Moving Organic Forward

Organic Check-off // Year of the Soil // Organic Public Servants
OTA’s Farmers Advisory Council
Moving Organic Forward

This has been an eventful spring for organic. As you will read in the cover article (Page 5), an official application has been submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture seeking an organic check-off—more commonly referred to as GRO Organic (Generic Research and Promotion Order for Organic). This is a monumental step for the organic sector—creating a way to fund much needed research, promotion and technical assistance to take U.S. organic agriculture to a new level.

Organic Trade Association (OTA) Board member Jesse Laflamme, on Page 5, sums it up: “The organic check-off is going to be so broad to promote the benefits of organic that is not a small versus big or us versus them. ...promoting organic...no matter what size our farm is or what size our company is.”

The U.S. organic industry is thriving and maturing, but we are at a critical juncture. We need a mechanism to give organic stakeholders the opportunity to collectively invest in research, build domestic supply, and communicate the value of the organic brand. An organic check-off—designed to meet the unique needs of organic—can do just that.

To share this message with the entire U.S. organic community, we are mailing this edition of the Organic Report to all U.S. certified organic operations. Along with a wide range of articles, we include an insert summarizing GRO Organic and detailing the specific provisions in the check-off regulation. A fact sheet on Page 11 addresses commonly posed concerns.

The organic sector is diverse and vibrant, as you will see from our featured articles.

We include a spotlight on the members of OTA’s Farmers Advisory Council—egg producers, dairy farmers, grain growers, producers of fruits, vegetables, cotton, and other crops. And the council has room for more!

Organic processors play a key role in the organic supply chain. The daily challenges they face in maintaining the integrity of their organic products is illustrated in our organic toolbox story (Pages 14 and 15). Organic fibers are important in the organic marketplace. This edition looks at how one OTA member takes organic fibers and offers hope and purpose to refugees and others seeking to make a living (Page 34), while another launches the first U.S. GOTS factory of its kind (Page 35).

And then there are those within the organic spectrum who are—or have—worked in public service with an eye toward integrating organic within U.S. agricultural policy (Pages 18–19).

It takes all of us—a diversity of voices—to tell the organic story, whether it be to consumers, other producers who one day may choose to join our ranks, or agricultural policymakers.

OTA cares about this diversity, and is actively engaged—through policy events like our annual Organic Week in D.C. to our leadership in organic export promotion—to give organic stakeholders the chance to exercise their voices. We encourage you to be a part of the movement forward.

Laura Batcha
OTA’s CEO/Executive Director
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Get the Facts! GRO Organic Executive Summary
We believe in leaving the earth better than we found it, which is why we’ve been creating deliciously organic foods for 30 years. And why we’ll keep ushering the organic movement forward with deliciously healthy innovation. Thanks to you, we’re working towards a day when all foods will be organic. Together, we’ve seen extraordinary growth in the organic industry – the promise of a bright organic future.
ORGANIC CHECK-OFF: AN HISTORIC STEP FOR ORGANIC

Trailblazing research and promotion program could take sector to new level

By Maggie McNeil


Research to bring new farmers into organic, to find organic solutions to fight invasive pests and weeds, to breed organic seeds that are so scarce. Regular dissemination of the latest information and technical data to assist organic farmers and keep them up to date on key research findings and other vital facts.

And reform. Reform to create a new kind of check-off program for the organic industry that would be accountable, open to scrutiny, and always reflect the needs and interests of the organic farmers and processors and organic businesses it would be charged to represent.

Those were the major themes resonating from three years of conversation between the Organic Trade Association and the entire swath of the country’s organic stakeholders in the long drive to formulate a check-off research and promotion program for the organic brand and the organic production system.

OTA listened, analyzed, studied and researched. And on May 12, OTA, in collaboration with the GRO Organic core committee, formally petitioned the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to begin steps to conduct a vote on and implement a research and promotion check-off program for the organic industry.

OTA’s action is a groundbreaking move with the potential to have far-reaching and significant impacts for the nation’s organic sector, and marks another benchmark for an industry that has been advancing and evolving and changing the landscape of American agriculture and the food we eat for almost half a century.

More than 40 years ago, the American public began to call for a change in the nation’s food system. People wanted to eat foods grown without the use of toxic chemicals, processed without artificial colors and preservatives, and produced in ways that did not compromise the environment. This desire for a responsible, clean and healthy food system became a nationwide call to action that, in 1990, culminated in Congress authorizing an act leading to current rules for the entire system of certified organic agriculture in the United States.

The authorization of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) was transformative for the organic sector. It brought together the hodgepodge of state and private organic certification programs and the many different

“The organic check-off is going to be so broad to promote the benefits of organic that is not a small versus big or us versus them. We are promoting organic and we all share that, no matter what size our farm is or what size our company is. There are shared values and shared principles of organic. That is what the organic check-off will promote.”

— Jesse Laflamme
Pete & Gerry’s Organic Eggs
standards and regulations used by organic farmers and processors around the country into a single set of clear and strict criteria for the organic industry. With a uniform and coherent set of rules to work with, the U.S. organic industry took off.

Now 25 years after that benchmark moment, the organic sector is again poised for another dramatic advancement.

OTA’s action marks the first time in the 49-year history of U.S. agricultural check-off programs that organic would be recognized as a distinct commodity class based on production practices. The organic check-off, referred to as GRO Organic (Generic Research and Promotion Order for Organic) would be an unprecedented multi-commodity, full supply-chain program in which the common thread is the set of organic production practices and the organic brand.

“For the first time the organic industry will reach out to consumers with a single voice to educate them about what the organic seal means. I believe all farmers, large and small, will greatly benefit from the research and promotion made possible by the revenue the organic check-off program will generate,” said Luis Acuña of Viva Tierra Organic, organic produce farm and distributor in the state of Washington. “It will be exciting to see what the future holds for our movement and industry after we reach this new milestone.”

GRO Organic would represent and promote all organic products; it would represent and promote the organic brand and the organic agricultural production system. Organic is different, and so would be the organic check-off. It is a daring concept, and did not come into the organic sector.

Unlike any other check-off program, the proposed organic check-off has been designed to solve what hasn’t worked in other research and promotion programs, emphasizes what has worked, and creates an innovative program tailor-made for today’s organic sector.

“I’m really happy to see organic is growing up,” said organic blueberry grower Donna Miller. “An organic check-off will help the industry bring the message to consumers of why organic is important and what the difference is between organic and conventional farming,” said Miller, who farms 32 acres of certified organic blueberries in west central Florida. “Consumers need to realize that the difference goes right down to the ground and to what we are putting in our drinking water through our farming practices.”

OTA led the drive to explore the feasibility of an organic check-off, gathering information over three years throughout the country from the organic community—farmers, processors, distributors and other organic businesses. In town hall meetings, panel discussions, surveys and phone calls, the needs and challenges—and how to meet those needs and challenges—of the organic industry were discussed and analyzed. More than 5,000 organic farms and businesses responded to OTA’s extensive surveys, weighing in support of establishing a dedicated organic check-off by a margin of 2 to 1, with little or no difference in the amount of support between the size and types of operations.

It’s estimated that GRO Organic could raise over $30 million a year to move the organic sector forward. Rooted in a strong focus on research to make farmers successful and technical services to accelerate the adoption of organic practices, the proposed program is designed to address organic’s most pressing needs: bringing new farmers into organic production, increasing organic research, and educating consumers about organic and its benefits.

A huge portion of the funds raised by the check-off—50 to 75 percent—will be dedicated to research, information dissemination and technical assistance. Not only is research devoted to organic agriculture sadly in need, but without the rapid dissemination of research findings or the unavailability of resources for technical assistance, organic farmers will continue to be held in check.

HELP WANTED
How to get more farmers into organic is an urgent challenge for the growing organic sector.

Demand for organic products in this country has never been greater. OTA’s most recent survey of the U.S. organic industry showed that organic sales in 2014 reached a new record of $39.1 billion, a jump of 11 percent. Organic food sales totaled $35.9 billion, also up more than 10 percent. Organic food now accounts for almost 5 percent of the huge U.S. food market, and some organic categories like organic produce now command more than a ten percent market share.

But organic acreage is still less than 1 percent of the total farm acreage in the United States. The widening disparity between organic supplies and organic demand means that organic milk producers have been forced to turn to foreign-grown organic products for organic feed for their cattle. Organic processors and handlers have also had to look abroad to fulfill their orders. And despite the best efforts to satisfy the growing appetite for organic, many
Retailers find that running short of organic products on their grocery shelves is not that rare of an occurrence. “We have the organic demand here, and we have the ability to grow organic here; what we need to do is increase the organic production,” said Roger Lansink, an organic corn, soybean, and barley grower in northwest Iowa. Lansink and his two sons farm 750 acres of organic crops, and have been certified organic for 20 years. Lansink thinks that now is the time for the organic industry to come together to advance itself, and that the organic check-off could be the way. “This check-off would greatly enhance organic’s ability to meet the demand. This check-off would allow funds to be spent on bringing new farmers into organic, so that organic supply can grow,” said Lansink. “It would focus on increasing organic production, which would be unlike other check-offs which focus on increasing demand. This is on the right track.”

**RESEARCH NEEDS**

The lack of funds for organic research—on organic production, on ways to control pests and weeds organically, on organic seed breeding, and more—is a key obstacle in the effort to increase organic production. And the corresponding lack of accurate and up-to-date data about the findings of key organic research and studies, along with an at-best spotty infrastructure to turn to for technical assistance, have kept the organic sector at a disadvantage.

Organic producers throughout the country say that without good research—and good information and adequate technical assistance—to help them deal with everyday problems, they are often fighting an uphill battle in staying ahead of the bugs and invasive weeds and unexpected diseases.

“The money spent on organic research is a fraction of what is spent on conventional research. An organic check-off could help organic farming the most by providing funds for research for organic systems,” said Perry Clutts, organic dairy farmer in Ohio. “Research helps present organic farmers reach higher potential, and it also gives confidence to future organic farmers to transition.”

“The need for a funding mechanism for organic research is huge,” added Doug Crabtree, organic grain and legume farmer in north central Montana. “Organic crops should be grown from organic seeds, but until there is dedicated funding for organic seeds, we are going to fall behind. We need more long-term research on crop rotation and on long-term farm system trials. Organic is starving for research funds, and the check-off could be a way to channel money into the system.”

Florida blueberry grower Miller agreed: “Organic needs more research dollars for the organic problems we’re all fighting with … We could rocket what is available money-wise for organic research if we could provide some funds from an organic check-off.”

**CONFUSED CONSUMERS**

Consumers all over the country, of all ages, income levels, political leanings and ethnic backgrounds, are buying organic.
Market research released this spring by OTA shows that from the Atlantic Seaboard to the Pacific Coast, from Detroit to Houston, sales of organic products are posting double-digit increases. The majority of American households in all regions of the country now make organic a part of their supermarket and retail purchases—from 68 to almost 80 percent of households in southern states, to nearly 90 percent on the West Coast and in New England.

And while the average shopper knows a lot more about organic than in years past, there is still much confusion about what the organic label stands for, and misleading information on what differentiates organic from all the unregulated claims on food that have proliferated in the grocery aisle.

One-third of organic consumers are new to the market and have been buying organic for less than two years, so they’re still learning all the facts. But, even for many people who have been buying organic regularly for some period, there is still a lack of knowledge that there is a huge infrastructure of regulations and standards behind the organic label.

“People don’t always understand that organic is the highest standard out there. Over the years of interacting with consumers, we know first-hand how confused consumers are about organic in the broad sense,” said Jesse Laflamme, organic egg producer and founder of Pete & Gerry’s Organic Eggs in New Hampshire.

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“‘To have a program from a high level that educates on the benefits of organic is critical: that farmers are not allowed to use toxic chemicals, that farmers aren’t allowed to use antibiotics, not allowed to use growth hormones, and more; those are very high level virtues of organic that are somewhat unclear and often not differentiated enough from other brands,” said Laflamme.

Vermont organic farmer Abbie Corse shares Laflamme’s concern, and says the organic sector needs to come together through a check-off program to pool funds to tell consumers the value of organic: “There is so much confusion in the marketplace for consumers...We need to let them know that when they buy USDA Organic, they are buying good, for their children, their family, their environment, their world. If we don’t put our money where our mouth is, who is going to?”

“An organic check-off program offers the organic industry an opportunity to unite and work toward a common goal of growing more organic. While there is increasing demand for organic, there are many more people who still don’t understand what organic is about and how they and the planet can benefit. Furthermore, some organic farmers face challenges that investment in agronomic research and other field-based activities would help overcome. An organic check-off program can help move the entire industry in the right direction to address these challenges, and help us get closer to the future we want to see with more organic available to all.”

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Photos: Nature’s Path (Page 5); Leslie Goldman, Your Enchanted Gardener (Pages 8, 9).
REFORM FOCUSED
Commodity check-off programs have been a part of American agriculture for almost fifty years, and numerous studies have been done on the effectiveness of those programs during that period. Most studies have found that check-offs have boosted funding for research, increased awareness and demand for the product they are promoting, and have returned a good investment on the dollar.

That said, some of the older research and promotion programs established as “stand-alone” Acts of Congress have been criticized for not always using check-off funds wisely or in the best interests of the sector they represent. The Generic Act, under which the GRO Organic program would be established, resolves many of these issues through new rules on how much of check-off funds can be spent for administrative purposes, identifying production practices as a research area for check-off funds and other new criteria.

OTA went even further in the crafting of the check-off proposal, learning from the concerns of farmers and other stakeholders, and creating a program that would represent the best of all the check-off programs.

“This is not your father’s check-off,” said Melissa Hughes, Director of Government Affairs for Organic Valley, the nation’s oldest organic dairy cooperative, and president of OTA’s Board of Directors. “This check-off is unique as the sector it is representing. It contains meaningful reforms to improve upon older check-offs.”

