

Organic News, Certification Updates, Member Profiles, and More!



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INSIDE LOOK

Organic Seed for Our Future

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Organic Seed for Our Future

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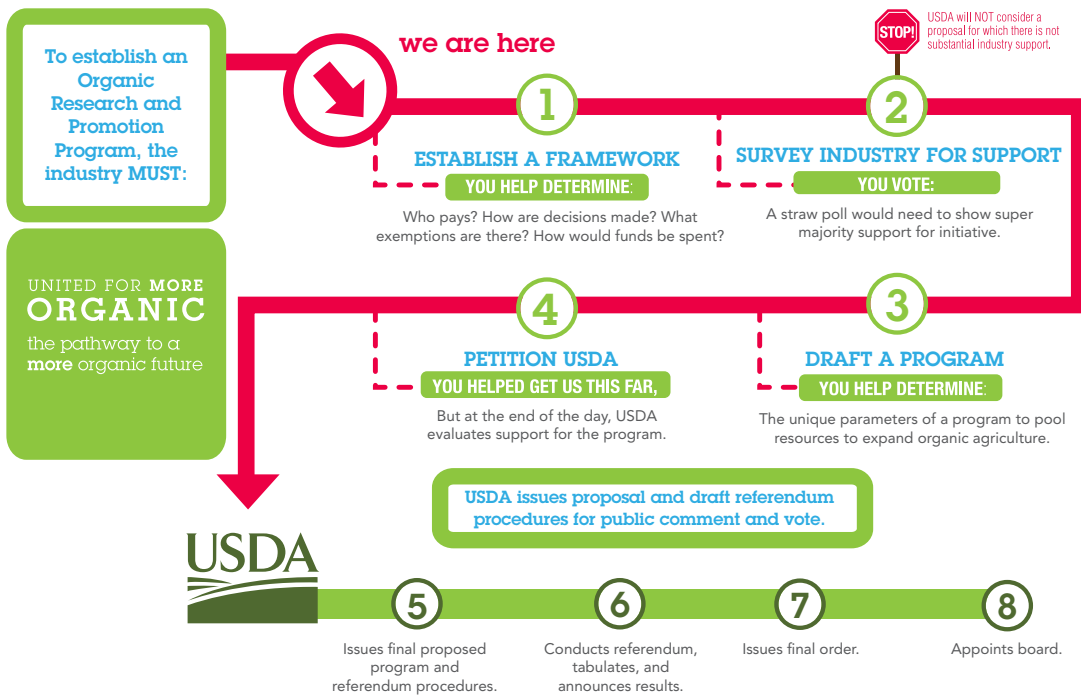
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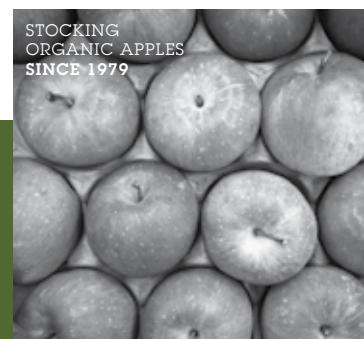
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A Comprehensive and Collaborative Approach

This month's feature story, authored by Kristina Hubbard of the Organic Seed Alliance (OSA), calls for a comprehensive and collaborative approach to addressing needs in organic seed research, education, and policy.

Since the National Organic Program emerged in 2002, the organic community and leaders like OSA have worked to expand supply and varieties of organic seed.

CCOF has supported the work of OSA and others, advocating strongly for increased investment in classical breeding and cultivar development through the USDA Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI).

Last year, CCOF Director of Policy & Programs Brise Tencer and I took Dale Coke of Coke Farms to meet directly with Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow, who was visiting the Bay Area. Dale - who is featured in this issue's account of CCOF members who are producing organic seed (page 24) - explained to Senator Stabenow the importance of organic seed and development of new varieties for organic systems, urging her to champion investment in seed research. Unfortunately, continued stalling of a comprehensive farm bill and ongoing budget battles have left this research and other important organic investments without funding.

Absent a coherent federal policy and investment strategy to support organic seed production, organizations like OSA and CCOF continue to advocate and organize. And our members continue to innovate, developing new seeds and breeds to support the growing organic sector. These include Bill Reynolds' "Black Beauty" zucchini (easy to pick, good shelf life, and superior taste, page 25), and Patty Buskirk (page 25) of Terra Organics who would like to expand the sale of her organic seeds beyond home gardeners to commercial farmers.

We will also continue working to have CCOF member concerns heard directly by officials, as we did in September in Salinas, California, with recently appointed USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Administrator Anne Alonzo. One of the first topics raised by a farmer at the roundtable with the administrator was organic seed. Kristina notes in this issue's feature article that organic seed is the "critical first link in the production chain." To grow the organic movement, this topic cannot rest.



Cathy

Cathy Calfo
CCOF Executive Director

Issue Contributors

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Kristina Hubbard is the director of advocacy and communications for Organic Seed Alliance. She's worked for more than a decade as an organizer, researcher, and writer on projects involving genetic engineering and consolidation in the seed industry. She was awarded a Doris Duke Conservation Fellowship to examine the implications of genetically engineered alfalfa, and has taught at the University of Montana. She's the author of *Out of Hand: Farmers Face the Consequences of a Consolidated Seed Industry* and co-author of *Organic Seed Alliance's State of Organic Seed report*. Her research was recently published in *Agriculture and Human Values*. Hubbard serves on the Montana Department of Agriculture's Organic Commodity Advisory Council.



USDA Celebrates National Farmers' Market Week

With 8,144 farmers' markets now listed in the USDA National Farmers' Market Directory (<http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets>), it was a good time to celebrate National Farmers' Market Week this August. Direct marketing is one of the fastest growing sales methods for organic agriculture, with CSA programs and farmers' markets popping up all over the United States to better connect consumers to the farms and farmers that produce their food. According to the Census of Agriculture, direct sales rose by nearly 50 percent between 2002 and 2007, and were valued at \$7 billion in 2012. California, of course, remains the number one state for farmers' markets, with 759 listed in the directory. Following close behind is New York, hosting 637. The top ten states for farmers' markets, in order: California, New York, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Virginia/Missouri (tie). To better promote local and regional food systems, the USDA launched a new interface for the National Farmers' Market Directory in May to encourage visitors and the development of cellphone apps and other tools that use the real-time data. Directory users can search for markets by zip code to access information on days of operation, location, available products, and payment options. More than 3,800 farmers' markets are authorized to accept SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) vouchers, expanding opportunities for recipients to access fresh produce and healthy foods. According to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, USDA has assisted almost 450 farmers' markets and other direct marketing projects through the Farmers' Market Promotion Program under the Obama

Administration, as well as supported hundreds of new projects and products through the Value-Added Producer Grants program. National Farmers' Market Week is celebrated annually during the first week of August.

eOrganic Webinars Benefit Organic Producers

Learn the latest in organic farming practices and research by attending or watching an eOrganic Webinar! Brought to the public by eXtension, the interactive learning environment delivering knowledge from the smartest land-grant university minds across America, eOrganic offers a curriculum designed for all kinds of organic producers. Their mission is to foster a research and outreach community, engage farmers and ag professionals through trainings and publications, and support research and outreach projects. Their fall webinar series is free to join and getting started now. Sign up for upcoming webinars to watch slides, listen to the presenter, and type in questions during the live event. Visit the eOrganic site at eOrganic.info for a complete listing of their upcoming webinars and an extensive archive of past webinars, sorted chronologically or by topic. Sign up for their newsletter to keep apprised of upcoming webinars and receive a convenient schedule in your inbox.

The Organic Center Debuts New Website

The Organic Center unveiled its newly redesigned website, www.organic-center.org this September, which, according to a press release, aims to "Bring You the Science Behind Organic."

"The Organic Center has made great strides this year in stepping up efforts to communicate the latest science showing the benefits of organic food and farming. This re-designed website will help consumers, policymakers, the media, and scientists access and better understand findings that shed light on the health and environmental benefits of organic practices," said Christine Bushway, Executive Director and CEO of the Organic Trade Association.

The features of "Generations of Organic" include:

- Summaries of the most up-to date scientific studies on organic issues such as pesticide avoidance, nutrition, and sustainable farming
- Monthly interviews with scientists doing cutting-edge research on hot-topic issues

- Organic recipes detailing the scientific background of the main ingredients
- A blog about arising topics and areas of organic interest

“Our website is full of science-focused, community-oriented content, so it is ideal for individuals with both a background in science and those who are interested in scientific facts but do not have a lot of scientific experience,” explained Jessica Shade, Ph.D., who came on board as the Center’s Director of Science Programs in mid-February 2013. She added, “This website will be the best place for the public to learn about cutting-edge science of interest to the organic community.”

Water and Irrigation Toolkit for California Farmers

FarmsReach, an online information-sharing and business platform for farmers, just launched a new Water and Irrigation Toolkit with resources recommended by successful farmers and specialists in water and irrigation.

In California, where drought has been documented since the 1800s and water quality has become a critical food safety issue, it’s imperative that the state’s 81,500 farmers and ranchers stay abreast of best practices and new technologies to optimize water efficiency and safety.

