed growers conference seeks proposals**

Held February 4-6, 2016 in Oregon, The 8th Organic Seed Growers Conference seeks proposals for conference content. The theme is Cultivating Resilience, a current assessment and roadmap for building organic seed systems that are ecologically, socially, and economically resilient. Preferred topics include:

- Advancements in organic plant breeding
- Breeding for resiliency and biodiversity, including to mitigate the impacts of climate change
- Farmer-led breeding projects
- New models for organic seed production, quality assurance, enterprise development, and commercializing new varieties (e.g., alternative approaches to intellectual property)
- Understanding the economics of seed production

Proposals are due July 15. [More](#).

### **Mission-oriented people needed**

[Mercaris](#) is hiring a Director of Business Development and a Sales Associate. The company provides a subscription-based market data service and on-line trading platform for agricultural commodities that are organic or non-GMO. To request position descriptions or more information please contact Kellee James at [info@mercaris.com](mailto:info@mercaris.com).

### **Farm Manager wanted**

Experienced organic farm manager needed to manage and carry out day-to-day operations on a 1000-acre certified organic farm in different stages of development. Beef, pigs, hay and pasture ++. Looking for someone who understands Joel Salatin's multi-species rotational practices. Send resume to: [GPAOpenings@gmail.com](mailto:GPAOpenings@gmail.com).

## **WHERE TO FIND WOLF, DIMATTEO + ASSOCIATES**

**Sept. 16-19: Natural Products Expo East, Baltimore, MD.** WD+A staff to attend.

**Oct. 26-29: National Organic Standards Board Meeting, Stowe, VT.** Bill Wolf will attend.