The key reforms put in place in the organic check-off proposal include:

- **Equal representation** on the Check-off Board of producers and handlers.
- **Direct election** of producer board members through direct balloting of producers.
- A full value chain of assessment, with all organic stakeholders paying into the program.
- A referendum every seven years to decide whether or not to continue the program.
- The option for farmers and handlers with gross organic revenue below $250,000 to voluntarily pay into the program.
- The option for organic producers to pay an assessment based on Net Organic Sales or Producer Net Profit.
- **Earmarking** up to 75 percent of the check-off funds for research (including regional priorities), for disseminating information on organic research and studies, and for technical assistance.
- Ensuring that all the research, inventions and innovations resulting from organic check-off programing remain in the public domain.

Will everyone like the organic check-off? No. But Iowa farmer Lansink sums it up: “If we get this passed and it doesn’t work out, we get to come back in seven years and take it back. But right now is the time for the organic industry to come together.”

An organic check-off. Unprecedented. Forward-thinking. Future-oriented. Like the industry it would be representing. //

“The organic industry in America is thriving and maturing, but it is at a critical juncture. An organic check-off program would give organic stakeholders the opportunity to collectively invest in research, build domestic supply and communicate the value of the organic brand to advance the entire industry to a new level.”

– Laura Batcha
Organic Trade Association
Organic Valley dairy farmers like the Phillips family believe in the importance of providing healthy, local, organic dairy products for the communities they live in. For more than 25 years, our farmer-owned cooperative has been committed to producing nutritious, organic products in harmony with the earth and with respect for animals.

Learn more about our mission at OrganicValley.coop.
An organic check-off would be unlike any other check-off program in American agriculture. Nothing like it has ever been tried, so the idea has understandably raised some questions. OTA has talked to lots of organic stakeholders over the past three years, and has found there’s a core group of concerns that keep coming up. We’ve also found that most of these concerns are based on perceptions of older check-offs, and we’ve addressed these issues.

**CONCERN / Producers won’t be adequately represented and will get overshadowed by large corporate interests.**

**SOLUTION /** The composition of the check-off board has been designed with the key objective to give producers a strong voice. Organic producers will hold at least half of the voting seats on the check-off board. Those producers will represent different regions, and will be directly elected by producers in their region. Producers are the backbone of the organic industry, and their needs and interests will not be overlooked or diminished.

**CONCERN / Smaller-scale producers and handlers wouldn’t have a say in the program.**

**SOLUTION /** The check-off has been crafted so that producers and handlers with revenue under $250,000 could choose to be assessed. If they chose to participate and pay into the program, they’d have full voting rights.

**CONCERN / It would be too expensive for the smaller operations.**

**SOLUTION /** The assessment rate is broad and shallow; everybody pays a little into the program and everyone benefits. The assessment rate would be 1/10 of 1 percent of Net Organic Sales (or of Producer Net Profit), so for an operation with net organic sales of $90,000 for example, the voluntary annual assessment would be $90.

**CONCERN / Not enough of the check-off funds would go into research.**

**SOLUTION /** An absolutely paramount objective of the GRO Organic program is to increase research for organic in order to help organic farmers deal with everyday problems, accelerate the adoption of organic practices and boost organic production. At least 50 to 75 percent of the check-off funds have been earmarked specifically for research or for activities that work hand-in-hand with research, such as technical assistance and widespread information dissemination of research findings. Also, because organic producers have identified local and regional research as a critical need, a board sub-committee of regional producer seat holders would be established to recommend to the full board just how those research funds should be spent.

**CONCERN / Too much of the check-off money would be spent on salaries and administrative costs, and other questionable activities.**

**SOLUTION /** A number of common-sense prohibitions are written into the check-off: First, a tight maximum cap of 15 percent of assessments has been established for administrative expenses; second, no check-off dollars could be used for lobbying; third, no check-off dollars could be used to promote individual brands.

**CONCERN / Once this is in place, it won’t be able to be terminated.**

**SOLUTION /** A referendum is required every seven years to decide whether or not to continue the program. The organic check-off has been crafted to be accountable and transparent. If organic stakeholders are not satisfied with the program, they can vote to end it.
Farmland LP creatively strategizes to meet organic demand

By Linda Richards

The challenge is clear and only intensifying with the rising demand for organic products: more organic farmers and more organic land are needed.

At the same time, older farmers are selling farmland, fueling a farmland real estate market that continues to grow. For investors, this has averaged a return rate of 12 percent the last 20 years, according to the National Council of Real Estate Investment Fiduciaries.

A company called Farmland LP is using these market dynamics to offer a creative solution. Launched in 2009 and based in San Francisco, Farmland LP owns over 7,000 acres of farmland in California and Oregon. More than 1,000 acres of them are now certified organic, with the rest in transition.

The farms are professionally managed by Farmland LP, while 20 tenant farmers and ranchers lease cropland, livestock forage and on-farm facilities. One of these is Garret Mussi, a third-generation farmer in the Delta area east of San Francisco. For 50 years, his family had leased land that was recently sold to Farmland LP. The company worked out an agreement where he farmed a portion last year while the land transitioned to organic.

“I had been skeptical about organic but they asked us if we wanted to grow organic this year,” said Mussi. He said yes and now his family is one of first to farm organically in the Delta area, growing durum wheat, tomatoes and silage crops.

THE VISION

Jason Bradford co-launched the company with his business partner Craig Wichner, a private equity investment manager long interested in agriculture. Bradford grew up in Silicon Valley where he witnessed the conversion of orchards in Santa Clara Valley to tract housing. Always a biology nut, he was fascinated by agriculture. After obtaining his doctorate, he launched his career. This included co-founding the certified organic Brookside Farm in Willits, CA, and research with the Missouri Botanical Gardens, where he began the Andes Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research Group (ABERG)—which studies biodiversity distribution and how ecosystems work in a South American area that harbors Earth’s highest biodiversity and is also the area most threatened by climate change.

It was the ABERG experience that molded Bradford’s thinking in the global need for a sustainable farming model. “And Brookside Farm gave me a perspective on farming and the food system that allowed me to think about the need to manage land and partner with farmers the way we do,” Bradford said.

Farmland LP is a B corporation, also called B Corps. B Corps are profit corporations certified by the non-profit B Lab, which demonstrate that they meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency in addition to making a profit.

Farmland LP was named to B Corp’s “Best for the World” top 100 list the past two years. Farmland LP also made Fast Company’s list of the “World’s 50 most Innovative Companies.” Open to accredited investors, Farmland LP has two funds. The first was established in 2009 as a limited partnership with a 30-year term. The second fund, launched in late 2014, is a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) that functions like a mutual fund for farmland.

TRANSITIONING TO ORGANIC

The company’s primary mission is to acquire and manage farmland near high demand organic markets.

“Many of our farmers sell to restaurants or through small distributors going to regional grocery chains and food coops. For example, in Oregon, Cattail Creek Lamb buys nearly all the lambs from our farms. Mosaic Farms is a small grower of pastured hogs that sells regionally,” explained Bradford, who is also the company’s manager overseeing farm operations.
Delta farmer Mussi said the biggest benefit for him was having someone else deal with the three-year transition of the land to organic, which Bradford and his advisors accomplished during the pasturing phase.

The company’s early acreage near Corvallis, purchased from retiring farmers, made a quick organic transition, primarily by putting it into pasture for livestock grazing. “Now some of those early pastures are rotating into vegetables (winter squash, spinach, kale), which is very exciting for me as it fulfills a long-term plan,” said Bradford.

While continuing to add acreage, Bradford said the company’s biggest challenge is continuing to transition the larger acreage farmland, especially in California, which came with legacy tenants, such as Mussi, who were farming conventionally. “It is a process to phase out conventional leases and bring in new tenants. In some cases, legacy tenants such as Mussi will convert to organic with us,” he said, adding that much time is spent building relationships and ensuring that expectations are clear on all sides.

**VITAL PARTNERSHIPS**

Within an area, Farmland LP prefers to buy land in significant blocks so that a diverse set of farmers can rotate from field to field to grow their specialized crop. Some of the Oregon farms have less than 100 acres, but are managed along nearby farms with 1,700 acres.

“A farmer growing grain and other seed crops may want a couple hundred acres or more within a few miles of each other. If we are bringing on livestock, we need enough pasture to make it cost-effective for them to manage their stock,” said Bradford. A small number of tenants need only five to ten acres to expand vegetable acres or raise pastured hogs.

Working with stakeholders to make the farmland offer positive environmental assets is another mission. For example, they’re working with the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to restore riparian forest and with U.S. Fish and Wildlife on endangered species recovery. As part of that effort, pollinator hedgerows are being planted with a grant from the National Resources Conservation Service.

**FUTURE GOALS**

Bradford can’t say enough about the perseverance and dedication of his staff. “This is exciting but very challenging work with a blend of high creativity and diligent follow-through,” he said.

In three years, Bradford hopes to complete all land purchases for the REIT fund. “In five years we plan to be well on our way towards organic transition on those lands. In ten years, he forecasts, Farmland LP will be the top organic farmland manager in the country.

“Personally I am always seeking to learn and improve my ability to manage farmland with the agroecological principles I adhere to. I want to see the farmland become more vibrant and productive with higher biodiversity, both native and domesticated, and stewarded by a host of talented farmers and ranchers earning right livelihoods,” Bradford said. //
The Organic Farmer’s Toolbox: A National List Perspective

By Gwendolyn Wyard
OTA’s Senior Director of Regulatory and Technical Affairs

In late April, the 15-member National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) met in La Jolla, CA, where it spent the majority of its four-day meeting listening to public comments and discussing the majority of National List inputs scheduled to sunset in 2016 or 2017. Under the Sunset Review Process, non-organic inputs allowed in organic farming and handling under certain restrictions must be reviewed every five years, to provide an opportunity to remove them from the National List if they fail the criteria outlined in the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA).

The Sunset process was designed to maintain the National List and keep it in line with OFPA criteria. This ensures that allowed production and handling inputs used to grow, raise or make organic products are 1) not harmful to human health or the environment, and 2) necessary because of the unavailability of a natural or organic substitute.

This process is a fundamental part of the organic law. However, there continues to be considerable debate about the end-goal: whether the objective is to shrink and ultimately eliminate the National List or simply maintain a list consistent with OFPA. The discussion brings many interesting questions, and sometimes successfully spurs market innovation to create new and better alternative farming and handling inputs.

Unfortunately, the debate also creates a disproportionate amount of time on the “use of inputs,” and detracts from the real focus of organic agriculture—to build healthy soils and use cultural and biological practices to combat pests, weeds and diseases.

With this conversation in mind and in preparation for the review of over 200 National List materials, OTA prepared an article entitled “The Organic Farmer’s Toolbox.” We featured this perspective in our Spring 2015 NOSB Resource Booklet along with a Know Your National List article demonstrating the “no-growth trend” to the National List since 2008. We are encouraging OTA members to widely circulate this information so we can push out a positive perspective that reflects realistic organic practices, strict standards, on-going transparency and public participation.

THE ORGANIC TOOLBOX
Every household needs a good toolbox and a well-stocked first aid kit to deal with unexpected challenges. And so it is with organic agriculture.

Many consumers believe that absolutely no synthetic substances are used in organic production. For the most part, they are correct and this is the basic tenet of the organic law. But there are a few limited exceptions to this rule, and the National List is designed to handle these exceptions. The National List can be thought of as the “restricted toolbox” for organic farmers and handlers. Like the toolboxes or first aid kits in our cupboards to deal with critical situations, the organic toolbox is to be used only under very special circumstances.

The organic farmer’s toolbox contains materials traditionally used in organic production. By law, they are necessary tools widely recognized as safe and for which there are no natural alternatives. This toolbox is much smaller than the “full toolbox” used in conventional farming. Organic farmers have restricted access to 25 synthetic active pest control products, while over 900 are registered for use in conventional farming. For the most part, they are correct and this is the basic tenet of the organic law. But 550 synthetic active ingredients are

How do the synthetic pest control products allowed in organic farming compare to the pesticides allowed in conventional farming?

25 synthetic active pest control products

registered for use in conventional farming by EPA*

900+ synthetic active pesticide products

allowed in organic crop production


The organic farmer must first use mechanical, cultural, biological and natural materials and move onto the toolbox only when and if they don’t work. In this way the toolbox is “restricted.”

Organic Trade Association | www.OTA.com
The organic farmer must first use preventive practices and biologics to prevent sickness and move onto the toolbox only when and if they don't work. In this way the toolbox is “restricted.”

organic livestock production

Before organic farmers can use any of these substances, however, they must develop a pest and disease management plan describing how they will first prevent and manage pests without the use of National List inputs. The restricted toolbox can only be opened when mechanical, cultural, and biological controls are insufficient to control pests, weeds and disease. This is foundational to organic farming.

The National List is also designed to cover the up to 5% non-organic minor ingredients allowed in organic food processing. These ingredients are essential in organic food processing but difficult or impossible to obtain in organic form, either because the supply is very limited or the ingredient is non-agricultural (like baking soda) and cannot be certified organic. A total of 79 non-agricultural minor ingredients are allowed in an organic processor’s “pantry,” while the conventional food processor’s pantry is bulging with more than 3,000 total allowed substances.

The restricted toolbox used in organic production and handling represents the best and least-toxic technology our food system has developed. NOSB regularly reviews the tools in the organic toolbox to assure they still meet the organic criteria set forth in the law. Under the rigorous Sunset process, NOSB and organic stakeholders review the contents of the toolbox every five years to make sure that organic’s allowed tools continue to be safe for humans, safe for the environment, and necessary because of the lack of natural or organic alternatives. There is no other regulation like this in the world.

Now more than ever, organic agricultural practices are needed on more acres to address significant environmental challenges for our planet. Now more than ever, the supply of organic ingredients, particularly grains and animal feed, is falling behind consumer demand. We face the dual challenges of encouraging more farmers to convert to organic and making our food production more sustainable. NOSB’s challenge is to protect the integrity of organic, while at the same time providing producers and handlers with enough flexibility to allow them to comply with organic standards and to also expand organic acreage.

Like the toolboxes and first aid kits of households for unexpected emergencies should they arise, the organic toolbox provides the tools to safely meet the challenges of today’s organic world.