FarmsReach’s Water and Irrigation Toolkit is the fourth in a series of practical toolkits to launch over the next several months, and complements their existing resources, which cover Business and Financial Planning, Marketing and Sales, and Seed and Planting.

The new Water & Irrigation Toolkit includes practical resources like Drought-Proofing Your Farm and Irrigation Tech Tips, among others, providing strategies to implement better systems, conserve energy use, and irrigate with limited water resources. It also includes information on soil management, plant selection, water cycling, and aquaculture systems, as well as easy calculators to track irrigation systems’ efficiency and ensure high crop yield.

“It can be a steep learning curve to know where you’re at and what resources you have [for irrigation efficiency],” says John Lagier of Lagier Ranches in Escalon [CCOF-certified]. “Especially for people who farm where water costs are higher, smart management of water can really affect the bottom line.”

Accessibility of water can also affect farms’ bottom line and capacity to even farm. In regions where water is scarce, farmers are “forced to learn water efficiency,” says Helmut Klauer of Classic Organic Farm & Market in Gaviota, who shares a well with

a half-dozen other farmers.

FarmsReach’s toolkit also includes resources about two controversial California water projects: fracking and the Bay-Delta tunnels. “Both of these issues are attracting a lot more media attention as the general public and agriculture industry learn about their implications,” says Melanie Cheng, founder of FarmsReach, in a press release. “Our goal is to provide resources and connections so farmers can be successful, so these projects which may greatly affect the water supply and water quality for California farmers should be on their radar.”

To view the Water & Irrigation Toolkit or submit additional practical resources for farmers and ranchers, visit www.farmsreach.com.

New EPA Pesticide Labels Attempt to Help Bees

In an ongoing effort to protect bees and other pollinators, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed new pesticide labels that prohibit use of some neonicotinoid pesticide products where bees are present.

“Multiple factors play a role in bee colony declines, including pesticides. The Environmental Protection Agency is taking action to protect bees from pesticide exposure and these label changes will further our efforts,” said Jim Jones, assistant administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, in an EPA press release.

Pesticide product labels provide critical information on how to safely handle and use pesticide products. The new labels will have a bee advisory box and icon with information on routes of exposure and spray drift precautions. This announcement affects products containing the neonicotinoids imidacloprid, dinotefuran, clothianidin, and thiamethoxam. The EPA will work with pesticide manufacturers to change labels so that they will meet the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) safety standard.

In May, the USDA and EPA released a comprehensive scientific report on honeybee health, showing scientific consensus that there is a complex set of stressors associated with honeybee declines, including loss of habitat, parasites and disease, genetics, poor nutrition, and pesticide exposure.

View the infographic on EPA’s new bee advisory box at www.epa.gov/pesticides/ecosystem/pollinator/bee-label-info-graphic.pdf.



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Homeless Garden Project Spotlight

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The Homeless Garden Project is a nonprofit organization based on a 3.5-acre organic farm in Santa Cruz, California, that provides job training and transitional employment for homeless men and women.

We strive to be an open and welcoming community for all who walk on our farm. The community often gets involved through volunteering their time; our Century Certificate program encourages volunteers to commit to working 100 hours and attending four of our educational lectures.

Working side-by-side with our crew, volunteers provide invaluable labor and become the best advocates of our organization - they begin to see the homeless as fellow community members and stigmas and assumptions are reduced or eliminated altogether. We hope that in the soil of our urban farm and garden people will find the tools they need to build a home in the world.

Learn more about the Homeless Garden Project at www.homelessgardenproject.org.

Written by Kate Pearl, Volunteer and Community Outreach Coordinator, Homeless Garden Project

Make A Stand Lemon-Aid's Vision to End Child Slavery

Nine-year-old Vivienne Harr hopes to end child slavery during her lifetime. After seeing a photo in 2012 of two boys living lives of slavery, Vivienne came to the difficult understanding that slavery did not end with Abraham Lincoln. Frustrated and wanting to do something, Vivienne enlisted the help of her family to make a stand against modern day slavery. Every day for a year, rain or shine, she opened her lemonade stand, raising funds to support her goal (check out the photos from her journey at www.instagram.com/makeastandlemonade). With resounding support from her family, the neighborhood, and arguably, the whole world, Vivienne was able to reach her goal of \$100,000 and write a check for \$101,320 to the organization Not for Sale. Her family thought she was done. Vivienne asked, "Is child slavery done?" and her family said "no," so neither was Vivienne. That's where bottled lemonade came in. Make a Stand Lemon-aid is available in both "Original" and "Kick," which is infused with yerba mate and ginger. Both drinks are certified organic (by CCOF!) and made with U.S.-grown fruit. Half of their profits from every bottle are provided to a fund of hand-picked organizations that do industry-leading, frontline work in eradicating child slavery: Free the Slaves, UNICEF, Nepal Youth Foundation, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor, and GEMS: Girls Educational & Mentoring Services. You too can take a stand. Visit www.makeastand.com to find a retailer near you or order a few bottles for yourself.

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Johnny's Selected Seeds 40th Anniversary

For 40 years, Johnny's Selected Seeds has been dedicated to helping families, friends, and communities to feed one another by providing quality seeds, tools, information, and service. Founder and Chairman Rob Johnston Jr. proudly states, "We will continue to work, today and into the future, as a community with you, your family, and your customers and friends. When the boundaries between all of us get blurred, that's when it's best." Today, Johnny's has grown from a fledgling business in a farmhouse attic to a national and international multichannel retailer that employs over 130 full-time and more than 40 seasonal. The company now regularly ships seed to commercial growers and home gardeners across the United States and regularly supplies seed to over 50 countries around the world. The Albion farm remains the center for research and continues as a working farm with more than 40 acres under cultivation. Johnny's 40th anniversary offers employees and customers an

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opportunity to reflect on Johnny's cultural impact and influence on the agriculture industry. The company became 100 percent employee-owned in 2006.

Congratulations to Johnny's Selected Seeds on 40 years of hard work and dedication! We're proud to share a birthday with you!

Ken Kimes Named Farmer of the Year

The Santa Cruz Farm Bureau has named longtime CCOF member Ken Kimes of New Natives in Corralitos, California, 2013 Farmer of the Year. The 1,100-member organization celebrated Ken's contributions to the agricultural community and dedication to organic practices. Ken is both an organic farmer and founding member and president of Farm Fuel, Inc., a biofuel supplier in Watsonville, California. New Natives was one of the first farms to receive CCOF organic certification, receiving its certification in 1983. Ken's 40,000 square feet of greenhouse space supports New Natives' diverse organic micro greens production. Congratulations, Ken!

Archi's Acres/VSAT Wins OTA Leadership Award

Congratulations to Karen and Colin Archipley! Archi's Acres/VSAT has been awarded the 2013 Rising Star OTA Organic Leadership Award, given annually, according to their website, "to an individual, inside or outside the organic industry, who has shown leadership and vision in furthering goals of the organic movement." The 2013 Leadership Award winners were recognized during Natural Products Expo East at the Baltimore Museum of Industry on September 25.

From OTA's 2013 Leadership Awards press release: *Karen and Colin Archipley founded the Veterans Sustainable Agriculture Training (VSAT) program in 2007 at their organic hydroponic farm, Archi's Acres, in Escondido, CA. Archi's Acres and the VSAT program offer training and employment opportunities in the organic farming sector for military veterans, who otherwise face an unemployment rate twice the national average. The program at Archi's Acres has trained over 200 active duty and veterans for careers in sustainable and organic agriculture and other sectors in the food supply chain.*

Because Archi's Acres and the VSAT program create a link between jobs for veterans and organic agriculture, they are helping organic reach a wider audience of policy makers while developing and encouraging additional organic farmers and entrepreneurs.

Learn more about Archi's Acres/VSAT at www.archisacres.com.

Straus Family Creamery Becomes Certified Sonoma Green Business

Spearheaded by Straus Family Creamery's former VP of Human Resources and Sustainability, Elizabeth Romanoff, Straus is proud to announce their completion of the Bay Area Green Business Program and subsequent certification as a Sonoma Green Business. The entire process took nearly a year to complete, during which time Romanoff and Straus Sustainability Coordinator Isabelle Reining joined forces to analyze current business practices and strategize additional ways that Straus could achieve optimal green-business practices. The company swapped out lighting for more efficient, energy-saving technologies, and reduced post-consumer waste while greening printing standards. Straus also sourced new packaging technologies in the midst of other improvements. "Who cares about the minimum; let's aim for the maximum sustainability standards," said Romanoff, in a company news release.

According to the release, Romanoff has taken the creamery's administration to the next level and created meaningful and enduring change. The Sonoma County Green Business Program will audit Straus every three years to maintain compliance with any new standards developed during that time. Great job, Straus! We're glad to see more members join the ranks of Certified Green Businesses.

