

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



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INSIDE LOOK ■

ORGANIC IS NON-GMO



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22

Organic is Non-GMO

- + Traditional Seed Breeding vs. GMOs
- + CCOF Members Breeding Seeds

“In a time when the future of agriculture depends upon politics, business, and international relations, organic is a beacon of opportunity for human and environmental health.”

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For over 40 years, CCOF has been a trusted source of information on organic farming and food production. Our information resources include full-color publications and online media targeted to all segments of the organic sector throughout the United States and beyond. For more information, visit www.ccof.org/advertise or contact advertising@ccof.org.

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first WORDS

California: The Capital of Organic

CCOF membership spans North America - from east to west and through Mexico and Canada. But our roots grow especially deep in "California: the Capital of Organic." Twenty percent of the \$32 billion organic sector of the national economy originates in the Golden State.

California leads U.S. states in organic farm production, growing 55% of all organic fruit, 90% of organic tree nuts, and 66% of organic vegetables - for a total of 62% of all organic produce.

Sales of certified organic products grew nearly 10% annually through the recession and also grew during a historic western drought. Eighty-one percent of families now buy organic products that are free of toxic pesticides and fertilizers, and grown without the use of GMOs (see feature story on page 22).

Demand for organic far exceeds supply. Those who source organic products are stepping up like never before to spur new production and the transition of non-organic land to organic. Nature's Path, North America's largest independent organic cereal company, announced the purchase of nearly 3,000 acres in northern Montana to help increase organic farmland, attract and educate new farmers, and meet the growing demand for organic grains.

Stonyfield Farm launched a major organic milk sourcing initiative this year to supply milk for their organic yogurt. They are working directly to support new farmers who want to realize their dreams of running a dairy farm, and transitioning conventional farmers and existing organic farmers who want to grow their herds.

CCOF members—through the CCOF Foundation—launched the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund to support

higher and vocational education to those seeking careers in organic production methods.

These and many new initiatives are underway, yet organic farmgate sales hover at about 3% of all farmgate sales.

On February 11, 2015, California-based CCOF members will go to Sacramento and tell their stories to our elected representatives. CCOF will also hold its annual meeting, hear from California Secretary of Agriculture Karen Ross, and honor six CCOF members who sit on the California State Board of Food and Agriculture.

As we meet with lawmakers, CCOF members will describe their operations, the opportunities they see, and the challenges they face. They will speak to issues that face all of agriculture - the drought, labor shortages, and regulation. They will also speak to the environmental and economic benefits of organic production methods and encourage lawmakers to hold special legislative hearings to explore ways that organic production can be scaled up to help meet consumer demand.

We would be honored to have you join us and tell your story! You can register for our Annual Meeting and Policy Day today at www.ccof.org/2015-event, or if you have questions, contact CCOF Policy Director Kelly Damewood at policy@ccof.org.



Cathy

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CCOF Executive Director/CEO

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As a unified voice for the diverse organic sector, OTA represents 1,000 members and 6,500 organic businesses across the organic supply chain. OTA is headquartered in Washington, D.C. with staff on the ground across the country.

OTA is proud to partner with CCOF to strengthen the organic sector's national public policy impact. Because of this unique alliance, sole proprietorship farmers* may join OTA for \$50. Please contact Nathaniel Lewis, OTA Senior Crops and Livestock Specialist ([360.388.6422](tel:360.388.6422)) to learn if you qualify for this deeply discounted rate.

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Military Veteran Farming Operations Popping Up

Coming home from serving overseas is often a difficult process for many veterans of war. Depending on geographical location, orders, and specialties, each veteran has a different experience. Some have difficulties acclimating back to society, and some come back with relative ease. A recent *Newsweek* article highlights some veterans who have a difficult time coming back from war find solace in farming. The article describes the therapeutic aspects of farming like caring for something, completing tasks, and being fully engaged in something that helps all people. Most farmers can connect with the therapeutic sentiments of farming. The labor is tough at times, but the harvest yields a feeling that is unlike any other. Not only are you directly connected to the earth, but you're connected to nutrition and a system that helps people. For many veterans, that is important.

Even more interesting are the programs and organizations geared towards supporting veteran farmers. One such program is run by CCOF Board Member Karen Archipley. Karen and her husband Colin, a Marine veteran, formed Archi's Acres in 2006. Archi's Acres is a successful organic hydroponic farm. Archi's Acres teamed up with California State Polytechnic University, Pomona to create the Veteran's Sustainable Agriculture Training (VSAT) program: a six-week certification and accreditation program aimed at teaching veterans about sustainable agriculture "from seed to market." Not only does the program teach organic production methods, it also instructs veterans on how to build business models, highlights the nuances of

owning a farm, introduces farm loan programs, and provides even more skills to veteran farmers. Not all alumni will become organic farmers. VSAT also prepares students for careers in food processing, soil-testing, and restaurant ownership.

VSAT is based out of Southern California, but has been recognized nationally for its work, receiving the White House's "Champions of Change" award in August for veterans and their families who continue to serve our country through job creation and community development. If you're interested in learning more, visit their website at www.archisacres.com/page/vsat-program.

Another program focused on veteran farmers is the Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC). The FVC's goal is to provide farming education and veteran assistance to those in need. This organization believes that food production offers purpose, opportunity, and physical and psychological benefits for veterans. By engaging veterans and developing them as career farmers, they hope to build strong, sustainable, local food systems.