To learn about the results of the spring 2015 NOSB meeting, check out OTA’s NOSB Report. For more information about the National List, check out OTA’s website. //

How do the materials allowed in organic processed foods compare to the materials allowed in all other food?

79 non-agricultural minor ingredients allowed in organic processing

3000+ substances comprise Everything Added to Food in the United States (EAFUS)

Compared to the 79 non-agricultural minor ingredients allowed in organic processing, more than 3,000 total substances comprise an inventory often referred to as Everything Added to Food in the United States (EAFUS), and this is only a partial list of all food ingredients that may be lawfully added to conventional food.
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The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations Council has declared 2015 as the International Year of Soils. Soils have been receiving a lot of attention lately, because they are the basis for our food systems, fuel and fiber production, many essential environmental functions, and climate change mitigation. Unfortunately, soil health is under threat: the large-scale use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides in conventional farming has been damaging soils and decreasing their natural ability to provide ecosystem services.

One of the benefits of organic agriculture is that it cultures soils to have higher biodiversity, an important measure in soil health. An article published in the journal *Science* found that organic soils had greater biological activity, greater soil stability, more biomass and higher diversity than conventionally managed soils. Another study published in 2014 in *Agronomy for Sustainable Development* found that conservation and organic farming techniques increased the number of soil organisms when compared to conventional farming.

Organic management is also important for carbon sequestration and building soil organic matter. The Organic Center has been addressing this issue by collaborating with Dr. Geoff Davies and Dr. Elham Ghabbour, who head the National Soil Project, to investigate soil health in conventional and organic farms. Drs. Davies and Ghabbour have developed an innovative technique that is able to separate out soil organic matter into its components: humic acid, fulvic acid, and humin.

Looking at each of the pieces that make up soil separately is important because while fulvic acids are water soluble and fluctuate from year to year, humic acid represents the long-term storage of carbon in the soil. Because the application of synthetic fertilizer can strip the soil of humic acid, The Organic Center and the National Soil Project are comparing the levels of humic acid between conventionally managed soil and organically managed soils, which do not use synthetic fertilizer.

This will be the first time that the humic acid differences between management systems have been quantified and linked to soil health. Several studies have found that organic is better at sequestering carbon, so we expect to see higher levels of humic acid, which would mean that not only is organic better at sequestering carbon, but it is effectively locking away carbon in long-term reserves that would otherwise be in the atmosphere.

The Organic Center Project will be continuing through 2015, and the project is offering free soil analyses to all organic farmers who send in soil samples. For more information about the research and to learn how to submit soil samples, visit The Organic Center’s Soil Health website.

This year, celebrate the International Year of Soils with The Organic Center by helping us gather more soil for our research. This work will be used to communicate with farming organizations, policymakers, and the public about how transitioning to organic benefits the soils, the land, and the greater landscape of agriculture as a whole. //
HELP WANTED: PUBLIC SERVANTS

Tending the Organic Policy Garden

By Mark Lipson

June 14, 2010, I arrived at the west end of the National Mall in D.C. for my first day of employment advising the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture on organic farming and localizing food systems. It was quite a leap for me. After spending 25 years of advocacy and agitation as an organic farmer and non-profit policy wonk, I was about to be assimilated into the Obama Administration. Later that day, I sat outside in the recently inaugurated “People’s Garden,” a patch of reclaimed parking pavement just becoming a working garden of food and flowers.

In that garden, I looked to find inspiration for my new task: cultivating organic agriculture policy and projects across the breadth of USDA beyond the NOP regulatory boundaries. That’s what I did for the next four and half years: weeding, planting, tilling and harvesting in more than a dozen different patches of varied fertility, in some cases still with toxic residues, in some places yielding healthy results and suitable for proud display.

As the first person with such an assignment within USDA, I was obviously stretched pretty thin. I quickly found that while the numbers of people who understood and valued organic and sustainable agriculture in public service were growing (and have grown more during the past six years), we still needed a lot more people on the team, at all levels. It’s especially undersized relative to the size of the organic economy and the critical potential for organic agriculture to address the systemic challenges our planet faces.

The “insurmountable opportunities” for the federal organic policy garden required then—as they do now—a small army of organic experts and allies. We need, and can deploy, a bigger force, both working change from within institutions and influencing from outside the world views of those who are in government service.

I’m now six months out from the end of my term at USDA, back on my farm and catching up with myself and community. I’m beginning to work on distilling my Washington experiences and finding ways to transmit the lessons. One such lesson is already completely clear: organic, regenerative, agroecological food systems have much deeper soil and wider territory to claim within our public institutions, but it won’t happen without a lot more policy gardeners toiling at the task.

I’m not (only) appealing for people in the organic industry to take a tour of duty in Washington. There are manifold ways to participate in conquering territory in the policy jungle. For every role in the organic sector, there are needs for service on advisory boards, expert panels, and other forms of stakeholder groups.

OTA continues to be an effective and growing force in the policy arena, with its membership activities, political alliances, and service contributions all playing a part. Some other public interest organizations have organic advancement on their agenda, and such groups are also a great vehicle for participation. Think of a swarm of organic pollinators and other beneficial organisms working on all those fronts in the organic policy garden. Be a part of the swarm.

As far as the heaviest trench work in the garden, that’s where the biggest change happens. No matter what happens in U.S. elections, the advancement of organic agriculture in public policy will be directly correlated with the presence of organic-sector-trained professionals in policymaking and implementing. Whether your expertise is production, procurement, formulation, distribution, or communications, there will be need for that in the context of federal agency service. Mid-career and senior members of the organic sector can and should consider preparing for such service. The phrase “government revolving door” has a malignant connotation, but that is not at all always deserved. It is possible to step over from industry and commerce into government and still be able to distinguish private gain from public interest in pursuit of the latter. That this often fails to happen is not a reason to abandon the field to those who project a different set of values into the practice of public policy.

While the mission of cultivating organic values into public policy may require some self-sacrifice, there are positive rewards. I found satisfaction in converting diverse opportunities into gains for organic farmers and food systems. Sometimes it was only stopping or slowing down something that was not such a good idea, but that was a good reason to be there. I was inspired by a number of incredibly smart and ridiculously hard-working people who were on their own tour of duty. Returning now to my home and farming community, I have a whole new perspective on the possibilities and payoffs within the organic policy garden.

From this vantage, I wonder who will next take up the spade and pruners to tend the growing organic policy garden. Will it be you? //
Former CCOF Board Member Jenny Lester Moffitt earlier this year was appointed Deputy Secretary at the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). Prior to that, Jenny was managing director at OTA member company Dixon Ridge Farms since 2005. She previously served as an education, outreach and research specialist at the American Farmland Trust, and was vice chair of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. Jenny will be a very strong voice for organic agriculture at CDFA.

How has your previous experience prepared you for this role?
Raised on my family’s organic walnut farm, I have grown up in the organic industry. In 1992, when my family’s farm became certified organic and expanded into processing, I stepped in and worked to develop our first customer. In high school, when it was time to develop a research project, I investigated Integrated Pest Management (IPM) systems, conducting action research on my family’s farm.

Since then, I haven’t stopped championing the importance of agriculture, including organic agriculture. As managing director of my family’s farm for the past 10 years, I oversaw the company’s day-to-day operations, including sales and marketing, food safety and organic certification. As vice chair of the Central Valley Regional Quality Control Board, I approached every opportunity and challenge with an open mind and thoughtful judgment.

CDFA embraces the diversity of our agricultural production systems and I share this value. I value the perspective of diverse experiences and opinions. It is for this reason and the many wonderful issues that I work on that I am excited to work at CDFA.

What issues critical to organic are on your radar there?
My work at CDFA includes water, climate change, healthy soils, the state organic program, farmland protection, compost and beginning farmer—all of which are critical to organic farming.

Without water, soil, climate and farmers, we wouldn’t be able to produce the food and fiber that we all need.

One issue that California and CDFA is embarking on is an issue that is near and dear to my heart: healthy soils. On our farm, we understood how important soil was to our livelihood. Healthy soils are important not just for providing nutrients to support plant life, but for water capture and retention, carbon sequestration and biodiversity. In January, Governor Brown launched a Healthy Soils Initiative and has charged CDFA with taking the lead to work cross agency in implementation. I am thrilled to be part of the team working on this very important initiative.

How receptive is CDFA to concerns and practices of organic growers?
The diversity of our agricultural production systems is essential to keeping California a leader in agriculture. CDFA and California champion that diversity. We are proud to have the most certified organic acres in the nation and to be the only state with a State Organic Program as well as a robust organic input material review and registration program.

The department is receptive to organic alternatives, as demonstrated by our use of biocontrol options and organic-approved treatments in several of our active programs. Just recently we announced the addition of a second biocontrol organism, a parasitic wasp, to our Asian citrus psyllid response efforts, with the Santa Barbara County infested area already identified as a site for releases. Our scientists, along with partners in the university systems, search the world for these alternatives, often going to far-flung sites in Asia and elsewhere to find and bring back predatory or parasitic organisms that can keep our invasive pests in check.

We use other alternatives including sterile insects (Medfly and pink bollworm, for example) and pheromone treatments as well. An organic formulation of the pesticide spinosad is a central element in our response to fruit fly infestations. We have demonstrated not just a willingness to use these alternatives, but also a commitment to choose them first as long as they are shown to be effective.

What are your goals in serving in this post?
I am proud to bring my perspective as a farmer to CDFA. I know how personal farming is. Agriculture is not just an industry, it is our nation’s roots, our food and fiber, and a way of life for California’s 80,000 plus farmers and ranchers. I hope that I can help share that story and help others understand what farmers go through—their vulnerability to market forces, their utter dedication to feeding people while serving as responsible stewards of the land.

Do you think your appointment will make a difference to the organic sector?
I bring 10 years of operating my family’s organic farm and processing operation to every conversation I am involved in, and I know the challenges and opportunities of the organic community. I’m proud to bring that experience to CDFA. But I’m also proud to represent the voices of all farmers and champion the good work we are doing to be trusted stewards of the land. //
COF will soon release a comprehensive report on the California State Organic Program (SOP) entitled The California Organics Review Report (CORR). California is the only state with its own organic program, and CCOF members consistently express concern that the SOP unnecessarily duplicates the National Organic Program (NOP). Therefore, CCOF is developing CORR to understand how the SOP may reinforce NOP and identify potential inconsistencies, shortcomings, or duplicative fees and paperwork requirements.

CORR complements our multi-faceted work to support existing and transitioning organic producers because it brings clarity to an ongoing policy issue for our membership. California produces more organic product than any other state in the United States, with over $8.2 billion in organic product sales annually. Yet organic producers in California comply with more regulations and pay more fees than any other organic producers in the nation.

Meanwhile, retailers and food manufacturers are calling upon California to help increase acreage and expand production to meet the rising national demand for organic products. Thus, we must understand what it will take to responsibly increase organic acreage and production in California if we want domestic production to meet the high national demand for organic.

We recognize that addressing tough policy issues head-on is part of the puzzle to maintaining and increasing organic production in California. The most frequently cited policy issue among our California producers is concern about the SOP’s fees. To determine whether improvements or legislative changes are appropriate, organic stakeholders and California policymakers must have a basic knowledge of the SOP and its relationship to NOP. By building this knowledge base, CORR will provide a foundation upon which the organic community may build to address challenges related to the certification process.

To ensure full stakeholder engagement, we developed CORR with an advisory committee comprised of diverse organic producers, public officials, and other stakeholders. The advisory committee reviewed our goals, helped us set the agenda for the report, and provided direction and feedback on key interviews and documents for review. The advisory committee’s final task will be to vet and critique CORR.

In addition to our advisory committee, we engaged with other stakeholders through a series of interviews. For example, we interviewed public officials at the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and California Department of Public Health, county agriculture commissioners, organic farmers and processors, people who work in certification, and a variety of other stakeholders. We heard firsthand accounts from farmers and processors about challenges working with the SOP as well as accounts about the value of the SOP to certified organic food. We also vetted our interpretations of legislative histories, efforts to reform, and government documents such as budgets via interviews and conversations with appropriate individuals.

Additionally, we used a variety of research methods and tools, and strived for high stakeholder engagement. For example, we examined the legislative history and mandates of both the SOP and NOP. We also compared NOP’s enforcement in other states to California. Finally, we closely examined the SOP’s budget and fee structures, and discussed our findings with public officials at CDFA.

In sum, CORR is the first step for a worthwhile conversation about fees and regulations of organic production in California. Through our in-depth research and high stakeholder engagement, we feel confident that CORR will help the organic community move forward with reforms or changes to the SOP. In turn, CORR will help California step up and take part in the national effort to grow organic.
ORGANIC IS NON-GMO & MORE

www.ccof.org/non-gmo
OTA plays a role in the broader food policy debate

By Marni Karlin
OTA’s Vice President of Government Affairs/General Counsel

For years, OTA has focused its resources on influencing the national policy debate around organic agriculture priorities—things like ensuring the National Organic Program has the tools it needs to fully enforce the organic regulations, appropriating federal funds for organic-specific research, and developing a proposal for an organic research and promotion program. These debates take place in the context of the Farm Bill and appropriations.

But it is important for organic to have a seat at the table in the broader food policy debate—playing a role in conversations about issues that are not organic-specific, but that affect the organic community. Organic agriculture can offer unique solutions to broader food policy issues—and engaging in these conversations can facilitate coalition building with partners with whom we might not otherwise encounter.

Developing working relationships with stakeholders in the broader food and agriculture community is important, both in terms of wider food policy debates and in helping develop new allies in advance of the next Farm Bill and appropriations debates.

This summer, OTA is engaged in the debate around three broader food policy areas—dietary guidelines, pollinator policy, and child nutrition.

Dietary Guidelines

The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee this year had a mandate to consider sustainability as it drafted the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. OTA’s comments were among the more than 22,000 comments filed to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Agriculture—more comments than have ever been submitted on any prior Dietary Guidelines. Many of the comments were about the Committee’s recommendation that Americans cut back on red and processed meats.