Harmons Healthy Checkout Lanes Comes to Stores

Now installed at all 16 store locations, Harmons Grocery offers a "healthy checkout lane," stocked with fruit and other items that include less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat, no trans fats, and less than 250 mg of sodium. "You can go through this checkout lane and purchase guilt-free snacks hand-picked by our dietitians," the grocer said on its Facebook page. Customers are big fans, leaving comments of support for the new checkout option. Harmons is committed to providing products and information for living a healthy lifestyle. In-store events include a "Healthy Snacking Store Tour," "Healthy Eating on a Budget" workshop, "Nutrition 101 Field Trip" store tour, and more. Registered dietitians are on staff at three of the stores, offering a number of services for Harmons customers. From store tours to personal nutritional counseling and health screenings, Harmons wants to ensure that its shoppers are equipped for a long and nutritious life. Sixteen Harmons locations span Utah. Learn more about Harmons and their wholesome offerings at www.harmonsgrocery.com. We hope to see healthy checkout lanes spread to stores across the United States.

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Member News Meets Social Networking



Wine Country Kitchens via [Facebook](#): "The good thing is that balsamic vinegar can be stored indefinitely. Once you open a bottle, oxygen is not a problem and will not cause deterioration. Store it in a cool, dark place away from heat. You may notice a sediment in the bottle. This is a natural by-product of the process and is not harmful."

Thanks for the information, Wine Country Kitchens! This is valuable storage information for anyone with a bottle or two of balsamic in their pantry.



Ritual Wellness via [Facebook](#): "Monday Morning Reset: 1 cucumber, 2 cups of spinach, 1 medium green apple, big squeeze of lime. Wash. Juice. Enjoy."

Thanks for the simple and appetizing recipe, Ritual Wellness! Posts like these are short, useful, and delicious!



Specialty Produce via [Facebook](#): "Frozen grapes hardly qualifies as a recipe, but this tip from Big Red Kitchen is an important one - green grapes freeze into solid chunks unfit for snacking, while red ones stay just soft enough to chow down on."

Have you tried freezing your grapes? Seriously, they are almost tastier than raw, fresh grapes. Just make sure they're organic!



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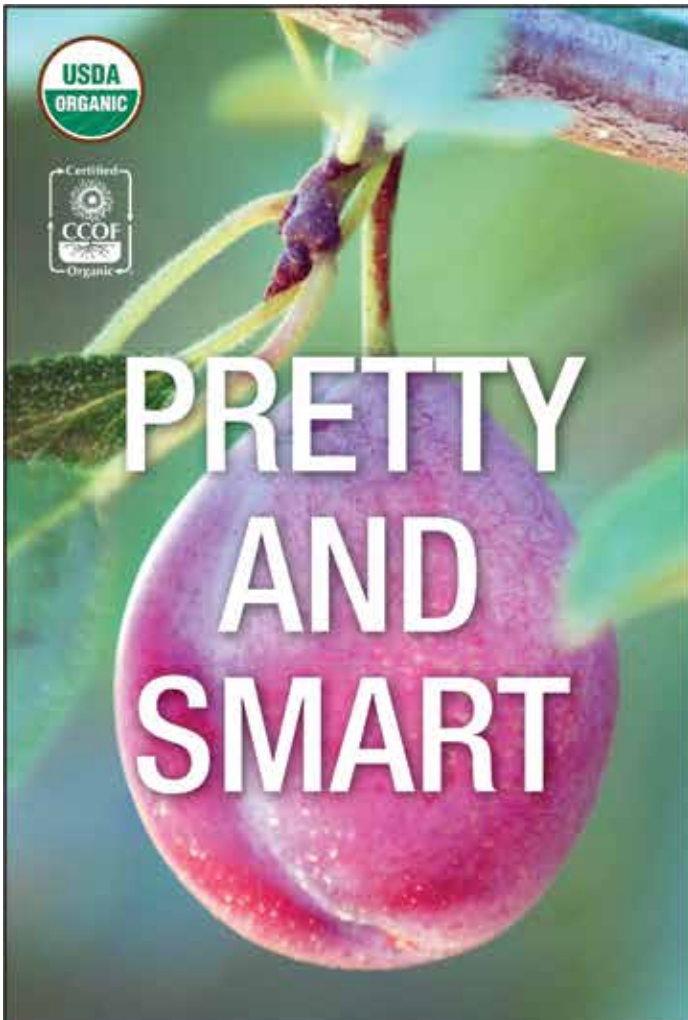
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Enacting Political Change through Organic Collaboration

CCOF is committed to representing our membership on the national stage when it comes to organic-related policymaking. Active participation in the political arena will set the stage for the future success of the organic movement, and we know that strategic alliances across different organizations will help us realize those goals more effectively. In order to accomplish this, CCOF not only houses a policy director and specialist onsite but also actively participates in multiple networks across the state and nation. Some of the primary groups that we collaborate with are the Organic Trade Association (OTA), National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), California Farm Bill Caucus, California Climate Action Network (CalCAN), and the Farmer Educator Network (FEN). Through our participation with these groups, CCOF is collectively amplifying the voice for the organic sector here in California and across the nation.

OTA

The Organic Trade Association (OTA) is a membership-based business association for the organic industry in North America. CCOF has a strategic alliance with OTA, the goal of which is to provide a unified front for the organic industry to grow and protect organic agriculture. CCOF members sit on OTA's Producer Advisory Council, and senior staff at CCOF are involved in OTA task forces. Working together in this capacity

allows us a far greater voice in affecting critical legislative issues on the national scale. Primary among these issues are farm bill concerns and funding for organic programs reaching from research to the National Organic Program itself.

CCOF members receive a 25 percent discount when joining OTA.

NSAC

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) is an alliance of grassroots organizations that advocates for federal policy reform to advance the sustainability of agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and rural communities. NSAC provides direct representation in Washington D.C., on behalf of its membership to Congress and federal administrative offices, such as the USDA and EPA. With just under 100 participating organizations, NSAC is the largest coalition of sustainable agriculture groups in the country.

Through the work of the coalition and on their own, these groups seek to advance common positions that support small and mid-size family farms, protect natural resources, promote healthy rural communities, and ensure access to healthy, nutritious foods for everyone. By bringing this broad grassroots perspective to the national table, NSAC levels the playing field and gives a powerful voice to sustainable and organic farmers. CCOF is a longtime participant in the coalition. Policy and Programs Director Brise Tencer sits on their executive board, and Outreach and Policy Specialist Jessy Beckett collaborates with the NSAC grassroots council. Tapping into the power of the broader sustainable agriculture movement amplifies our work, aiding us in being a leading voice for organic interests nationwide.

CA Farm Bill Caucus

The California Farm Bill Caucus is a coalition of the state's leading sustainable agriculture organizations. A subset of NSAC, The California Farm Bill Caucus makes recommendations and lobbies for the interests of organic producers in California. CCOF is one of the eleven member organizations that make up the California-based members of NSAC.

Overall, the California Farm Bill Caucus has four major priorities: organic, federal conservation programs, rural development, and beginner farmer and rancher development. The group's priorities for the 2013 bill include opposing any cuts to the conservation title, continuation of the EQIP Organic Initiative program, the expansion of the Conservation Stewardship Program and National Organic Certification Cost Share Program, and the assurance that farmers will be covered for organic premiums under the crop insurance programs. The California

Active participation in the political arena will set the stage for the future success of the organic movement.

Farm Bill Caucus also promotes continuation of funding for sustainable agriculture research, education and extension, beginner and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, rural development, and food systems.

A key player with the California Farm Bill Caucus, CCOF Policy and Programs Director Brise Tencer strategizes on how the group can more effectively work together, and spearheads the promotion of their policy platform.

California Caucus of NSAC: *ALBA, CalCAN, California Farm Link, CCOF, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, EcoFarm, NCATI, OFRF, Pesticide Action Network, Roots of Change, Wild Farm Alliance.*

CalCAN

CalCAN (the California Climate and Agriculture Network) serves as the California voice of organic and sustainable agriculture on climate change policy. Farmers and ranchers are already feeling the effects of climate change as water supplies become scarcer; unpredictable and extreme weather events threaten crops; and heat, drought, floods and decreased chill hours challenge farming operations. Organic farms can increase on-farm resilience to climate impacts and provide powerful climate solutions: they typically have lower carbon footprints than conventional systems because of reduced greenhouse gas emissions and enhanced carbon storage in soil and plants.

In collaboration with farmer spokespeople and other allies, CalCAN advocates for resources for farmers whose practices reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon, and provide many environmental co-benefits. For example, some of CalCAN's recent activities include arguing for inclusion of funding from California's cap-and-trade program for organic and sustainable farming practices that have climate benefits, winning passage of two bills to increase the cost effectiveness of producing on-farm renewable energy, and encouraging the creation of the first state legislative committee on organic and sustainable agriculture. This year, CalCAN is focusing on how farmland protection can help mitigate climate change. CCOF's Brise Tencer serves on CalCAN's executive committee, providing strategic input and connections to organic farmer leaders to further CalCAN's work.

FEN

CCOF continues to play a coordinating role for the California Central Coast Farmer Education Network (FEN), which was created through a grant from the Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program, a fund authorized by the farm bill and the USDA. The goal behind FEN is to cohesively educate

and support the beginner farmer population in the Central Coast of California. Initiated by the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems (CASFS), FEN has a calendar of workshops, field days, seminars, webinars, and other learning opportunities put on by over a dozen regional organizations for Central Coast growers. FEN attempts to cross-pollinate between these different groups, making sure that the organizations know what is happening throughout the community. This communication intends to minimize educational redundancy and maximize curricular integration. CCOF hosts our FEN partners here at our office for quarterly meetings to share ideas for further collaboration between educational programs.