OTA’s comments, which focused on the Committee’s consideration of sustainability, encouraged the Committee to incorporate a commitment to organic agriculture into future Guidelines. Organic agriculture can enhance sustainability, sound treatment of the environment, and the health of the American public. The data continue to show the role that organic production practices play in ultimate nutritional outcomes, so a commitment to organic is a commitment to the nutrition of American eaters.

Pollinator Policy

Seventy-five percent of all crops grown for human consumption rely on pollinators, predominantly bees, for a successful harvest. Over the past decade, both native and honeybee populations have been declining at alarming rates, raising concerns about the impact on our global food security. Since 2006, U.S. honeybee keepers have reported they lose 30 percent of their hives on average each winter.

Factors likely involved in declining pollinator populations include exposure to toxic agricultural pesticides, decrease in pollinator forage due to extensive mono-cropping and dramatic increase in non-selective use of herbicides, and destruction of native habitat through the conversion of land for anthropogenic use.

Earlier this summer, the White House released a National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators. Although intended to be a comprehensive approach to reducing the impact of stressors on pollinator health, it only minimally addressed the impact of agricultural production methods on pollinators.

OTA has released its own position on pollinator policy. There, OTA urges the Administration to more fully address the impact of agricultural production methods, including organic practices, on pollinators, and dedicate research to these practices. Organic farming standards require a number of practices that are beneficial to pollinators—such as the prohibition of the use of synthetic pesticides, and a requirement of farm management that fosters biodiversity and improves natural resources.

OTA has engaged in the conversation by specifically calling on:

• USDA to ensure the National Organic Program has the resources needed to move forward on an organic apiculture standard

• USDA to investigate the best and most successful models—including diversified organic systems and practices—for pollinator habitat protection

• USDA to expand programs—conservation or others—through which producers can get assistance in establishing appropriate pollinator habitat

• USDA and EPA to recommit to identifying alternatives to neonicotinoid pesticide use and leveraging organic systems to reach that goal

• USDA to rely on existing research and engage in new research to assist farmers in organic conversion to benefit pollinators

• The White House to amend its National Strategy to include agricultural production methods as a valuable solution to pollinator problems and
recognize organic farming practices as particularly beneficial.

CHILD NUTRITION

The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 authorized an organic food pilot program under which school food authorities could explore opportunities to build relationships with local organic companies, farms and food providers to provide healthy and nutritious organic foods to our students, without driving up costs. The pilot program would model best practices in bringing fresh, nutritious, affordable organic foods to our schoolchildren within the confines of the existing school food cost structure.

The pilot program was authorized at $10 million per year, but was never funded. During OTAs Policy Conference this year, OTA members lobbied Members of Congress to fund the program, so best practices could be identified and an opportunity could be created to allow all of our kids to have access to healthy, nutritious, organic lunches.

When funded, this competitive grant program would develop and provide support services to initiatives increasing access to organic foods in eligible schools; help schools scale or further develop existing initiatives that increase access to organic foods; help schools that are just getting started on bringing organic to their schoolchildren and structure their efforts for maximum impact by embedding best practices into early design consideration; or provide technical assistance in the area of procurement, food safety, or other relevant areas.

CONCLUSION

While OTA will, of course, continue to prioritize organic-specific policy goals in our advocacy work, we are also committing our resources to participate in the broader food policy debate. By engaging on issues such as dietary guidelines, pollinator preservation, and child nutrition, we have the opportunity to offer organic solutions to these issues, and build coalitions with stakeholders in the broader agriculture community.

This will serve American consumers, as well as position the organic community as a relevant thought-leader in broader food policy issues.

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NEWS AND TRENDS

Sales of U.S. organic products reach record $39.1 billion

Sales of organic food and non-food products in the United States set another record in 2014, reaching $39.1 billion, up 11.3 percent from 2013, according to the Organic Trade Association’s 2015 Organic Industry Survey. Despite tight supplies of organic ingredients, organic food sales posted an 11 percent increase to reach $35.9 billion, while organic non-food sales, at $3.2 billion, jumped almost 14 percent for the biggest annual increase in six years.

The U.S. organic sector has expanded significantly since OTA first began tracking the industry’s performance in 1997. In 1997, organic food sales totaled around $3.4 billion, and accounted for under 1 percent of total food sales. In 2014, organic food claimed almost 5 percent of the total food sales in the U.S., and has consistently far outshone the 3 percent growth pace for the total food industry.

Organic fruits and vegetables continued to be the biggest-selling organic category in 2014 with $13 billion in sales, up 12 percent from the previous year, and making up more than 36 percent of all organic food sales. Of all the produce now sold in the United States, 12 percent of it is organic, a market share that has more than doubled in the past ten years when organic produce sales accounted for only 5 percent of the fruit and vegetable market.

The organic dairy sector posted an almost 11 percent jump in sales in 2014 to $5.46 billion, the biggest percentage increase for that category in six years. Sales of organic non-food products—accounting for 8 percent of the total organic market—posted the biggest percentage gain in six years, with sales of organic fiber and organic personal care products the stand-out categories.

The final survey report is available for purchase, with OTA members receiving a discount. Contact Angela Jagiello at OTA for more information.

U.S. CERTIFIED ORGANIC OPERATIONS JUMP FIVE PERCENT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced that the number of U.S. certified organic operations increased by more than five percent over the past year, to reach 19,474 businesses. Meanwhile, the global tally reached 27,814 operations certified to meet National Organic Standards.

Since the count began in 2002, U.S. certified organic operation have increased by over 250 percent. The list of certified organic operations is available online through USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service.

GLOBAL ORGANIC MARKET ESTIMATED AT $72 BILLION

According to the latest data on organic farming and sales released in February at BioFach, the global organic market in 2013 reached 72 billion U.S. dollars (approximately 55 billion euros), led by the U.S. market with sales of $35.1 billion (24.3 billion euros).

Germany was next, with 7.6 billion euros, followed by France, with 4.4 billion euros. China, for which there were official market data for the first time, logged in with 2.4 billion euros in sales. Two million organic producers—a new high—were reported in 2013. The countries with the highest numbers of producers were India, Uganda, and Mexico.

Meanwhile, a total of 43.1 million hectares were organic at the end of 2013, up almost 6 million hectares compared to the previous year. These and more statistics are included in The World of Organic Agriculture 2015, published and available for purchase from IFOAM-Organics International and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture. //

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OTA’s Farmers Advisory Council (FAC) provides input from small- and medium-sized organic farmers, ranchers and growers to the Organic Trade Association on matters pertinent to the advancement of organic agriculture, with a specific focus on OTA’s policy agenda. Established in 2013, FAC is designed to formalize and improve communication between OTA and organic producers. It gives organic farmers a voice to directly influence OTA’s policy, and enables OTA to better represent the diversity of organic producers in its policy and advocacy.

The council is comprised of representatives of state and regional farming organizations representing organic that enter into an agreement with OTA for the mutual benefit of strengthening the organic industry’s national public policy influence. If your organization is interested in being represented through FAC, contact OTA’s Senior Crops & Livestock Specialist Nate Lewis.

**FAC PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS**

**CCOF INC.**
CCOF advances organic agriculture for a healthy world. For more than 40 years, we have done this through organic certification, education, advocacy and promotion. From field to fork, we certify and represent organic growers, livestock producers, handlers, and retailers. Our certified members include more than 2,900 organic operations supplying 1,100 different organic crops, products, and services. CCOF is the only full-service organic certification agency whose members are represented by a strong trade association. CCOF is headquartered in Santa Cruz, California, and governed by a board of directors consisting of elected certified members.

It’s important to include CCOF on the Farmers Advisory Council and California farmers to represent organic specialty crops. CCOF is proud to have a seat at the FAC table to advance organic agriculture.

—Phil LaRocca of LaRocca Vineyards in Forest Ranch, California, is Chair of the CCOF Inc. Board.

**CROPP COOPERATIVE**
Organic Valley is America’s largest cooperative of organic farmers and one of the nation’s leading organic brands. Organized in 1988, it represents approximately 1,800 farmers in 36 states. Focused on its founding mission of saving family farms through organic farming, Organic Valley produces a variety of organic foods, including organic milk, soy, cheese, butter, spreads, creams, eggs, and produce, which are sold in supermarkets, natural food stores and food cooperatives nationwide. With its regional model, milk is produced, bottled and distributed right in the region where it is farmed to ensure fewer miles from farm to table and to support our local economies.

Organic farmers depend on aligning to help the public understand the value of their products, and the Farmers Advisory Council provides that opportunity. The broad range of farmers from across the industry and country share current concerns and issues, so it is a grassroots approach to supporting family farms—which is really the Organic Valley mission.

—Steve Pierson, a member of CROPP Cooperative since 2005, currently serves as Treasurer on its Board and has been a director since 2011. He and his wife Susan operate their organic family dairy farm in St. Paul, Oregon.

**MONTANA ORGANIC ASSOCIATION**
The 230-member farmer-governed Montana Organic Association (MOA) provides invaluable perspectives from organic growers in the important Northern Great Plains and the Mountain West regions. The Northern Great Plains is a significant provider of organic grains, with Montana ranking as the nation’s largest producer of organic wheat.

Joining OTA’s Farmer Advisory Council will benefit our membership in giving them a larger influence on national organic policy issues, and gives FAC our perspective on issues facing Montana’s organic farmers and ranchers. With the demand for organic food so high, especially for grains, MOA thinks this partnership will help us to better serve our membership, cultivate new organic farmers and ranchers, and expand organic acreage in our region.

—Nate Brown, Chairman of the Board for MOA, is an organic dairy farmer in Montana.
OREGON TILTH CERTIFIED ORGANIC

Oregon Tilth is a leading certifier, educator and advocate for organic agriculture and products since 1974. Our mission to make our food system and agriculture biologically sound and socially equitable requires us to find practical ways to tackle big challenges. We advance this mission to balance the needs of people and planet through focus on core areas of certification, conservation, public health, policy and the marketplace. With headquarters in Corvallis, OR, Oregon Tilth’s scope of activities is global. We certify 1,511 operations located in 47 U.S. states as well as Mexico and Canada. We have 1,287 members, comprised of certified operations as well as non-certified individuals and organizations that support our mission.

Oregon Tilth focuses on collaborative partnerships to increase access to resources and expertise. By participating on the FAC, we bring the organic farm community’s diverse perspectives to offer input on ensuring organic integrity, growing the organic sector and driving public investment in sustainable agriculture.

—Chris Schreiner, Executive Director

TILTH PRODUCERS OF WASHINGTON

Tilth Producers of Washington has been a leader in the organic agriculture movement since 1974, educating and advocating for farmers for decades, and committed to making organic agriculture a viable option for beginning and experienced growers alike. Based in Seattle, Tilth Producers is a 500-member organization representing farmers across Washington State. Tilth Producers advocates for policies and regulations that support small-scale organic farming, both in Washington and nationally.

We look forward to having a representative on OTA’s Farmer Advisory Council and providing direct input on behalf of our small and medium-sized grower members.

—Michele Catalano, Executive Director

WESTERN ORGANIC DAIRY PRODUCERS ALLIANCE

The Mission for the Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA) is to preserve, protect and ensure the sustainability and integrity of organic dairy farming across the West. WODPA’s supporting membership is 18 percent of the organic dairy farms, which accounts for about 40 percent of the organic milk produced in the western half of the United States. WODPA’s vision is to advocate for and help protect organic dairy farmers in the West.

It is important for WODPA to be a part of the OTA-FAC so that organic dairy farmers from the Western part of the U.S. can provide input into issues affecting our operations and have our collective voice be heard.

—Sean Mallett is from Harmony Organic Dairy, Twin Falls, Idaho

ORGANIC EGG FARMERS OF AMERICA

The Organic Egg Farmers of America (OEFA) aims is to bring together various stakeholders dedicated to the production of eggs in compliance with the Organic Standards, and to create an environment of honesty and co-operation for the betterment of the industry as a whole. OEFA is a national organization made up of approximately 38 farmers, marketers, certifiers, and associated egg industry companies. A not-for-profit organization dedicated to sharing information, research and exploring common topics that affect egg producers, its primary event is an annual educational symposium. It welcomes new members.

Being part of the Farmers Advisory Council gives us a voice at the table. We are able to share our views with the broader organic farmer community, and advocate together for things that matter to us all. Through FAC and OTA, we are part of the larger movement of organic farming and the difference organic is making in the food system and in rural America.

—Joseph Kropf of Fairfield Specialty Eggs Inc., of Deer Grove, Illinois, is OEFA’s representative on FAC
Doug Crabtree: After a career in organic research, inspection and certification, Doug Crabtree returned to his calling to farm. In 2009, he and his wife Anna Jones-Crabtree founded Vilicus Farms, a dry land organic crop farm located in north-central Montana. The operation produces a diverse array of heirloom and specialty grains, oilseed and pulse crops, and practices “radical” land stewardship, minimizing fallow and strip cropping. It also devotes nearly 20 percent of the land to conservation, enhancing wildlife, pollinators and beneficial biology. Vilicus Farms also sponsors an apprentice program designed to “create and launch” new organic farmers. Doug and Anna strive to provide an example of organic farming practiced as an expression of a deep stewardship ethic as well as a legitimate profession.

John Brunnquell is managing member of Egg Innovations LLC, which owns and operates organic pullet production, an organic feed mill and processing plant as well as chickens for egg production. He oversees the company’s day-to-day operations, sales and marketing, food safety and organic certification. John is active on several industry organic egg boards and committees including United Egg Producers’ Organic Egg Committee, Organic Egg Farmers of America Board of Directors, and the Methionine Task Force. He is both a strong advocate for family farms and for maintaining consumer trust in the organic products produced by the organic industry. Egg Innovations produces a wide variety of specialty eggs, and is committed to organic, animal welfare and maintaining family farms for future generations.

Bob Quinn of Quinn Farm and Ranch owns and operates a fourth generation small grain certified organic dry land family farm of 4,000 acres near Big Sandy in North Central Montana. He earned a Ph.D. in plant biochemistry from the University of California at Davis. His whole farm—100% organic since 1989—is his laboratory as well as his garden. He experiments with organic cropping systems, dry land vegetables, a small orchard, and grows high oleic safflower which is crushed and used first for food by local restaurants and then for fuel to run his tractor. In 1986, Bob introduced Kamut brand Khorasan ancient wheat to the natural food market place.