From federal, to state, to local, CCOF is proud to team up with so many organizations of similar creed. We believe that cooperation in this fashion deepens our understanding of national trends, magnifies our impact, and allows us to further our mission of being the leading voice for organic through promotion, education, and advocacy.

CCOF Welcomes New Outreach and Policy Specialist!

We are excited to announce the recent hire of Jessy Beckett as our outreach and policy specialist. Jessy grew up on organic and conventional farms in the Salinas Valley of California and has several seasons of farming experience. She holds a master's degree in community development from UC Davis, where she worked with beginner farmers and CSA operations in California's Central Valley. Jessy also managed the production of the global film "Symphony of the Soil," which highlights the benefits of organic practices on soil health and fertility. She will be organizing CCOF's educational programs, working with the CCOF chapters, and advocating for CCOF members with the policy department. You can reach her at jbeckett@ccof.org.

Crop Planning Webinar November 7

Already thinking about what you'll sow next season? Did you miss the *Crop Planning* webinar last year? Back by popular demand, we will have a new and improved *Crop Planning* webinar November 7, 9:30-11:00 a.m. New presenters will walk through the basics of how to develop a crop plan, setting you up for a successful season of growing and meeting market demand. Visit www.ccofcroppanning.eventbrite.com to register.

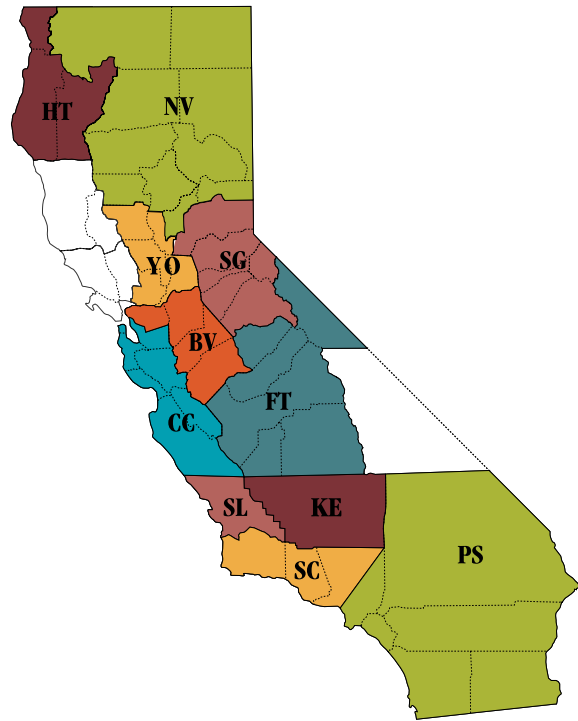
Welcome New CCOF Chapter Leaders!

Pacific Southwest (PS)

A great time was had by all at the most recent Pacific Southwest chapter meeting on Tuesday, June 25, at the Stone Brewery Bistro & Gardens in Escondido, California! Held with the local Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers, the meeting focused on loan offerings for small farmers. Guest speaker Greg Koch, owner of Stone Brewing Co. & Stone Farms, talked about the history of his business and how they source ingredients for both the beer and the bistro. Lucky attendees got a tour of Stone Brewery, which included tasty samples! Next, Brent Collins and Frank Golbeck of Slow Money discussed their loan programs for small businesses. The final speaker was Val Dolcini, state executive director of the U.S. Farm Service Agency, who spoke to the group about the USDA Microloan Program. After a Q&A session, many stayed for a delicious dinner at the Stone Brewery Bistro & Gardens. The Pacific Southwest chapter leadership: Karen Archipley, Archi's Acres (Board Representative); Lois Christie, Christie Organic Consultants (Board Alternate); Soleil Develle, Pan O'Rama Farms (President); Tom Page, Page's Organics (Vice President); and Mary Page, Page's Organics (Treasurer).

Central Coast (CC)

Downtown San Juan Bautista looks like rush hour never happened at 6 p.m. on a Monday evening. Those that choose to be out and about are enjoying an evening meal (or drink) at one of the open restaurants. Dona Esther Restaurant has been serving Mexican food since 1982 and recently hosted 20 Central Coast chapter members for a meeting on Monday, July 15. The meeting began with some social time and a chance for everyone to pack their plates with chile verde and enchiladas. The meeting then kicked off with a welcome and introductions by Board Representative Grant Brians (Heirloom Organic Gardens). The agenda was packed with interesting speakers, including Val Dolcini, state executive director of the U.S. Farm Service Agency. Val has been making the rounds at CCOF chapter meetings to inform our members about the USDA Microloan Program (more information at <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/files/161523.pdf>). Direct from the CCOF home office, Executive Director Cathy Calfo and Director of Policy & Programs Brise Tencer presented on recent CCOF updates and took questions from the group. This was an election year for the Central Coast chapter so the last order of business at the meeting was to vote in new officers. After a unanimous vote, the new slate of officers is as follows: Grant Brians, Heirloom Organic Gardens (Board Representative);



Christine Coke, Coke Farms (Board Alternate); Steve Pedersen, High Ground Organics (Board Alternate); Toby Garrone, Far West Fungi (Vice President); and Kurt Jacobsen, Driscoll's (Treasurer). Congratulations Central Coast chapter officers!

Fresno-Tulare (FT)

On Friday afternoon, August 23, the Fresno Tulare chapter held its quarterly meeting at Organic Fresno restaurant in Fresno, California. The meeting was catered with organic and gluten-free fare, served buffet style. Special guest Dean Boyer and staff from the CSU Fresno Jordan College of Agriculture, Sciences & Technology attended and were on hand to discuss with the chapter the future of organic farming research and institutional training at CSU and in the greater San Joaquin Valley. In addition, the chapter elected a new treasurer, Eldon Thiesen, Eldon Thiesen Farms. The meeting concluded with a raffle of member products and CCOF merchandise. The Fresno Tulare chapter leadership: Vernon Peterson, Abundant Harvest Organics (Board Representative); Steve Koretoff, Purity Organics (Board Alternate); Dwayne Cardoza (President); Eldon Thiesen, Eldon Thiesen Farms (Treasurer).

Let the CCOF community know what your chapter is doing!

Write to programs@ccof.org and we will publish your chapter update in the next edition of *Certified Organic*.

Thank you to this issue's contributors: Cynthia Ortegón (FT) and Lois Christie (PS).



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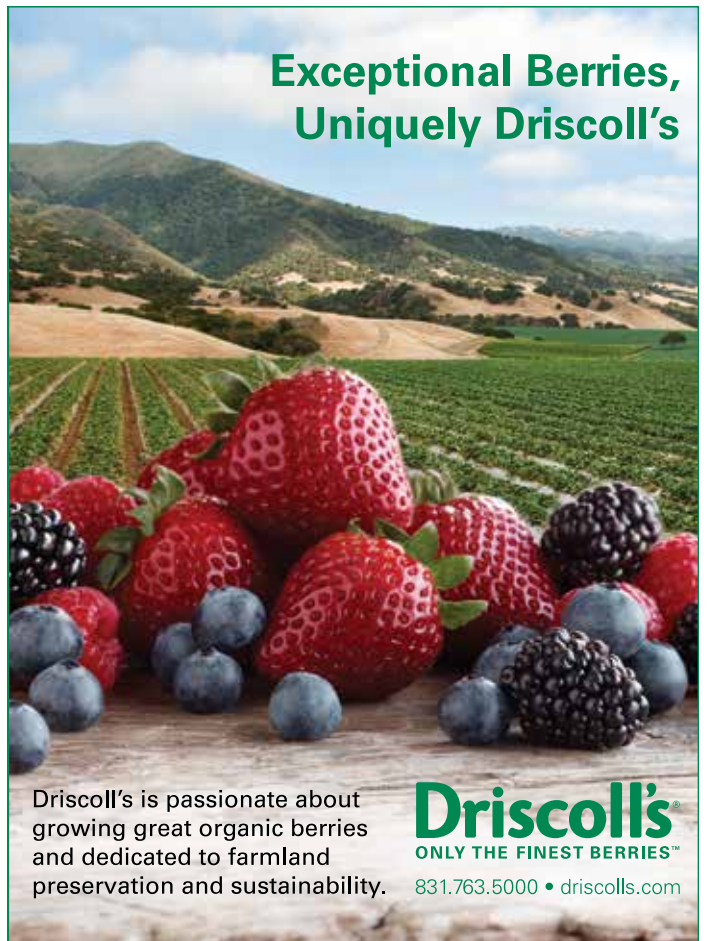
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Organic Seed for Our Future

Written by **Kristina Hubbard**

When the National Organic Program (NOP) launched in 2002, there was virtually no organic seed industry. Only a handful of companies sold certified organic seed. The organic seed requirement was coupled with a necessary exemption to use untreated, non-organic seed when an “equivalent organically produced variety is not commercially available.” Yet, the regulations were written to ensure the integrity of organic systems, starting with this critical first link in the production chain.