Organizing across the country, across supply chains, and time zones, we have had challenges, but in keeping with OTA’s value that farmers are the foundation of the organic industry, it has been imperative and a priority for OTA to design a process to hear the voices of organic farmers. OTA’s Farmers Advisory Council does just that, and is doing that successfully. It has been gratifying to see it grow, including more and more farmers.
To organic farmers everywhere for treating their animals and the earth with care and treating us with some of the finest organic ingredients around, thanks.

Howe Farm, VT
One of the Organic Valley family farms that supply milk for our yogurt

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FAC FIELD NOTES

Working to reduce barriers and expand supply

By Nate Lewis
Senior Crops & Livestock Specialist

OTA’s Farmers Advisory Council (FAC) has been busy over the past few months. FAC has expanded its membership and reach through a strategic partnership with Tilth Producers of Washington, and convened the organic supply chain in numerous meetings at OTA’s Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., to refine a strategy for reducing barriers to organic production and expanding organic supply. We are also looking forward to the production season where we will host a collaborative discussion at the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society field day in Carrington, North Dakota.

Adding the voice of farmers from Tilth Producers of Washington will ensure the diversity of concerns and issues facing producers in the Pacific Northwest will be raised and addressed. Finding solutions to these barriers is not simple, and requires a multi-stakeholder approach, which we fostered at our member meetings and agency visits at OTA’s 2015 Policy Conference in D.C.

For three days, OTA members convened in our nation’s capital to identify barriers to organic production and increasing organic supply. Discussions covered crop insurance, land access, apprenticeship programs, and consideration of a possible industry-led transitional certification program. The multi-stakeholder meetings included farmers, handlers, manufacturers, retailers, and certifiers all providing their perspectives on the larger challenges facing the organic industry and how addressing these specific issues could overcome those challenges.

FAC-led conversations about crop insurance informed a small team of OTA farmer members in a visit to the Risk Management Agency (RMA) at USDA. In this meeting, we shared the challenges organic farmers still face in obtaining adequate coverage for their farms, and how RMA could improve their products to better serve the unique needs of organic producers. A strong safety net for farmers is critical to the growth of the organic sector as is facilitating access to mentorships and land for beginning farmers and providing a financial premium for their crops during the three years of transition to organic certification.

These hurdles can be insurmountable, and FAC is taking a lead role in scaling and networking existing apprenticeship programs to provide models for the training of America’s future organic farmers. Similarly, a transitional certification program could be used as a supply chain management tool for organic handlers and play a key role in guaranteeing a premium price for transitional crops.

A strong safety net, opportunities for new and beginning farmers to get into organic production, and a mechanism to compensate existing farmers for the expense of transitioning to organic are all facets of a solution to the organic supply pinch that the industry is facing. These topics were brought to the table through FAC, and developed into policy actions by convening the full spectrum of OTA’s larger membership base.

We are looking forward to showcasing this work at a collaborative meeting in conjunction with the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society’s July 14 field day in Carrington, North Dakota. The field day will take place at the North Dakota State University’s Carrington Research Extension Center, which is focusing breeding efforts on specialty “ancient” grains like Einkorn.

Following the field day, the U.S. Organic Grain Collaborative will host a meeting for farmers, processors, advocates, and Extension on further identifying specific issues preventing organic acreage expansion in the Northern Great Plains, and how to best leverage the resources available.

By convening a regionally based stakeholder group, we hope to build off the success of OTA’s national approach to the issues and develop solutions that work to address the specific regional concerns of the Northern Great Plains.
**WHEN #ORGANIC GOES SOCIAL**

Bringing stakeholders together to deliver the #organic message

By Kelly Taveras
OTA’s Digital Communications Manager

“What does ‘organic’ really mean? Can I trust it? Why is it so expensive?”

The conversation is happening on social media, whether you’re a part of it or not. Throughout the world, millions of consumers, businesses, influencers and policymakers are engaged across a variety of social networks—and all signs point to continued growth across channels in the coming years.

Today more than half of the U.S. population engages on social networks regularly, and most of them are under age 34. At the same time, OTA’s U.S. Families Attitudes and Beliefs Study shows that the majority of organic consumers are in that same demographic, are new entrants to the market, and rely on social networking sites as their primary source for information on current events, food and cooking, and health.

Effective social media marketing gives organic businesses and brands an exceptional opportunity to meet and communicate the new-to-organic consumer online—and it’s time that we, as an industry, collectively seize it.

As an organic business, your communications and marketing strategies likely have two overarching objectives—to educate consumers about your brand, and to educate them about organic. While organic businesses across the supply chain are diverse and communications priorities vary, one primary goal remains similar: the desire to help consumers understand the value of organic, what the USDA Organic seal means, why they can trust it, and perhaps most importantly, why they should invest in it.

Many of our members are already actively engaged on social. And many are new to the game. Wherever you are in the process of establishing your channels and joining the conversation, now is the time for organic stakeholders to collaborate on delivering a consistent organic message and engaging in meaningful dialog.

The 140 character tweet and the 403 x 403 pixel Facebook graphic need to demand attention, and the #TwitterChat dialogue and direct comment replies need to dig deeper, clarify nuances, and be human to be meaningful. As a sector, we have to deliver a message that will change the conversations about the organic industry. If we come together with strong and consistent messages about organic and strategies for disseminating and engaging that message, people will be enticed and want to discuss it.

So how do we do it? We bring communications professionals from organic businesses together to brainstorm how to better align messaging. We create a pipeline of content sharing so that when a new study is released that shows organic is more nutritious, we can collectively share it on our networks and expand its reach. We collaborate on social media campaigns that educate the public on the value of making the organic choice and put premium organic products in the hands of consumers. And we keep talking to each other.

OTA wants the public to know about organic and to support it. We also want the public to know about our members and to support them. Through collaboration with our diverse membership, strategic partners, media and bloggers, social influencers, policymakers and consumers, we are confident that we can increase that support and move the needle on understanding what organic really means.

This past year, OTA launched an “Organic-Palooza” social media campaign aimed at doing just that. The campaign reached more than 15 million individual social media users, likely making it one of the largest-ever, short-term social campaigns in the organic industry. We were encouraged that so many organic brands (over 100) took part in sharing the campaign’s messages to speak in a unified voice in the midst of their own social media outreach.

Staying engaged in the conversation via social media networks where eaters and thinkers gather is critical to our success as an industry. OTA plans to continue efforts with engaging and targeted organic campaign outreach efforts in the future, and we’d love to have you on board.

If you have ideas on how we can collaborate on delivering a consistent organic message through social, have questions, or want to get involved in the next campaign, contact me at OTA. //
Grant expands fresh produce for Florida SNAP recipients

By Linda Richards

Florida's fruit and vegetable production is year-round and the second largest in the United States. However, since most is exported, a problem exists: few Florida residents purchase and consume Florida-grown produce. Add to that scenario the fact that nearly one in six Floridians is without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

An organic grower organization is providing a solution. Via a large-scale grant over three years, the Florida Organic Growers (FOG) is boosting organic, local produce use among low-income Floridians.

In April, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack flew to Florida, and awarded FOG one of its eight multi-year large-scale Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grants. FOG’s Program Director Marty Mesh, a recipient of one of OTA’s Organic Leadership Awards in 2014, and his staff were present to receive the award.

“We have a unique opportunity to combat our state's food insecurity while providing new market opportunities for Florida farmers,” said Mesh, adding that a miniscule amount (.018% in 2013) of assistance benefits go to the state's farmers. As a result of the grant, people in under-served communities will have access to affordable, fresh Florida-grown produce at farmers’ markets, and soon Community Supported Agriculture programs (CSAs), while providing a real immediate benefit to farmers and their communities.

The grant was part of 31 small to large grants given in the program’s first year. (The Rodale Institute received a one-year award.) Funded by the 2014 Farm Bill, the grants are designed to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among low-income consumers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). As a result, now cardholders can take advantage of a one-to-one match. Thus, cardholders who spend $10 on fresh, Florida grown produce can receive an additional $10 to purchase more fresh, local produce.

Increasing farmer sales

In the Florida program entitled Fresh Access Bucks (FAB): Increasing Food Access and Florida Farmer Sales at Markets Statewide, organic products are a key component, although conventional, certified organic and practicing organic/not certified are all covered.

Carmen Franz, the manager of the FAB program, co-wrote the grant application after a successful two-year pilot program funded by state grants. “Through 20 farmers’ markets we generated over $200,000 in healthy food purchases for over 150 Florida farmers and added 3,000 new shoppers. We were also very good at building partnerships with key agencies and organizations that demonstrated our collaborative efforts in Florida,” she said.

Over the next three years, 30 markets will join the current 20 throughout at least 21 counties in Florida.

HELPING INDIVIDUALS

Art Friedrich is one of those partners. In 2009, he moved to the Miami Dade area with non-profit experience and a background helping his family run sustainable farms in New England.

“I wasn't planning to get back into non-profit work, but there was a total lack of a local food market in the Miami area,” he said. With the help of a colleague, he organized a non-profit organization—Urban Oasis Project—that oversees seven of FAB's current 20 markets. Other endeavors include managing Verde Gardens—a 22-acre organic farm and café—that also benefits a permanent assisted-housing program for

Through community support and funding from Jane’s Trust, Englewood Farmers’ Market in Englewood, Florida, has been able to hire support staff to manage Fresh Access Bucks.
formerly homeless families in partnership with Carrfour Supportive Housing.

Friedrich say his numbers show local produce has doubled each year. He estimates certified organic produce make up 70% of sales, with organically grown but not certified accounting for another 20%.

All his markets are located in low- or mixed-income neighborhoods, while a Supportive Community Agriculture (SCA) program is being developed that will provide the FAB program in housing projects through a smaller weekly drop-off food share. “We’re getting a great response from SNAP users who, with the doubling of the produce, are able to feed their families. They can double their fruits and vegetables, up to $20 a day. They’re spreading the word among their friends.”

This mirrors national research on farmers’ market SNAP incentive programs, which show 90% of incentive program consumers report increasing their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

PARTNERSHIPS KEY

FAB’s manager Franz said the biggest challenge is getting the word out about the program.

“It’s been difficult without ample resources to do professional branding and expensive advertisements to let SNAP participants know about the program,” said Franz, adding that grassroots outreach is vital in local communities. “The relationships we’ve built with state level agencies have made a huge impact on expanding our reach,” she said.

To make sure recipients know the benefits and how to prepare seasonal produce on a budget, the market partners conduct regular nutrition education initiatives such as health screenings, and recipe and nutrition info for fruits and vegetables. The grant includes educational funding for each market to purchase mobile, cooking demo units.

“In some instances, our markets partner with local chefs to do the demos, or we’ve partnered with the American Culinary Federation or various volunteers from culinary schools,” said Franz.
As its name implies, OTA member Esperanza Threads brings hope through the gift of sewing.

In 2000, returning to Cleveland, Ohio, after working in Native American missions in Montana, Sister Mary Eileen Boyle contemplated what she would choose for the next step in her life’s calling. An Ursuline Sister of Cleveland—an order whose mission is to transform lives through contemplation, justice, and compassion, she wanted to start something that would transform lives while respecting the earth and follow a holistic philosophy.

The result: the establishment of Esperanza Threads, which produces apparel and goods such as t-shirts, hand and bath towels, sweat suits, and onesies for babies using organic fibers. The products are then often sold at churches, art shows, and other local trade fairs.

However, its mission is way more than that. In fact, in addition to manufacturing goods using organic fibers to support its existence, it trains individuals for jobs in industrial sewing in Cleveland. These trainings are aimed at refugees and immigrants who relocated to the metropolitan area of Cleveland as well as area citizens who are underemployed or unemployed. Here, they learn the basics of industrial sewing and how to transform fabric into apparel, towels and pillows to give them a way to earn a living within the Cleveland sewing industry.

It was the vision of Esperanza Threads to use organic fibers—generally organic cotton but sometimes organic wool. The organic and eco-friendly fibers used are made into apparel under fair wage and fair trade conditions.

Lucretia Bohnsack has served as Esperanza Threads’ Executive Director for the past three years, but has been involved there since its inception 15 years ago, even serving in the past on its board. She notes that about three-fourths of the trainees are refugees or immigrants from such countries as Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Honduras, El Salvador, and small African nations.

Although the original idea was to help encourage women taking part to start their own businesses, it has evolved to train them on the basics of sewing so that they can find jobs in the local economy, Bohnsack says.

“People taking part feel appreciated and are trained to have a skill. They then go out and find jobs,” she adds. In fact, this past year, Esperanza Threads achieve a 72 percent placement rate for those who went through training, obtained positions, and were able to keep them.

Esperanza Threads’ manufacturing is done by people who have sewing experience or have graduated from the company’s trainings. It also does contract sewing for others. Sister Mary Eileen oversees the trainings, which teach six to seven people in industrial sewing at a time. Volunteers who help include retired home economics teachers and others who have sewn for years. These intensive trainings provide 48 hours of basic industrial sewing skills, with trainees then prepared to get a job and get further specialized on-the-job training.

Its manufacturing operations help pay the rent, cover administrative costs, utilities, and buy more materials for future sewing. The organic fibers it uses are domestically produced and sourced from the Carolinas. Bohnsack said supply is limited.

“It is difficult to find organic fiber. We would use more if it were available,” she says.

Esperanza Threads has some dreams—such as actually opening up a little retail space rather than carting around its products to different sales, and improving its website, www.esperanzathreads.com, to have the capacity to take online orders.

For now, it continues to fulfill its mission, giving hope and providing skills to those it serves in its community while expanding the use of organic fibers. //
MetaWear launches first U.S. GOTS factory of its kind

Located in a refurbished Verizon facility in Fairfax, VA, close to our country's capital, OTA member company MetaWear has launched the first GOTS-certified ethical manufacturing and dye factory in the United States.

This cutting-edge solar- and geothermal-powered manufacturing facility provides cutting, sewing, dyeing and screen-printing to produce certified organic cotton T-shirts.

Using seaweed-based inks and paying its staff a livable wage, the MetaWear operation was recently certified to the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), the world’s platinum standard for the processing of organic textiles.

“MetaWear is extremely proud to be paving the way for today’s U.S. textile industry. We adhere to the most stringent global processing standards, and offer earth-conscious, socially responsible and screen-printed apparel—perfect for promoting companies’ brands and messages,” says Marci Zaroff, ECOFashion pioneer and MetaWear co-founder and President.

GOTS—the textile industry’s counterpart to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s organic food standard—covers the growing, processing, manufacturing, packaging, labeling, trading and distribution of all textiles made with at least 70 percent certified organic fiber. As with organic food standards, a textile product carrying the GOTS Organic seal must contain a minimum of 95 percent certified organic fibers, while one with the “made with organic” label must contain a minimum of 70 percent certified organic fiber. GOTS-certified textiles must be produced without toxic and persistent pesticides, GMOs, formaldehyde, chlorine bleaches, heavy metals or other chemicals detrimental to humans and the environment but typically used in conventional cotton t-shirts and textiles.

MetaWear uses Fair Trade-certified organic cotton to produce promotional custom T-shirts for men and women. In addition, it uses “Seaink,” a proprietary dye process that uses a seaweed-derived base.

“With Seaink, MetaWear can avoid the harmful impact of standard dyes without sacrificing color vibrancy,” according to CAS Shiver, MetaWear co-founder and technical mastermind behind the ink development as well as the solar and geothermal energy practices used for the operation.

In addition to being GOTS-certified, MetaWear produced the world’s first Cradle-to-Cradle (C2C) Certified fashion T-shirt for lifestyle brand Under the Canopy, also founded by Zaroff. It was unveiled at the Cradle-to-Cradle Innovation Institute’s recent Fashion Positive launch. C2C certification focuses on material health, material reuse, renewable energy, water stewardship, and social justice.

GOTS FACILITIES GREW BY 18% IN 2014

The number of facilities worldwide certified to the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) grew by more than 18 percent in 2014, from 3,085 to 3,663. GOTS certified facilities are now located in 64 countries around the globe.

GOTS is recognized worldwide as the leading processing standard for textiles made from organic fibers. Growth is evenly spread across all market segments, including mass market and big brands. GOTS certification allows consumers to purchase items certified organic from field to finished product.

Countries with the greatest increase in GOTS certification during 2014 were India (+388), Bangladesh (+89), Germany (+32), Turkey (+21), and China (+18).

The top 15 countries with the highest number of GOTS certified facilities are India, Turkey, Germany, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Italy, South Korea, Portugal, Japan, France, United States, United Kingdom, Austria, and Hong Kong.
“The growth in certifications demonstrates that GOTS has become the standard of choice for brands and retailers to efficiently manage their organic fiber supply chains,” said Claudia Kersten, GOTS Managing Director.

Such certification also verifies a company’s commitment to sustainability, as opposed to unverified self-claims.

According to OTA’s 2015 Organic Industry Survey, the market for organic fibers is the most rapidly growing U.S. non-food organic category, growing to $1.1 billion in 2014, up 18 percent from the previous year.

The number of U.S. companies gaining GOTS certification in 2014 increased by 20 percent over 2013, and included Burt’s Bees Baby®, Boll & Branch, IMM Group, Loomstate, Maggie’s Organics, MetaWear, Michael Stars, Organics and More, Portico, Synergy Organic Clothing, Under the Canopy, PACT Apparel, Welspun, and Xamax. These companies make a wide array of products, from apparel for babies through women/men, to beds and bedding, and personal care products.

In March, GOTS released a new edition of its Licensing and Labeling Guide to address changes made in the latest version (4.0) of the standard.

GOTS was developed by leading international standard setters—the Organic Trade Association, Japan Organic Cotton Association, International Association Natural Textile Industry (Germany), and Soil Association (UK) to define globally recognized requirements that ensure the organic status of textiles. For more information, visit www.global-standard.org.

NEW FIBER COUNCIL FORMING
At its April meeting, OTA’s Board of Directors approved the establishment of an OTA Fiber Council based on OTA Sector Council operating guidelines. The application for the new sector council was first reviewed by the OTA Board’s Community Relations Committee, which gave its support.

Marc Zaroff, President of Portico Brands and Founder of Under the Canopy, submitted the request along with seven other OTA member companies that have expressed interest in participating. Besides Zaroff, those expressing interest include Sandra Marquardt of On the Mark PR, Bená Burda of Maggie’s, Scott Nash of MOM’s Market, Tara Cappel of MetaWear, Dale Read of the Specialty Sleep Association, Barry Cik of Naturepedic, and Melody Meyer of UNFI.

The aim is to create a cohesive voice across fiber categories within OTA, and to grow the organic fiber sector overall.

The first in-person meeting for the council will be held at Natural Products Expo West. Those interested in becoming part of the Fiber Council are encouraged to contact Gwendolyn Wyard, OTA’s Senior Director for Regulatory and Technical Affairs. //
Canada is in the midst of implementing new agricultural legislation, which will have far-reaching impacts for all sectors in the coming years. Additionally, major changes are planned to rules governing food safety, imports, organic, and food labeling.

On February 25, Bill C-18—the Agricultural Growth Act—received Royal Assent and became law in Canada. However, rather than totally overhauling the laws governing agriculture and seed, the government chose to introduce hundreds of small amendments and shifts throughout nine pre-existing acts, with dozens of regulations implicated. This included the Plant Breeders’ Rights Act (PBR), which protects the rights of plant breeders and seed developers.

Canada’s new Agricultural Growth Act enacts The International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV 1991), with important consequences for organic and conventional growers in the country (see Variety Protection sidebar).

### Efforts to amend

Early on, COTA and other partner organizations called on the government to amend the bill to better protect farmers’ right to save seeds. COTA’s Executive Director was one of the first witnesses called to testify at the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on Bill C-18. COTA’s testimony focused on the unintended consequences of the bill on the organic sector and on recommendations to strengthen the farmers’ privilege.

COTA relied heavily on data from its recent market study on organic and ecological seed, and also held its annual policy conference and lobby day in Ottawa during the hearings to drive home the organic sector’s views on the legislation. Following these actions, the government agreed to introduce amendments to the bill, specifically language that clearly indicates farmers’ rights to save, condition and replant seeds. This was a major victory for the organic sector, and will protect all producers in the future. However, the current law still makes it possible to withdraw or restrict (on a crop-by-crop basis) this “privilege” following a regulatory consultation process.

Although pleased with the progress made, COTA remains concerned that the Agricultural Growth Act does not take into account the reality of the organic sector. Organic growers employ a low- to minimal-input system, and target seed varieties for very specific agronomic outcomes. As the bill does not incentivize the development of seed for organic production, it is likely that few new organic-relevant varieties will be adapted to Canadian climate and geography. COTA will continue to actively participate in the next phase of regulatory development under this Act to ensure farmers’ rights are protected, and that the collection of royalties on saved seeds is not introduced.

### Variety Protection

**The Term of Protection** for plant varieties is extended from 18 to 25 years for trees and vines, and from 15 to 20 years for all other materials. It also extends the scope of breeders’ rights to import, export, stock and conditioning reproductive material (such as seed).

**Essential derived varieties**: Under Plant Breeders’ Rights (PBR), a grower could grow “essentially derived varieties,” derived from and retain essential characteristics of a protected variety, only if he or she has the authorization from the PBR holder of the original protected variety.

**End-point-royalties (EPRs)**: Text within the law could allow PBR holders to ask for royalties on harvested material, including royalties on crops from saved seed. The regulatory text doesn’t explicitly indicate that the cost of EPRs cannot be greater for saved seeds than for purchased seeds (to create a disincentive or “penalty” for seed saving).

### Investment in International Marketing

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) has announced over $785,000 in matching funds over four years for COTA to promote and market Canadian organic products in domestic and foreign markets through the AgriMarketing Program (AMP).

Totalling over $1.5 Million, COTA’s project will expand its marketing strategy to new countries and trade shows targeting organic products, while also enriching activities in current markets, expanding the “Think Canada Organic” domestic consumer campaign, and providing technical assistance to government authorities working on market access and equivalency arrangements.

Over the next few years, COTA staff will lead several trade missions to Japan to build on the recent Canada-Japan Organic Equivalency Arrangement. COTA will also pursue its organic promotion and education programs in Europe by adding new target countries (France and the United Kingdom), and will organize trade missions in Switzerland for Canadian organic companies. This four-year support will also strengthen Canada’s presence at Natural Products Expo West and BioFach Germany, among other trade events. Additionally, reverse trade missions will bring organic food buyers from Asia, the United States and Europe to talk business directly with Canada organic suppliers across the country.

Finally, investments will be made to support the expansion of the consumer promotional campaign (“Think Before You Eat: Think Canada Organic”) to educate Canadians on the environmental, social and health benefits of choosing organic.
Last year, COTA issued a public statement urging all Canadian provinces to introduce legislation to support and strengthen Canada’s regulatory framework for organic across the country.

TRANSITION SUPPORT
In March, COTA’s Matthew Holmes was called to testify before the Senate’s Agriculture and Forestry Committee. The Committee has been conducting a study into international market access priorities for the Canadian agricultural and agri-food sector in advance of the government’s next five-year Federal-Provincial-Territorial Agricultural Policy Framework.

COTA used the occasion to underscore the significant supply pressures in the sector, and call for federal funding to assist producers with the transition to organic farming. The committee was highly engaged, and asked a number of questions of Holmes on how the government could introduce new programming supports to address the shortage.

The testimony also garnered attention from Prairie-based Western Producer, the dominant agricultural trade publication in Canada. In April, the publication ran a full story showcasing COTA’s call for federal funding, with more details provided via an interview with COTA’s Shauna MacKinnon.

“We need to bring more farmers into agriculture, and organic is the strongest part of the food sector right now. Canada is really alone in comparison to our trading partners in not providing that kind of support at the federal level,” MacKinnon said.

Both the article and COTA’s original testimony also highlighted the need to expand the scope of the Canada-EU equivalency to benefit the processing sector. In April, COTA held a series of meetings with industry and Canadian trade officials in Brussels to build consensus for an expanded scope under the Canada-EU equivalency arrangement.

GMO APPLE APPROVED
Following in the footsteps of U.S. authorities, Health Canada has announced approval of Okanagan Specialty Fruits’ genetically engineered (GE) “Arctic Apple,” which could reach markets as early as next year. Only two weeks after the Arctic Apple was approved for sale in the United States, the Canadian company was acquired for $41 million by Maryland-based Intrexon Corporation, which calls itself a leader in synthetic biology.

In a press release, Neal Carter, founder of Okanagan Specialty Fruits, stated, “We are committed to bringing better versions of consumers’ favourite fruits to their grocery stores and kitchens.”

The Arctic Apple has been modified to inhibit the natural browning of the flesh after being cut, but will not be required to be labeled as GMO. “Arctic
“Apples” are the first genetically engineered apple approved for sale in the United States and Canada. A poll conducted in 2012 showed 69 per cent of Canadians opposed the approval of the Arctic Apple. Fred Steele, President of the British Columbia Fruit Growers’ Association in British Columbia, said, “The market should have a reference point to make a choice and to protect conventional producers from possible harm... The government needs to ensure consumers can make good decisions and, if there is to be choice on purchasing genetically modified foods, then the choice should be apparent.”

COTA was active in advocating against the approval of the GE apple, and continues to work on tightening how GMOs are approved and labeled in Canada. The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network is encouraging Canadian retailers to pledge their commitment not to carry this new apple in their stores.

**GMO Contamination**

COTA has initiated a new research project with the aim of understanding the degree of GMO contamination in organic products across Canada, as well as strategies for better prevention and mitigation. The research consists of a literature review and comparison of major global organic standards, focusing primarily on four crops identified as high-risk in Canada: corn, canola, soybeans and alfalfa.

The research provides an overview of the agronomic profiles of the identified high-risk crops, along with estimates of economic costs associated with current GMO avoidance mitigation strategies. It also showcases common preventive measures implemented by organic operators to contain the GMO contamination threat. Moreover, it addresses genetic testing protocol approaches, and best management practices. The research also includes a chapter on international organic standards, which allows a comparative analysis of where Canada stands in terms of GMO prohibitions, labeling and seed testing. Finally, COTA provides a series of recommendations to the organic sector pinpointing current research gaps that should be addressed to ensure a better understanding of GMO contamination in Canadian organic products.

COTA shared its findings with the Organic Technical Committee at the Canadian General Standards Board’s May meeting, with the aim to better inform and contextualize the committee’s review of Canadian organic standards. Companies seeking more information or interested in being involved in the next phase of the project are encouraged to contact the COTA office.

**Organic Week 2015**

September 19-27 marks the sixth annual celebration of Organic Week in Canada, organized by COTA, Canadian Organic Growers and the Canadian Health Food Association. Supported by dozens of sponsors and regional partners, Organic Week celebrates organic products and farming across the country in an inclusive way—from small farmers to mainstream retail. Increased awareness and demand for organic products among Canadian consumers show the campaign is hitting the right nerve.

Over a very short period, Organic Week has become Canada’s largest organic marketing event. Hundreds of Organic Week community events take place across the country each year, and hundreds of organic retailers host Organic Week displays and promotions. These are listed on the Organic Week website.

Thanks to industry sponsor support, Organic Week is able to promote organic products and farming in major weeklies and magazines, supply retailers all over Canada with point-of-sale materials, run an online advertising campaign and partner with The Globe and Mail to publish an annual Special Report on Organic. For more information on the significant opportunities to align your brand with this campaign or to reserve your 2015 sponsorship, contact COTA’s team. //
OTA’S POLICY CONFERENCE & HILL VISIT DAYS

What an INCREDIBLE week!

Whether you were in D.C. with OTA, at your desk following the live stream, or watching your inbox light up with Google Alerts, OTA’s #OrganicWeekDC was an exciting time for our members and for our sector.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED:
A vibrant conference featuring U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), and other thought-provoking leaders.