In many ways, the organic seed sector is still in its infancy. The diversity of organic seed varieties has not caught up to meet the needs of our growing organic sector and organic plant breeding is still being defined, as seen through discussions about which breeding methods should and should not be excluded. We saw this recently when the NOP clarified its position on the use of cell fusion in developing seed used in organic. Still, there has been considerable progress in increasing the availability of organic seed. Dozens of companies now participate in the organic seed marketplace (see page 24). Furthermore, our data shows that farmers are attempting to source more organic seed.

Two years ago, Organic Seed Alliance (OSA) published the first *State of Organic Seed* report, a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities and challenges in building organic seed systems. We collected data through a national farmer survey to better assess certified organic growers’ attitudes and perceptions regarding organic seed, identify obstacles restricting their use, and provide the organic community good information to improve the quality, integrity, and use of organic seed. We also heard from researchers, certifiers, food and seed industry representatives, and farm and food policy experts through questionnaires and a full-day symposium to discuss the data and identify further needs and recommendations.

When organic seed is available to meet different agronomic, market, and climate needs, organic farmers succeed.

The premise of our *State of Organic Seed* project is that when organic seed is available to meet different agronomic, market, and climate needs, organic farmers succeed - and so does the larger organic industry. We know that increasing the commercial availability of organic seed demands consistency in enforcing the organic seed requirement, further investing in organic seed research and development, and educating growers and certifiers, among other efforts.

State of Organic Seed provides evidence that we are making progress in all areas. Farmers report increased attempts to source organic seed and more pressure from certifiers to do so. Public and private investments in organic seed research have slightly increased. Furthermore, our data shows a growing understanding that organic seed is important beyond being a regulatory requirement for certified operations. The vast majority of farmer respondents agree that organic seed is central to maintaining the integrity of organic food production, and that varieties bred for organic are important to the overall success of organic agriculture.

Despite this progress, organic producers are still underserved in seed specifically adapted to their cropping systems, regions, and market niches. In other words, most organic farmers rely on non-organic seed, some produced in chemical-intensive systems in conflict with organic principles.

Only 20 percent of certified organic crop growers who responded to our survey indicated they have been using 100 percent organic seed for at least three years. While more than half indicated they've increased the percentage of organic seed they use, organic seed still lags behind.

Why aren't more farmers sourcing organic seed?

Variety availability is a "significant factor" in not choosing organic seed. Lack of variety was identified more in vegetable crops than any other cropping system.

Initially, we thought this was related to the needs of smaller-scale producers who grow a number of crops for the fresh market. However, it was the larger scale producers - defined as 40 acres or larger - who were struggling to source adequate organic seed, with more than 80 percent of larger growers citing lack of varieties as a barrier. More than 60 percent of the larger growers also indicated that contracts ("buyer demands") played a factor in not sourcing organic seed.

It is not surprising that farmers report price as a factor in choosing non-organic seed, even though cost is not an allowable reason to pass up organic options. More than 40 percent of respondents indicated that "price" was a moderate to significant factor.

A little surprising, however, was that distrust of organic seed quality was not a major factor for sourcing non-organic seed, despite anecdotal evidence to the contrary. Farmers were asked to indicate if they had "more, less, or about the same" degree of quality issues in organic seed versus conventional seed. More than 70 percent had the same degree of problems with conventional seed as organic seed.

But enough numbers. Overall, our analysis shows that organic seed use is improving. Yet, developing seed systems that benefit organic agriculture requires increased attention and resources to ensure farmers have adequate seed options that perform well on their farms and meet market needs. It's not a stretch to say that the lack of organically bred and produced seed is a barrier to the ongoing growth and success of organic agriculture.

The good news is that seed is the embodiment of potential, and the opportunities before us are endless in addressing our most pressing organic agricultural needs. The goal from OSA's perspective is not to move as quickly as possible to 100 percent usage of organic seed, but to move as quickly as possible to 100 percent usage of high-quality organic seed that is optimal for organic farming systems. We intend to develop regional seed systems that are responsive to the diverse needs of organic farmers, not encourage policies and practices that force producers to use varieties that are inappropriate for their systems.

So what does the roadmap look like for getting there? An

important outcome from the report is a general agreement among stakeholders that building organic seed systems demands a comprehensive and collaborative approach to addressing needs in research, education, and policy.

Research: The next generation of organic plant breeding

Organic seed research, including advancements in organic plant breeding, are critical pieces of this roadmap. Improving the availability of seed produced organically demands more skilled seed producers and more seed companies focused on distributing organic seed. Not discussed nearly enough, however, is that beyond organic seed production we need more organic seed *breeding*. Seed bred under organic conditions provides genetics that are well adapted to the low-input systems in which they are sown.

Developing regional seed systems that respond to the diverse needs of organic farmers requires new investments and increased public-private collaboration. For example, the organic food industry now boasts about \$30 billion in sales each year, yet annual organic seed investments represent approximately .002% of these sales. This is shocking since seed is fundamental to the food production chain.

When it comes to public research, like other organic research priorities, organic plant breeding relies heavily on federal funding through the USDA Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI). The future of this program is unclear due to unusual farm bill hold-ups and budget cuts. Yet the importance of this support cannot be overstated.

One OREI-funded plant-breeding project is the Northern Organic Vegetable Improvement Collaborative (NOVIC). For the last four years, OSA has teamed with farmers, USDA, and four major universities to breed new seed varieties for organic systems, identify the best performing varieties for organic agriculture through trial networks, and educate farmers on organic seed production and on-farm plant breeding. While a number of crops and breeding goals have been involved, the project has focused primarily on breeding for favorable season-extending traits in broccoli, carrot, snap pea, sweet corn, and winter squash.

Another OREI project, Carrot Improvement for Organic Agriculture (CIOA), is addressing the critical needs of organic carrot farmers by developing orange and novel-colored carrots with improved disease and nematode resistance, weed competitiveness, and nutrition and flavor.

Projects like these are essential to increasing the availability of organically bred and produced seed. Even with the regulatory exemption that allows organic farmers to source non-organic seed, finding untreated seed that performs well in organic conditions can be difficult. Many farmers rely on a commercial



seed marketplace where decision makers are few, and seed is increasingly owned by a handful of firms with no interest in the success of organic. Recent data on seed industry consolidation shows that three chemical and biotechnology firms control more than half of the global seed marketplace.

That's why regional seed systems that put farmers' interests before shareholders' interests are imperative to the ongoing growth and success of organic agriculture. Regional breeding networks focus on seed that is appropriate for local conditions, a farmer's first defense against production challenges. Examples include a NOVIC sweet corn that is adapted to organic conditions for the cool and wet climate of the Pacific Northwest and other regions of the Northern Tier.

NOVIC and CIOA are excellent examples of collaboration between farmers and formal plant breeders using a participatory plant breeding approach. Breeders learn what traits are most important to farmers in the region and farmers develop skills in professional, on-farm breeding. Our data shows that organic farmers want to be part of the solution: more than half of survey respondents expressed interest in producing organic seed commercially and conducting on-farm plant breeding projects.

Farmer involvement is essential to increasing organic seed availability and supplying appropriate varieties to fulfill organic farming needs. But we need more investments. We need to also diversify and decentralize our community's approach to developing organic seed. This entails broad participation of not just farmers, but seed companies, non-government organizations, and public and private plant breeders.

We're seeing creative responses. Organically Grown Company, the largest all-organic produce distributor in the Pacific Northwest, is funding (and intimately involved in) a participatory plant breeding project with OSA to develop organic purple sprouting broccoli seed for the Pacific Northwest. This project exemplifies the role food industry partners can play in ensuring a secure organic seed future for their growers and high-quality food for their customers.

Another example is the Clif Bar Family Foundation's Seed Matters

initiative. Among its priorities is funding eight organic plant breeding graduate fellowships representing five universities. These are the first fellowships of their kind in the United States and serve as an example of the visionary approach industry members can take to support a future where the organic food sector is based on a foundation of organic seed.

This investment is especially important given waning public support for university plant breeding programs that focus on field-based breeding and variety development. These fellowships are a reminder that addressing organic seed needs is not always about fixing what's broken. We need new models and investments. We also need a new program that funds public cultivar development to fill existing gaps in plant breeding, including organic.

The public sector has an important role to deliver high-quality cultivars that address the specific, yet always changing, needs of farmers at a regional level. Nevertheless, current USDA funding in other grant areas, such as the Agriculture Food and Research Initiative, appears to be falling short of addressing the needs of minor and emerging crops most in need of public investment. Farmers who rely on neglected crops and markets, including organic, need a larger public investment in these projects. OSA and our partners are calling on USDA to create a separate funding stream with the main objective of delivering regionally adapted "farmer ready" cultivars held in the public domain.

This is one message that OSA recently delivered at a USDA Plant Breeding Working Group listening session. As I heard from presenters representing both the public and private sectors, there was a common theme that training the next generation of plant breeders must also be a top priority of USDA-funded projects within land-grant university breeding programs.

The week before, I had the privilege of attending the Student Organic Seed Symposium initiated by and for plant-breeding graduate students interested in careers in plant breeding that support organic agriculture. Here was a group of students organizing themselves to learn about cutting-edge plant breeding, the organic seed industry, and how they can engage in reinvigorating public research and education. Many of these

students will graduate soon and be looking for jobs. Several believe that public plant breeding positions will not be an option for them.

Education: Building organic seed knowledge and skills

Education in the classroom *and* the field is the next essential piece of our roadmap for organic seed system development.

I recently heard from one organic seed company that there are so few suppliers that a single crop failure can mean the complete absence of that variety for the year because, at times, there are no backup sources. Developing new growers and maximizing use of current ones who are skilled in seed production is therefore essential to increasing and securing a stable organic seed supply.

Following the publication of *State of Organic Seed*, OSA convened a number of working groups to move the recommendations forward.

A host of resources are available to support organic farmers in producing organic seed.

www.seedalliance.org

Free how-to guides, Participatory Plant Breeding Toolkit, Farmer Seed Stewardship Initiative, California-specific organic variety trial report, and more from OSA

www.extension.org/organic_production

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www.organicseedfinder.com

The Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies Organic Seed Finder

varietytrials.eorganic.info

Organic Variety Trial Database, the only searchable tool that includes hundreds of organic variety trial results from across the United States

diverse stakeholders to trade knowledge, techniques, and ideas that strengthen our organic seed community. This is the only educational conference focused solely on organic seed.

Policy: Balancing the state of organic seed with enforcement

Confronting seed industry consolidation and restrictive intellectual property protections like seed patents is critical to expanding organic seed systems. So is protecting organic seed integrity from unwanted genetically engineered products. Steps must also be taken to encourage organic seed usage and provide better information to farmers and certifiers.

When the NOP published its final guidance document this past March on Seeds, Annual Seedlings, and Planting Stock in Organic Crop Production, it didn't draw too much attention within the organic community. Some called it reasonable while others, including OSA, were disappointed because it left out important suggestions that were strongly supported through the public comment process and the National Organic Standards Board.

The quality and integrity of our nation's seed supply has fast become a top issue of concern among organic consumers, which is why we're glad the NOP continues to clarify and enforce an organic seed requirement that ensures the long-term credibility of the organic seal. But we believe the guidance as written does not reflect the progress we have made since the regulations were written. The number of companies supplying organic seed has grown, and more educational resources and tools exist to support the sourcing and planting of organic seed.

Our main critique of the guidance is that it fails to provide a framework for what continual improvement (a principle embedded in the organic standards) looks like and how to achieve it in the context of seed. Understanding the need to reduce burdens on organic operations, as promoted through the NOP's "Sound and Sensible" initiative, we believe that steps can be taken to support increased use of organic seed without creating new burdens. For starters, NOP can provide certifiers with more education and information to assist their efforts in guiding farmers in sourcing organic seed. We believe certifiers should continue to request trialing and researching more than three sources, particularly for those farmers who do not improve sourcing of organic seed year-to-year.

As we make this kind of progress, we remain on track toward continual improvement. Increased availability and use of organic seed means more certified organic acreage, fewer organic farmers relying on seed that's produced in conflict with organic principles, and more farmers meeting the NOP's requirement to use organic seed - all factors in strengthening organic integrity.

OSA is celebrating its ten-year anniversary, which means a lot of retrospection. Over the course of the last decade, the changes we've witnessed in how seed is managed and developed have been enormous. On one hand, the industry has become even more consolidated and our plant genetics increasingly privatized. On the other hand, a number of new organic seed enterprises have emerged, more farmers are operating as seed stewards, and, as a community, we are realizing the opportunities to breed, produce, and distribute seed in ways that reflect the values of the organic movement.

Through new models and partnerships, we are collaborating on innovative research and expanding educational resources. And we are advocating for policies that support the expansion of organic seed systems. This includes ensuring that seed is conserved, protected, and improved upon as a natural resource fundamental to organic production.

Getting to Know CCOF Organic Seed Producers

Written by Zea Sonnabend



Coke Farm/Jardines, Inc.

San Juan Bautista, California

It all began for Dale Coke when he looked into the bottom of his bag of Burpee Gold Beet seed and started thinking that he could get better-quality seed by growing it himself. He selected some of the best plants from his beet crop that year and saved them for seed. Dale, who has about 350 acres of diversified vegetable crops in the CCOF Central Coast Chapter, is one of the longest certified-organic members of CCOF (certified since 1981). Around the same time he saved beet seed, Dale started getting concerned that some of his favorite varieties of lettuce, peppers, and cucumbers were becoming more difficult to find or commercially unavailable. He liked the idea of maintaining a full growing cycle on his farm and full diversification of crops, so he started producing seed primarily for his own use.



Over the last several years, Dale has been able to produce enough seed to sell some. As the seed market has developed, Dale is at the point where he now has about three to five acres of vegetable seeds and 48 acres of wheat for seed. In 2012, about two-thirds of the seed was for his own use and one-third for sale through contracts with seed companies. The crops he grows for seeds include beans, beets, chard, cucumbers, melons, and open-pollinated corn.

Coke also conducts variety trialing and would like to spend more time developing specific varieties for organic farmers that are selected under organic conditions. However, as a full-time farmer, Dale is unable to manage the variety development himself and would like to work in collaboration with plant breeders. He observes that varieties need to not only grow well in organic fields but also need marketability in terms of appearance, yield, and keeping qualities. Seed varieties also need traits like disease resistance, and optimum flavor and nutrition, of course. The very important issue of preserving genetic diversity in our food crops is also in the front of Coke's consciousness as he considers variety choices for his vegetable crops.

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Eel River Produce

Scotia, California

Bill Reynolds grows twelve acres of vegetables in Humboldt County on the edge of the fog zone with perfect growing conditions for dry farming. He specializes in crops that do well with dry farming, such as summer and winter squash, lemon cucumbers, scarlet runner beans, beets, and melons. He has been certified-organic since 1989.

About 15 years ago, Bill was having a hard time finding a zucchini that had desirable wholesale market characteristics, so he made a cross between the hybrid variety "Raven" and the heirloom "Black Beauty." He wanted a variety that was dark green and glossy with an open plant habit so it was easy to pick, very vigorous and productive, and has good shelf life and superior taste. Bill also needed disease resistance and the ability to grow in dry conditions. He started to work on selecting from his cross and improving his selections with John Navazio, Ph.D., the senior scientist for the Organic Seed Alliance and the extension organic seed specialist for Washington State University. The result of their breeding program is "Dark Star" zucchini, which has been very successful for other organic growers with yields as high as many hybrids. More recently, he has been working with well-known organic seedsman Steve Peters to help market this seed variety and a few others that Bill went on to create, such as "Stella Blue" hokkaido squash and "Shiraz Tall Top" beet.

Bill is a member of the Family Farmers Seed Cooperative, a group of about a dozen seed growers in the Midwest and western United States who have a cooperative structure to clean and sell their seed. His seeds are offered by several retail seed companies as well as direct from the FFSC in wholesale quantities at www.organicseedcoop.com. Several significantly sized organic farms are now using some of Bill's seeds.

His next project is an open-pollinated se type (sugar enhanced) sweet corn that is a few years away from commercial release. Bill is looking for that great flavor of se types in an open-pollinated corn. He thinks one of the biggest challenges that seed growers face is the threat of GMOs in the corn seed supply, which is driving his corn breeding. Growers need high-performance varieties that are organic and not contaminated with GMOs.



Terra Organics/Seeds by Design

Maxwell, California

Patty Buskirk came to organic seeds from another direction than the growers previously mentioned. Already well-established in the "boutique" seed business with Seeds by Design, Patty followed up on a suggestion by her partner, Rick Rowan, to expand into the organic seed market. As a wholesale seed company, Patty works directly with growers to produce seed that is then sold to retail seed companies and to larger farms who purchase wholesale quantities. For her organic line, she first contracted with former CCOF operation Emerald Farms and currently with Park Farming to produce a full assortment of organic vegetable, flower, and herb seed in the Sacramento basin of northern California.

Most of Terra Organics' business is organic seed that goes into packets for home gardeners. With commercial farmers having only 20 percent of their market, Buskirk would like to see more progress towards the use of organic seeds. She believes that high-volume seed users such as large farms are key to inspiring change in the seed industry as they start demanding more organic seed and certifiers start enforcing the organic seed provisions more strictly. Terra Organics is in a prime position to supply a growing organic market since they are in the heart of a highly desirable seed producing area and have the equipment and facilities to clean and store large amounts of all types of seed.



Terra Organics/Seeds by Design conducts variety trialing and holds annual field days to showcase unique product lines and specialty varieties in both organic and conventional seed. They are known for their high quality and diverse assortment of organic seed and for listening to their customers to be able to meet their needs. They also do some of their own selection and hybridization work on several species of vegetables; there are always new products from their research!

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FDA Extended Public Comment Period for FSMA

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For those of you who have not yet had the chance to comment on the new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) that is currently in development by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), you now have a little more time. The FDA has extended the public comment period from September 16 to a **final deadline of November 15**.