A jam-packed Hill Visit Day, during which OTA members advocated for organic at more than 100 congressional offices, as well as key agencies including USDA, the White House, and several foreign embassies.
A packed house at OTA’s first-ever Member Business Day, prior to the Policy Conference at the Hall of the States. Over 100 OTA members took part in more than a dozen meetings.

An Organic PAC bowling fundraiser.

And even a 25th birthday party for the Organic Foods Production Act!
OTA’S VISION OF AN ORGANIC INDUSTRY in 2030 includes market growth, acreage growth and supply chain profitability all healthy and in balance. Demand will be higher, acreage will meet the demand, organic penetration in the market will be deeper, and the influence of organic will be greater.

Market Growth
The total market penetration of organic will more than double. Organic food will account for 10 percent of all food consumed in the U.S. Sales of non-food organic products will more than triple. U.S. organic sales will approach $90 billion a year.

Supply Chain Profitability
Thriving organic farm profitability and improved rural livelihoods will provide market incentive for U.S. organic production to grow and expand, attracting new farmers and ranchers across crop and livestock areas and keeping existing farmers in organic.

Acreage Growth
Acres in the U.S. will double to meet the demand. Organic will be the third largest U.S. commodity as measured at farm-gate sales, which will triple to top $10 billion a year.

OTA vision:
Grow ORGANIC to achieve excellence in agriculture and commerce, protect the environment and enhance community well-being.

OTA mission:
Promote and protect ORGANIC with a unifying voice that serves and engages its diverse members from farm to marketplace.
OTA believes the growing demand in the organic market will continue to outpace supply. This widening gap between supply and demand for organic products sets the stage for a critical era in the growth of organic. With OTA’s leadership, the organic supply chain can work together to deliver on the promise of organic to agriculture, the environment and the public.

THE ROLE OF OTA IN 2030

For organic to reach its full potential, OTA will play an indispensable role in navigating the challenges and opportunities ahead. OTA’s efforts will:
- Create a unified and impactful voice for the organic industry.
- Empower the membership to remove barriers and provide access across the value chain.
- Uphold and advance robust organic standards across the globe.
- Build infrastructures which cooperatively support the growth of organic.

I. INFLUENCE

In 2030, OTA will be recognized by policymakers, the media and organic industry participants as the go-to voice for organic. Membership in the trade association will be recognized as the single-most effective way to address the range of issues facing the organic industry.

II. POLICIES AND POLITICS

In 2030, OTA’s leadership in the political and policy arenas will result in a national agriculture policy in which organic farming will be recognized as best practices in agriculture production. Organic will be known as the premier agriculture production model. The health and environmental benefits of organic food, fiber, personal care and other non-food products will be validated and clearly understood.

III. ORGANIC STANDARDS

In 2030, OTA’s unwavering commitment to its core mission to promote and protect organic trade and integrity will result in organic firmly recognized as the gold standard for transparent farm-to-table/shelf (or body) guarantees.

IV. GLOBAL ARENA

In 2030, OTA’s collaboration in the global organic arena will foster a robust global market for organic, spur organic production worldwide, and help address global environmental, economic, and food security challenges.

V. RESEARCH, PROMOTION AND EDUCATION

In 2030, OTA will have facilitated an organic industry with robust research, promotion, and education resources commensurate with the need to support the growing market and expanding acres. One possible way to accomplish this is via a self-directed and independent fully functioning Organic Research and Promotion Order/Board whose establishment will be led and facilitated by OTA.

VI. ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

In 2030, OTA’s leadership in the industry as a whole will be as an umbrella and coordinating organization with affiliated organizations. The structure of these new entities will be determined by industry need, with OTA building out the organizational umbrella and serving as the thought leader and catalyst for development, coordination and evolution of the various activities.

VII. MEMBERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

OTA will be recognized for the diversity of its membership, with members across the supply chain actively involved in the association structure and leadership. The divides between producers and processors, small-scale and large-scale, food, fiber and non-food will be overcome through OTA providing the opportunities for its members to come together and influence the organization. Through its strong leadership, OTA will provide a unifying vision to its members to advocate for what’s best for the whole organic industry.
Exports of U.S. organic foods as well as imports of organic products into the United States have risen significantly in the past few years. But, by how much? And, for which products?

OTA’s international department sought to answer those questions with a landmark study on the trade flow of organic food products across the borders of the United States. This watershed report compiles, for the first time ever, a comprehensive picture of the officially tracked organic food products sold by U.S. exporters and bought by U.S. importers. The work reveals that a robust global appetite for organic food has created new lucrative markets from Mexico City all the way to Hong Kong for U.S. organic producers—but also provides strong evidence that American farmers are losing out on some valuable opportunities by not growing more organic.

The study was conducted by Pennsylvania State University’s Dr. Edward Jaenicke, Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics. Powered by the latest data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Office of the U.S Trade Representative, the OTA-commissioned study analyzes international trade for organic products that have been assigned a harmonized tariff schedule code. Twenty-six codes in all were used for the report. Currently there are 38 export and 38 import codes with another submission for additional codes—mainly processed products—under review.

The data result in a ‘Help Wanted’ message for American farmers. They show substantial missed opportunities for the U.S. farmer by not growing organic—whether to meet the demand outside the country or keep up with robust domestic demand for organic.

GLOBAL APPETITE FOR U.S. ORGANIC

In 2014, American organic growers sold more than $550 million worth of products tracked by the U.S. government through organic export codes to buyers around the world, with the United States rightly claiming the position of global supplier for fresh organic produce.

Apples, lettuce, grapes, spinach and strawberries are the top five organic products exported by the United States. Exports of organic apples alone jumped 40 percent in 2014 from the previous year, compared to a small three percent growth rate for non-organic apple exports. In fact, the pace of growth for the exports of almost all of the 26 organic products tracked was markedly higher than that of their non-organic counterparts.

Exports of organic produce account for an increasingly greater proportion of total exports. Of all the cherry tomatoes exported by the U.S., for example, 42 percent are organic; 33 percent of the spinach exports are organic, along with 27 percent of the onions, and 23 percent of the carrots.

The thirst for organic products—and specifically for U.S. organic products—is resonating around the world.

ORGANIC IMPORTS FILLING GAPS

Imports of organic products outpaced exports, amounting to nearly $1.3 billion in 2014. The import picture tells two stories: one of an increasing appetite by Americans for organic foods not widely produced in this country (like coffee, bananas, mangoes, and olive oil), and the second of growing domestic market for organic feed grains but insufficient home-grown organic crops to meet that demand.

On the import side, the top five organic imported products are coffee, soybeans, olive oil, bananas and wine. While America’s coffee lovers gulped down more than $330 million worth of foreign-grown organic coffee, helping to boost the import total, imports of organic soybeans and organic corn—the main ingredients in organic feed for the expanding U.S. organic dairy, poultry and livestock sectors—showed sharp gains.

The second-largest organic product imported by the U.S. is soybeans. The U.S. is the world’s largest soybean grower, and normally exports more than one-third of its soybean crop. Domestic production of organic soybeans, however, has stagnated at very low levels since early 2000, despite the
SUCCESS by the Numbers

OTA-sponsored trade show activities lead to record-breaking sales projections for the first half of 2015!

Through Market Access Program funding, OTA is able to offer myriad trade show opportunities to organic exporters. So far in 2015, OTA has participated in three trade shows with 35 USDA certified organic businesses. The results are in, and as you can see, our grant money is being put to good use!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade Show</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Projected Sales</th>
<th>On-Site Sales</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BioFach</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>$4 million USD</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Products Expo West</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$4.8 million USD</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Seoul Hotel &amp; Food</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$2.1 million USD</td>
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Growing demand for the product by organic feed users and organic processors. Organic corn is the tenth most imported organic food product, even though the U.S. leads the world in corn output. Like soybeans, U.S. organic corn production has fallen far short of demand, with domestic output only marginally rising in the past decade.

Organic soybeans and organic corn command high price premiums in the U.S. Organic feed-grade soybeans now sell for around $25 per bushel versus the average price for conventional soybeans of around $9 per bushel. Organic yellow feed corn sells for around $14 per bushel versus the conventional price of around $4 per bushel.

Going organic is not easy, but this report identifies that there are opportunities for U.S. farmers in both the domestic and global organic markets. This study provides critical new data not only for farmers, but for the industry, lawmakers and other policymakers to design programs and supply chain partnerships to encourage more organic production and help farmers make the transition to organic. For more information or for a copy of the report, go to OTA.com.

Professor Ted Jaenicke, with OTA’s Monique Marez, shares USDA certified organic export data.

Representatives of Acme BBQ, To Your Health Sprouted Flour, UNFI, Nature’s Sun Grown, and Organic Valley pose with Ambassador Mark Lippert in Seoul.
We Want You!

OTA has a fully loaded calendar to increase USDA certified organic exports for the rest of 2015. We want you to get involved! Here is a list of upcoming activities.

Contact Monique Marez, OTA’s Associate Director for International Trade, to learn more.

EXPO MILANO 2015
USA PAVILION, MILAN, ITALY
OTA is participating in Expo Milano 2015 in the USA Pavilion: American Food 2.0 United to Feed the Planet. A collaboration between the U.S. Department of State and the James Beard Foundation, this one-of-a-kind pavilion features a vertical farm, interactive exhibitions, and daily programming all about our food system. OTA will lead a symposium, two TED-style talks, and other activities during the month of October in Milan. There are opportunities to collaborate! Contact OTA for more information.

ANUGA 2015
COLOGNE, GERMANY
OTA will host an all-organic pavilion at Anuga in Cologne, Germany. Anuga is the largest food trade show in 2015 with thousands of visitors from all over the world expected to attend. The pavilion is full, but let us know if you are interested in future EU-based trade shows

ORGANIC DAY
TOKYO, JAPAN
OTA is leading a consumer education activity in Japan in late October. The program will help familiarize customers with the USDA Organic seal and all that our organic industry represents. We need help developing content for all age levels, and all product categories. Let’s get creative and collaborate on this exciting opportunity!

RETAIL PROMOTION
SEOUL, KOREA
The South Korean consumer is ready for USDA certified organic products! As the national trends move towards health-focused and functional foods, and as our equivalency arrangement reaches its first anniversary, the time is now to promote your products in Korea. If you would like to be involved in planning this marketing strategy and nominating products to be featured, let us know.

SIGN-UP NOW:
BIOFACH 2016
Sign-ups are now open for BioFach 2016. For a small co-pay, first-time exhibitors are offered a table top in the OTA Pavilion, one round-trip economy airfare to Germany, and hotel costs during the show. This is the leading all-organic trade show. If you are ready for the EU market, BioFach is a great place to meet qualified buyers, brokers, and more!

EXPO WEST
REVERSE TRADE MISSION 2016
No doubt about it, the Natural Products Expo West trade show floor is chaotic. Avoid missing out on key conversations with qualified buyers due to the hustle and bustle in the exhibition halls, hallways, and tents. OTA sponsors ten buyers from all over the world to come to Expo West just to meet you! For a small participation fee, we organize one-on-ones with highly motivated buyers looking to bring organic products to their customers. The numbers don’t lie: 2014 participants reported $4.8 million USD in projected sales. Reserve your spot now!
SQUEEZE PACKS
ONCE AGAIN NUT BUTTER now offers single-serving 1.15 oz. squeeze packs intended for snacking on the go. The certified organic and Non-GMO Project Verified varieties include Almond Butter and Lightly Toasted Almond Butter (www.oanb.com).

REVERED TEA
DAVIDSON’S ORGANIC TEAS has introduced three new offerings to its Tulsi tea line. These include Tulsi Licorice Root, Tulsi Rose Petals, and Tulsi Red Vanilla varieties. All of the company’s product line is certified organic (www.davidsonstea.com).

HEAT AND EAT
PLUM ORGANICS has jumped into the heat-and-eat organic soup category with single-serve soups in eight-ounce pouches. Varieties are chicken noodle, tomato and turkey meatball, and chicken fiesta (www.plumorganics.com).

ORGANIC SOUP LINE
CAMPBELL SOUP CO. has launched six soups—five of which are gluten-free—under its namesake brand, Campbell’s Organic. Each is made with USDA certified organic ingredients (www.campbellsoup.com).

THINS & MINIS
MARY’S GONE CRACKERS now offers gluten-free Thins and Minis featuring certified organic ingredients. The Thins, made with organic sprouted buckwheat flour, chia seeds, quinoa flakes, mesquite flour and sprouted black bean flour, come in five flavors. The Minis—bite-sized treats in the form of the sun, moon, stars, and hearts—come in three flavors (www.MarysGoneCrackers.com).

BERRY HARVEST
CROFTER’S ORGANIC has added a new flavor to its family size 16.5 oz. Premium Spread line. Berry Harvest—a blend of strawberry, blueberry, seedless blackberry and seedless raspberry—is certified organic, Non-GMO Project Verified, and has one-third less sugar than a traditional preserve. It is sweetened with fair trade cane sugar (www.croftersorganic.com).

WELLNESS IN A CUP
CHOICE ORGANIC TEAS now offers four new tea blends to its Wellness Teas line. These new organic functional teas include Expecting Baby, Beauty Detox, Body Stress Relief, and Hibiscus Heart. The blends are classified as Herbal Dietary Supplements (www.choiceorganicteas.com).

LOW GLYCEMIC SYRUP
WHOLEsome!” has introduced a low-glycemic natural sweetener made from organic coconut palm sugar. It is a popular ingredient in Asian cuisine, but also makes a great baking ingredient or sweet topping for dishes like oatmeal, pancakes and waffles. This syrup is certified organic and Non-GMO Project Verified, gluten-free vegan, and kosher (www.wholesomesweet.com).

SPORTS NUTRITION
CLIF BAR & COMPANY offers a line of sports nutrition food containing organic ingredients in resealable pouches. Each recipe in its new CLIF Organic Energy Food line is gluten-free, non-GMO and does not contain partially hydrogenated oils, high fructose corn syrup, artificial flavors or synthetic preservatives (www.clifbar.com).