The Food Safety Modernization Act, passed in early 2011 in response to various food safety scares, will affect farming and processing operations in a number of ways. We encourage members to check out our blog to stay apprised of these food safety regulatory developments. For a detailed analysis of how FSMA may apply to your business, please visit the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's (NSAC) website pages on the Produce Rule and the Preventive Controls Rule at www.sustainableagriculture.net/fsma. Also helpful is the FDA's overview of who is covered by the produce rule, which is available online at www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA.

Your feedback on the proposed rules will be critical in making sure that the FDA considers the organic community's needs when constructing this sweeping set of regulations. We continue to work with OTA and other coalition partners in assessing the rules.

CCOF and OTA hosted a webinar in October for our members to learn about the draft food safety comments by the OTA Food Safety Task Force, of which CCOF is a member. During the webinar, CCOF members had an opportunity to discuss their opinions on the comments and offer suggestions. The webinar also provided an overview of issues and recommendations that members may submit as comments to the FDA.

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Farm Bill Future Uncertain

As this magazine goes to print, the farm bill impasse, caused primarily by partisan fighting over efforts to cut the SNAP program (formerly known as food stamps) continues. Last year's attempt to pass a farm bill resulted in a nine-month extension of the 2008 Farm Bill (which unfortunately didn't actually extend all USDA programs). That extension ran out September 30.

Many of the programs that organic farmers depend on were left without funding in 2013 under the 2008 Farm Bill extension. Without these programs, organic growers no longer have access to many types of USDA support already provided to conventional producers. Now that the extension has run out, those opportunities remain unfunded. Whether through another extension or a full 2013 bill, questions remain as to if these programs will receive funding or not.

What can you do about it? Call your House of Representatives member and tell them you want a full farm bill passed now! Specifically, please encourage your member to support:

- The National Organic Program
- The Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative
- Organic Certification Cost-Share Program
- The Organic Production Market and Data Initiatives

Tell your representative that these programs should be funded regardless, whether through a new farm bill or another extension.

If you are interested in visiting your representative in person to talk about the farm bill or other policy objectives, get in touch with us! We have had 48 farmer meetings with policymakers this year and aren't done yet. These meetings have made a tangible difference: we have seen a record number of representatives speaking up for organic agriculture. Keep your eye on the news and your email - we will be reaching out to members through an action alert as soon as we know more!

Keep up with the Farm Bill! For the most recent Farm Bill updates, visit the CCOF blog: www.ccof.org/blog

Invasive Pest Watch

Unfortunately for growers, there have been a number of troubling pest issues recently.

First, new incidences of Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) have been found in Tulare County, triggering a new quarantine area. Luckily, it seems that no CCOF members are in the new quarantine area, but the quarantine is certainly triggering significant concerns for what may come next. California citrus growers are challenged by a lack of acceptance of organic treatments due to the eradication mindset and inconsistency in policies and attitudes between different counties regarding ACP control and eradication efforts. In addition, funding restrictions at the state level that do not allow for creative solutions are causing concern.

Our CCOF policy staff has been participating in the OTA Task Force for Asian Citrus Psyllid and Citrus Greening Disease. The task force convened a meeting on June 18 in Washington D.C. with the National Organic Program and the Animal Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS), which is the agency that oversees many of the eradication efforts and quarantines in California through the state Department of Agriculture. The goal of the meeting was to educate representatives on the effectiveness of organic management protocols used to control the disease and gain support for a nationally accepted organic treatment program that will be approved in the case of a federal or state mandatory spray situation. The presentation given at this meeting is available on the OTA website at www.ota.com/pics/documents/OrganicCitrusPresentation_APHIS_Final.pdf.

The presentation includes information about the size of the organic citrus industry, the typical harvest/bloom cycle for citrus in California (which may be more than a year long), some of the organic treatments that are used successfully in Texas and Florida, the extent of ACP in California, and the areas where government officials need to work to achieve recognition and success for organic citrus.

The next steps for the Organic Citrus Task Force are to bring a similar presentation to California regulators and industry leaders to gain acceptance for organic protocols nationwide and encourage more research into organic treatments. The task force will also reach out to the scientific arm of APHIS on the value of organic approaches.

Another pest rearing its head is the Virginia Creeper Leafhopper (VCLH), which has been found in vineyards from the Oregon border to the northern Sacramento Valley, but as of March 2013, has not made its way to the vineyards of Napa or Sonoma counties. However, VCLH has been found in neighboring Lake and Mendocino counties, primarily in



backyard and organic vineyards.

Finally, in recent Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) developments, apples have been added to the list of exemptions from the LBAM quarantine for domestic shipments. For strawberries, agreements have been worked out with Mexico and Canada that allow organic berries to be shipped to those countries.

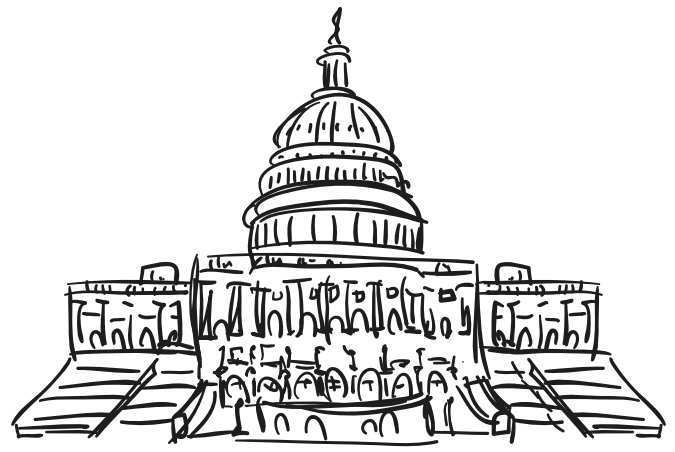
We are continuing to monitor these and other pests so we can communicate to policymakers about the needs of organic producers in addressing them.

CDFA and Organic Materials Review

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) recently convened a meeting of its Fertilizer Inspection Advisory Board Organic Input Material Subcommittee, on which CCOF Director of Policy & Programs Brise Tencer sits. At the meeting, CDFA updated the committee on the status of its Organic Input Material Program (OIM), including its efforts to seek ISO accreditation and USDA-NOP recognition. They also provided details on their fertilizer registration update. The most significant discussion was around a couple of examples of decisions to not allow a product for use in organic systems that had already been approved for organic use by either OMRI or WSDA. CDFA clarified that their legal obligation is to prohibit production or distribution of products in the state of California that have not been approved by their program. Obviously, the discrepancies in findings by CDFA and other Material Review Organizations is causing confusion and frustration on the part of growers and certifiers.

Lastly, CDFA was seeking input on a policy change to modify the requirement that they inspect each manufacturer every year. Instead, CDFA would like to have the language amended to say they may inspect the manufacturers and should prioritize such inspections based on risk (e.g. that high nitrogen fertilizer manufacturers would be inspected first).

Organic Practices Offer Hope for Citrus Greening



Citrus greening disease poses an unprecedented challenge to U.S. citrus growers. However, as the industry scrambles to curb the devastating effects of this disease, the organic sector is discovering some promising findings that could offer hope for the overall future of U.S.-grown citrus.

Early field research, including USDA monitoring of the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) population, the insect which spreads the disease, in Florida and Texas groves, indicates organic management techniques focusing on tree and soil health plus biological treatments provide equal or better disease management than the use of repeated pesticide applications allowed in conventionally managed citrus groves.

A case in point is the significant progress Organic Trade Association (OTA) member company Uncle Matt's Organic, based in Clermont, Florida, has made in keeping the disease contained. Uncle Matt's has found that ACP can be kept in check through a comprehensive and sustainable organic farm program that integrates biological controls (including the release of predator wasps), organic fertilizers, and sprays of botanical oils.

For instance, Uncle Matt's releases tubes of parasitic wasps into its groves every 21 days. Each tube contains 100 to 200 wasps per tube. The wasps are very effective at finding where the female psyllid has laid her eggs. When the egg hatches and becomes a nymph, the parasitic wasp locates a soft spot in the nymph exoskeleton and lays one wasp egg per nymph. When the implanted wasp egg hatches, it kills the nymph by eating its inside.

After 18 months of collecting data from grove monitoring, USDA reported that Uncle Matt's organic grove ranked in the "low" percentile, and, in some cases, in a group with the lowest percentile for psyllid presence.

Other findings have indicated that boron deficiency is prevalent in trees infected with citrus greening. Thus, high boron levels in the leaf can help repel psyllids. Meanwhile, peer-reviewed published sources have shown that psyllids and other insect pathogens are attracted when citrus trees are fertilized with synthetic ammonium nitrate as the major source of nitrogen. In contrast, trees in groves fertilized with an organic source of nitrogen like feather meal are less attractive to the psyllid.

OTA has established a Citrus Greening Task Force with participation from CCOF and organic citrus growers from California,

Florida, and Texas to work on a national solution to challenges posed for organic producers. The goal is to establish an effective National Organic Program (NOP)-compliant treatment protocol for citrus greening.

Meanwhile, Marni Karlin, OTA's director of legislative and legal affairs, has been reaching out to senators and representatives from citrus states, particularly California, Texas, Florida, and Arizona, to engage them on the issue.

Already, legislation has been introduced in both houses of Congress to establish a Citrus Research trust fund. OTA is actively advocating for support of that legislation and the inclusion of language requiring that any research funded consider the full array of disease management protocols, including those that are organic-compliant. Karlin thus far has met with over 30 congressional offices on the issue of citrus greening, and will continue her outreach in the coming months.

U.S. organic citrus operations currently represent 1.5 percent of U.S. citrus acres and contribute approximately three percent of overall farm citrus sales. Of all U.S. organic citrus production, California certified-organic citrus operations represent 53 percent of grapefruit acres, 67 percent of tangerine acres, 69 percent of orange acreage, and 99 percent of lemon acres. These California citrus operations produce approximately 62,351 tons of citrus a year, valued at \$76.6 million in sales.

However, organic citrus growers in California are coming under increasing pressure to use conventional methods, such as spraying, to help control the spread of the disease. In January, the California Department of Food and Agriculture requested mandatory spraying for citrus greening. In particular, the county of Ventura is attempting to become a Pest Control District, which would mandate spraying within 80 meters of an outbreak. This could potentially cause approximately 2,000 organic citrus acres in Ventura to lose certification.

With organic treatment protocols not only proving to be successful but, in some cases, even more effective than current conventional treatment programs, the time is ripe for expedited action to get from research to implementation of NOP protocols on this issue. With initial research findings revealing promising results from organic practices, the organic sector could very well play a key role in the long-term health of the overall U.S. citrus industry.

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To meet your needs, we are offering GlobalG.A.P. field-level food safety certification. CCOF is bringing our organic expertise, service focus, integrity, and innovation to food safety.

CCOF's GlobalG.A.P. field-level food safety certification pilot program is your first opportunity to join us.

CCOF is Your Certification Choice

Founded in 1973, CCOF is one of the oldest organic certifiers in North America. More than 2,600 organic farmers, handlers, producers, and ranchers chose CCOF for our full service organic certification program and excellent trade association benefits. Now, through GlobalG.A.P. certification, we will provide a cost-effective program that allows organic farmers to succeed as food safety certification becomes increasingly important in the marketplace.

Our food safety certification program offers:

- Integrity to organic production systems.
- Proven leadership in organic certification and standards enforcement.
- Efficiency in paperwork and inspections.

Food Safety Certification Program Levels

GlobalG.A.P has different levels of certification programs to meet the needs of different buyers. *Be sure to talk to your buyers to determine which level of certification you need!*

We are able to offer certification to the following GlobalG.A.P. standards:

- **IFA 4.0 Crops Base: Integrated Farm Assurance** – GFSI benchmarked. Top-level program. Important for exports.
- **PSS: Produce Safety Standard** – GFSI-benchmarked but includes ONLY food safety standards. Subset of IFA.
- **Harmonized Standard (U.S. only)** – Not yet GFSI-benchmarked. Developed by the United Fresh working group.
- **LocalG.A.P. (previously known as Primary Farm Assurance, or PFA)** – Not GFSI-benchmarked. Simplified standard with Basic/Foundation and Intermediate levels. A stepping stone to full IFA or PSS certification.

Frequently Asked Questions

What/Who is GlobalG.A.P.?

GlobalG.A.P. is a stakeholder-driven nonprofit organization based in Germany that sets food safety standards for farmers. There are over 120,000 farms worldwide certified to GlobalG.A.P. standards.

CCOF is committed to making inspections painless and efficient while ensuring that we uphold the gold standard of organic integrity.

What/who is GFSI and why does it matter?

The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) is an international nonprofit umbrella organization that “benchmarks” (deems equivalent) food safety standards. Retailers or buyers that require food safety certification from their suppliers generally require that the certification standard be GFSI-benchmarked. The CCOF GlobalG.A.P. program is GFSI-benchmarked and should be accepted by your buyer just like other GFSI-benchmarked programs (such as PrimusGFS).

To learn more about food safety certification from CCOF, visit www.ccof.org/food-safety-certification.

Before and After Your Onsite Inspection

For most operations, your onsite CCOF inspection is one day out of the year. We know that this day can be stressful and takes your focus away from your day-to-day operations. However, there are things you can do before and after the inspection occurs to make sure that the inspection goes smoothly, your certification moves forward, and there are no speed bumps along the way. For additional tips on how to keep inspection costs down, see www.ccof.org/faqs/what-about-organic-inspections.

Here are some tips for making the inspection process as easy and cost-effective as possible:

Before the Inspection

Stay in Contact

Return the phone calls or email from your inspector as soon as you can. Inspectors work hard to group inspections in order to cut down on the travel costs to each operation. By responding promptly to your inspector and being as flexible as possible in the scheduling, you may be able to save significant cost on inspection travel.

Read the Pre-Inspection Letter

Before your inspection, you will receive a “pre-inspection letter” from your inspector, outlining what the inspector will be doing onsite and the records that they will need to review. Look this letter over carefully and contact your inspector right away if you are confused or need any additional details or information about what is in the letter.

Request a Copy of Your Inspection Checklist

Did you know that your inspector can provide you with a blank copy of the inspection checklist that they will use to perform



your inspection? Just ask. You could use the inspection checklist to perform a self-assessment or mini internal audit to identify any areas that may require additional attention or focus during the inspection.

Review your Organic System Plan

You can access the Organic System Plan (OSP) that CCOF has on file (the same one your inspector will be using) on MyCCOF (www.ccof.org/myccof). Give yourself some time to sit down a few weeks before your inspection to look over this document and make sure all the information is current and complete. You can save time and money by updating your OSP prior to your inspection rather than waiting until your inspector is onsite with the meter running.

After the Inspection

Pay Attention to the Exit Interview

Before your inspector finishes the inspection, they will conduct an "Exit Interview" with you to discuss any issues of concern or additional information that they need to complete the report. Please be sure to send along any items such as receipts, supplier certificates, product labels, etc. that your inspector requests on the interview document (that they will leave with you) as promptly as possible! This will reduce the number of times that we will have to contact you after the inspection. If you

are confused about what to submit, be sure to contact your inspector directly and ask for clarification.


Look Over Your Inspection Report

Did you know that your inspection report is available to you 24/7 via MyCCOF once your inspector has submitted it to us? You will receive an email as soon as the report is ready for you to view. Log on to MyCCOF at your leisure to see the report and make sure there are no errors or misunderstandings in it.

Respond Quickly to Requests

If you receive a call, email, or letter from us requesting additional information, please respond as soon as possible so you can avoid moving to Noncompliance. Need additional time to gather the necessary information? No problem! Just request an extension on the deadline. Your Client Service Specialist is here to work with you to close out these requests as soon as possible.

The CCOF staff, including inspectors, is committed to making the inspection and certification process as painless and efficient as we can while ensuring that we uphold the gold standard of organic integrity. We look forward to working with you now and in the future, and encourage you to contact us at any time with your suggestions, comments, concerns, or questions. We want to help!



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Water management is not one-size-fits-all, so where can a farmer find the resources to save water and money at the same time? The Ecological Farming Association's Water Stewardship Project (WSP) provides technical and financial information to help farmers use water more effectively and improve their bottom line.

The online resources at www.efawaterstewardship.org feature a curriculum of 6-9 minute video case studies that highlight on-farm practices for anyone seeking to better design their water management plans. These case studies are presented as tours of the farm's water management innovations, and are led by the farmer. In a concise presentation, the farmer explains the techniques and systems they have employed to use water more efficiently and even provide expanded water supplies on their farms. All practices have thorough explanations and they often use low-tech, affordable techniques.

There is no better instructor than the farmer who has conceived of and organized to implement the solutions for their particular farm's needs. All of the systems can be adopted and adapted to a diversity of farming operations. Check it out! From

dry farming to farm ponds, you are sure to find something useful for your farm.

The WSP also features audio files from past EcoFarm Conference workshops on topics ranging from using landscapes for water storage to advanced irrigation monitoring. These audio files are organized by topic and are available for free on the site. The links and resources are another important facet of the curriculum, and they provide information about funding, technical assistance, and other valuable tools.

There will be excellent water stewardship workshops featured at the 2014 EcoFarm Conference, including water harvesting, irrigation systems, and more.

Win a day pass to the conference!

Simply review the WSP website curriculum and resources, and complete a survey:

If you are a farmer or rancher, please complete this survey:
<http://agwater.wordpress.com/water-stewardship-survey-for-farmers-ranchers/>

If you are not a farmer, please complete this survey:
<http://agwater.wordpress.com/survey-all/>

We look forward to hearing from you! Until then, we hope you will dig deeper and visit www.efawaterstewardship.org to learn how to use water more effectively on your farm.



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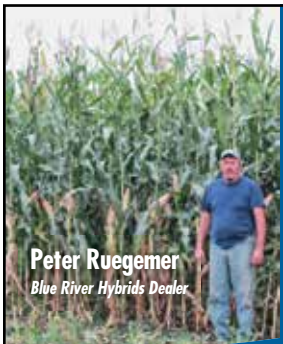
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