NOT JUST FOR KIDS
ORGANIC VALLEY has introduced Snack Sticks made with organic cheese aimed for adults. They are available in Medium Cheddar and Pepper Jack varieties (www.organicvalley.coop).

FRUIT BARS
PATAGONIA PROVISIONS has added Organic Fruit + Almond Bars in three flavors to its food line. The fruit bars—which come in apricot, Inca berry, and mango—contain organic fruit, seeds, nuts and juice. They are also gluten-free, kosher and vegan (www.patagoniaprovisions.com).

ORGANIC JUICES
UNCLE MATT’S ORGANIC has launched three new organic juices: Orange Turmeric, Orange Coconut, and Matcha Lemonade. Both the Orange Turmeric and Orange Coconut juices will include probiotics. The third juice is made with a blend of organic Matcha green tea and organic home-style lemonade (www.unclematts.com).

FROM CHIPS TO NUTS
MADE IN NAUIE has a variety of new products, from Organic Toasted Coconut Chips and Organic Nut Fusion Blends to Organic Dried Berries and Cherries. All are made from organic ingredients with no artificial flavors or refined sugars (www.madeinnature.com).

ICED AND GREEN
Organic green-tea based beverage company STEAZ has launched four new flavors: Lightly Sweetened Grapefruit Honey, Unsweetened Passion Fruit, Unsweetened Dragon Fruit, and Zero Calorie Goji Blackberry. All are organic and fair trade (www.steaz.com).

ZERO-CALORIE DRINKS
HONEST TEA has introduced three new varieties of organic, zero-calorie beverages—Cinnamon Sunrise Herbal Tea, Ginger Oasis Herbal Tea, and Honest Fizz organic Golden Ginger Ale. The company is also converting the other varieties in its Honest Fizz zero-calorie soda line to organic certification (www.honesttea.com).

New product announcements may be submitted to Barbara Haumann (bhaumann@ota.com).
**BUSINESS MILESTONES**

**Amy’s Kitchen** is opening its first Amy’s eatery—a fast food shop with drive-thru window—in Rohnert Park, California. It features an all-vegetarian menu, including meatless burgers on gluten-free rice flour buns, dairy-free ice cream shakes, single-serve pizzas, burritos and salads.

**Clif Bar & Company** has broken ground on its first owned and operated bakery in Twin Falls, ID. The new 277,000-square-foot bakery—the Clif Bar Baking Company—will help meet growing demand for organic energy and nutrition bars. The opening date is slated for spring 2016, creating more than 200 jobs.

**Elevation Burger**, the first and largest U.S. organic burger chain, opened its third store in Maine in March. Also, the chain has added organic chicken to its menu in its more than 50 domestic and international Elevation Burger restaurants. The company is already the nation’s largest restaurant seller of organic beef. **Cuisine Solutions**, which has developed the nation’s largest restaurant seller of organic cooking chicken, is Elevation Burger’s exclusive provider of certified organic chicken ready to be finish-grilled at its restaurants worldwide.

**MOM’s Organic Market** is planning a new Center City grocery store at 34 S. 11th St. in Philadelphia’s new East Market development. MOM’s second in Philadelphia, it will be designed to help draw young and retired professionals to the four-acre block of planned new and renovated stores, apartments, offices, bars, and restaurants. The store will have 55 free shopper parking spaces in a garage, and is slated to open when renovations are done in 2016 in a former warehouse most recently used by Family Court.

**Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage** opened its first Fayetteville, Arkansas, store in March. The store features a mix of national brands and locally grown, raised and manufactured products from Arkansas. All fresh produce is USDA certified organic.

At its annual meeting in April, **Organic Valley** celebrated its record sales of $972 million in 2014, with a profit of $14.5 million. The co-op implemented a record increase in farmer pay price, which went up in most regions by 10 percent, on average. Organic Valley also added 65 jobs, ending 2014 with 802 staff. Organic Valley farmers produced nearly one million kilowatts of clean, renewable energy in 2014, nearly double 2011 figures.

**SK Food International** has merged SK Food Ingredients LLC with **Hesco/Dakota Organic Products**. Both SK Food and Hesco are certified organic by **QAI**, Kosher through **Orthodox Union**, and Non-GMO Project Verified.

**United Natural Foods Inc. (UNFI)** plans to open a 450,000-square-foot distribution center in Gilroy, CA, to expand its market reach in the San Francisco Bay Area. The new facility, slated to open in August, is being designed using sustainable practices and is expected to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification.

Expanding in the Chicago market with six new stores, **Whole Foods Market** is adding in-store dining options and bars to each to give adult customers more reasons to visit. In early May, the company announced it had signed leases for nine new stores planned for Atlanta (two locations), Birmingham in Michigan (relocation), Houston, Jacksonville Beach in Florida, Park City in Utah, Rochester in New York, and Washington, D.C. (two locations). It also announced plans to debut a new chain of smaller, more value-focused stores next year.

**MARKETING**

**Earthbound Farm** has launched a new website that includes **Organic Bound**, a web-based magazine offering product coupons and a recipe collection and database searchable by type of dish, dietary restriction, cuisine and occasion.

**Honest Tea’s** Honest Tropical Green Tea has been selected to be exclusively sold by The Wendy’s Company. The tea is certified organic and Fair Trade Certified.

**Organic Valley** marketed its Organic Fuel—the first milk protein recovery shake on the market made using organic milk—by conducting a cause campaign to “Save the Bros” with a video that went viral on YouTube and Facebook, and was named Adweek’s best commercial of the week on February 20.

**Pacific Foods’** new organic bone broth is now being served on tap at the popular JoLa Café in Portland, OR. The café is serving five flavors of Pacific’s organic chicken and turkey broths in 10-ounce servings at its new customizable bone broth bar.

**Sutherland Product Sales Inc.**, sales agent and distributor of organic fruit and vegetables, expanded its spring and summer organic fruit lineup.

**Whole Foods Market** has expanded the reach and hours for **My Street Grocery**—a mobile food trolley providing community access to healthy foods in the Portland, OR, metro area. Stocked with produce, pantry staples, as well as dairy, meats and frozen fruits and vegetables, the refurbished trolley car now operates pop-up community markets Tuesdays through Saturdays. My Street Grocery represents a partnership between Whole Foods Market and local healthcare providers, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, schools and neighbors.
Wholesome Sweeteners has changed its name to Wholesome!™ Since 2005, Wholesome!™ has paid more than $10 million in Fair Trade premiums to farming co-operatives and partners worldwide, helping to bring clean water, electricity, schools and health care to villages in Malawi, Mexico, Brazil, and Paraguay. It has produced a documentary-style video, now on YouTube, putting a face and story behind Fair Trade organic farming.

Wild Oats Foods LLC’s organic products are now sold in approximately 3,800 Walmart stores.

OF NOTE

Twenty K-8 teachers nationwide will be awarded $1,000 grants this summer for organic agriculture classroom projects from the CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers) Foundation’s Future Organic Farmers Grant Fund. The $20,000 in grants was funded by the UNFI Foundation, Driscoll’s, Organic Valley, National Co+op Grocers, Lauren and Eric Shiermeyer, and Clif Bar Family Foundation.

MegaFood, in partnership with Uncle Matt’s Organic, has established an annual grant program to Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers Inc. as part of a commitment to organic and sustainable farming.

National Co+op Grocers has joined the IX-ONE Product Data and Image Exchange as a founding member.

Organic Farming Research Foundation (ORFR) has established a five-member Advisory Team. The members are Dr. Kathleen Merrigan (Executive Director of Sustainability, George Washington University), Dr. Frederick L. Kirschenmann (Distinguished Fellow for the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University and President of Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture), Dr. Chuck Benbrook (Research Professor, Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources, Washington State University), Ferd Hoechner (Policy Director for the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition), and Dr. Nancy Creamer (Distinguished Professor of Sustainable Agriculture and Community Based Food Systems at North Carolina State University and Director of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems).

Organic Materials Review Institute’s Executive Director Peggy Miars has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS). Last October, Miars was elected as the only North American representative to serve a three-year term on the World Board of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, which created IOAS in 1997 to provide accreditation for certification bodies that verify organic or sustainability-related standards.

RIBUS Inc.’s Nu-FLOW—an organic solution to silicon dioxide—was awarded the Engredea Editors’ Choice Award for Best Organic Ingredient at Natural Products Expo West 2015.

Will Harris, a pioneer in sustainable meat production and owner/president of Georgia’s largest certified organic farm White Oak Pastures, has been named president of the American Grassfed Association representing hundreds of U.S. grass-fed meat producers.

Whole Foods Market has been ranked No. 55 on this year’s “100 Best Companies to Work For” by FORTUNE magazine. It is the company’s 18th year to be on the list.

PERSONNEL NEWS

Global Organics Ltd. has hired Gigi Brienza as its Director of Operations. She formerly directed sourcing and supplier development at Stonyfield Farm.

PCC Natural Markets has hired former Starbucks executive Cate Hardy as its new CEO.

RIBUS Inc. has hired Laurie Wittenbrink as Global Marketing Manager and Lisa Harter for Global Business Development.

Rodale Institute has hired three new employees: Dr. Vijay Bhosekar, Director of Scientific Communications; Jesse Barret, Organic Allentown Program Manager; and Justin Barclay, Veteran Farming Program Coordinator.

IN MEMORIAM

RALPH BRONNER

Ralph Bronner, executive vice president and spokesperson for Dr. Bronner’s Magic Soaps, died February 10 at the age of 78. The first son of company founder Emanuel H. Bronner, he had continued his father’s legacy of sharing a message of hope for a unified world, and led Dr. Bronner’s on the progressive path it is most known for pioneering.

CORRECTION

The Wild Oats product line was launched in Walmart starting in April 2014, not 2013 as stated in the article “Retailers Ramp Up their Offerings” in the Winter 2015 edition of the Organic Report.
Welcome! NEW MEMBERS

AG PROCESSOR
FONA International Inc.

BROKER
Red Hill Foods

ASSOCIATIONS
Biopesticide Industry Alliance
Organic Exporters
Association of New Zealand

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Crosstek Solutions LLC
Farmland LP
Intact US Inc.
Kerrigan Global Solutions LLC
Rokala Public Affairs
The Fresh Approach
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Sugarism Trade

GROWERS/FARMERS
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Botanical Plantations LLC
Cascade Organic Flour LLC
Cultivator Natural Products Pvt. Ltd.
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Foster Farms
Green Tractor Farm
Hestia Organic Farms
Highlander Organics Inc.
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Joachim's Pride Inc.
Garry & Gerri Johnson
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Miller Farm
Don McKen
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Quarter Acre Farm
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Rembrandt Foods
Sabine Land & Livestock
Skagit River Ranch
Stonehenge Organics
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Lyle Wright
Yorkshire Valley Farms
Zondo Family Farm & Ranch

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Carmela Beck
Chris Schreiner

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KVZ Trading Company LLC

INGREDIENT SUPPLIER
Natural Habitats USA Inc.

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DD USA Organic LLC
EnviroKure Inc.
Ferrara Candy Company
Isagro USA Inc.
Margarita's Tortilla Factory LLC
Monaluna
PrivateLabelSkin Inc.
Three Twins Ice Cream
Weleda Inc.
Zimt Artisan Chocolates Ltd.

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Perspectives on an Organic Check-Off

“A huge concern of mine is how is the organic industry positioned to meet the growing demand for organic? We do not have enough people in place to make sure there are adequate organic producers, to make sure there is enough organic information available. This check-off would greatly enhance organic’s ability to meet the demand.”

—Roger Lansink farms
750 organic acres in northwest Iowa
Photo: Gene Lucht, Iowa Farmer Today

“For the first time the organic industry will reach out to consumers with a single voice to educate them through various PR campaigns about what the organic seal means. I believe all farmers, large and small, will greatly benefit from the research and promotion made possible by the revenue the organic check-off program will generate.”

—Luis H. Acuña, President and CEO, Viva Tierra Organic Inc., Sedro-Woolley, Washington

“I’d like to see check-off funds go towards helping bring more certified organic producers into our community... We need to help ourselves do a better job of promoting what we do, and how farmers can benefit from being an organic farmer... And one of the best parts for me as an organic producer is producing something that consumers really want.”

—Perry Clutts, owner of organic dairy farm Pleasantview Farms in Ohio

“I’m really happy to see that organic is growing up. An organic check-off would help the industry be able to bring the message to consumer of why organic’s important... Organic needs more research dollars for the organic problems we’re all fighting with—pests and weed control in particular... weed control is the biggest beast and what I spend the most money on. I probably could expand more if I didn’t have that piece of the expense associated with the hand labor of pulling weeds.”

—Donna Miller, owner of D&G Blueberry Farms in western Florida

“There is a disconnect between the demand for organic products and the supply of organic ingredients. Organic food companies like my company face shortages of organic ingredients far too often. Each year there is another organic ingredient that is under-produced and difficult to source. In order to fix this supply and demand issue, more farmers in America need to go organic.”

—Nicole Dawes, founder and CEO of Late July Snacks
“I understood that the proposed check-off was controversial and decided to investigate. Largely I found that concerns stem from bad experiences with other agricultural commodity programs like beef, pork and eggs, that benefited large agribusiness and processors while American farmers were screwed over. But I found that the proposed organic check-off program has been designed with a lot of feedback from organic farmers in a sensible and fair fashion.”

—David Bronner, President of Dr. Bronner’s

“Over the years of interacting with consumers, we know first-hand about how confused consumers are about organic in the broad sense. Is natural better, what about all-natural, is GMO-free as good as organic? What makes organic ‘organic?’ To have a program from a high level that educates on the benefits of organic is critical... People don’t always understand that organic is the highest standard out there.”

—Jesse Laflamme, co-owner of Pete & Gerry’s Organic Eggs, Monroe, New Hampshire

“As a small organic dairy farmer, I can certainly understand the concerns brought by the opposition. But ultimately, I find myself thinking of my kids and the decisions I make for them on a daily basis. And honestly, I’m brought to the line from The Lorax that I’ve read so many times, ‘Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get different. It’s not.’”

—Abbie Corse, sixth generation farmer at The Corse Farm Dairy, Windham County, Vermont