Army veteran and CCOF-certified Shooting Star CSA co-owner Matt McCue is a perfect example of building a sustainable food system with close ties to the community. "I realize that in order to succeed I don't need to travel endlessly. Like the plants, I can become a part of the environment and create a more meaningful bond with my world," he explains.

The FVC supports veteran farmers from coast to coast and boasts a solid network of organic operations. To learn more, visit www.farmvetco.org. In addition, CCOF supports veterans by offering fee reductions to VSAT and FVC farmer veterans seeking organic certification. To learn more about fee waivers for veterans, contact getcertified@ccof.org.



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The best way to ensure that your food is GMO-free is by buying organic.

Mandatory GMO Labeling Under Heavy Scrutiny Coast to Coast

From Vermont to Oregon, there are multiple battles being fought over mandatory genetically modified organism (GMO) labeling. In Vermont, we're seeing the results of what happens when mandatory GMO labeling is passed. Currently the state is being sued over this new law. The Grocery Manufacturers Association is leading the charge in this lawsuit, claiming that it infringes on food manufacturers' U.S. Constitutional rights. One argument is that manufacturers shouldn't need to "convey messages they don't want to convey."

Additionally, Maine and Connecticut recently passed mandatory GMO labeling laws. These are trigger laws that can only go into effect once the correct terms are met. For example, labeling laws in Connecticut will start once four other states also pass mandatory GMO labeling legislation. Similar triggers are set for Maine.

Oregon was one of the other states that would have helped Maine and Connecticut get closer to passing this legislation. Oregon's Ballot Measure 92 (2014) was one of the hot measures from last year's midterm elections. Even after a recount, this measure failed by approximately 800 votes.

As we all know, the best way to ensure that your food is GMO-free is by buying organic. Until mandatory labeling is required throughout the nation, CCOF will continue working to keep GMOs out of your organic food. Learn more about how organic is non-GMO on page 22.

Russian Food Sanctions: Building an Organic Tomorrow?

Russian agriculture may be witnessing a renaissance of sorts. Earlier this year, western countries set up economic sanctions in response to Russian involvement in overtaking Ukrainian territory. In response to these sanctions, Russia devised sanctions to ban agricultural products from most English-speaking territories and the majority of the European Union.

Historically, Russia has had difficulties with a sustainable food system. For most of the late 1900s, the Soviet Union relied heavily on imported agriculture to meet the needs of its people. This was not an easy task, since Russia has long

experienced socioeconomic and geographical boundaries that complicate adequate food security.

In 1917, 80% of Russians were involved in agriculture. The majority of farm owners were peasants whose families tended the fields. Led by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the Bolsheviks stood against "bourgeoisie government" and planned a takeover to create a unified centralized government set on leveling social status, giving peasants more land, and restoring rights to industrial workers. With the support of a large peasant population, agitated industrial workers, and other allied interests, the Bolsheviks went to war. Once the Civil War began, the Bolsheviks moved to an economic system that devalued money and militarized all production facilities. Additionally, Bolsheviks sent parties to reclaim peasant farmers' crops. Not only did they seize peasant grains, but radical Bolsheviks also began outlawing private trade. Without private trade rights and proper nourishment, famine struck and claimed five million Russian lives.

By the late 1920s, agricultural production had rebounded, only to see a forced shift to communal farming in 1937. Those who didn't comply were sent to gulags (labor camps) located in the most remote areas of Soviet Russia. The Bolshevik takeover and forced communal farming were some of the largest agricultural breakdowns in Russian history and led to an agricultural policy that values imports. This has served Russia well until recently.

Now, with Russia banning imported food, Russians have to utilize all avenues of food production. An article in *The New York Times* explores the emergence of organic systems in Russia and an organic cooperative based in Moscow. Boris Akimov, the organic cooperative owner, shares what he sees from the struggling country. Akimov suggests that since there is a lack of developed agriculture in Russia, there are plentiful opportunities to build sustainable agriculture throughout the country. The question is, will Russia accept this kind of agricultural infrastructure?

Russians tend to think that the chances of an organic revolution are slim due to governmental control of land and the lack of urgency in increasing food production within their borders. With over 106 million acres of Russian land falling out of production (an area roughly larger than Japan or Montana) over the last two decades, there is plenty of opportunity for growth.

As producers and handlers of organic products, this is a fantastic time to appreciate a U.S. system that values the importance of organic food production and to encourage organic and sustainable food production systems throughout the world, including Russia.

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member NEWS



Jardine's: Warming Bellies and Hearts Over the Holidays

Up-and-coming CCOF-certified member Jardine's is based in Buda, Texas, a small town with a population of 10,209. Jardine's has a product line that mainly focuses on hot sauce, salsa, BBQ sauce, marinade, chili sets, and seasonings. They pride themselves on introducing a taste of Texas to your kitchen table. What's even more special about this organization is their involvement in their local community.

Jardine's has teamed up with the Hays Consolidated Independent School District (HCISD) to support their special education department with developing vocational skills and by funding the program. HCISD recognized that some of their students were having difficulties working in the community, and once they opened up their Vocational Training Center, they partnered with Jardine's to provide some additional opportunities for their students. This partnership allowed some special needs students to build the Jardine's Chili Kits—something that is just a little too intricate for a machine to complete. The process gives students who have difficulties in other roles a chance to be successful in a process that has a definitive set of tasks and results in a finished product. Many students have excelled in this role, and according to the Jardine's website, they've produced about 12% of the Chili Kits that are shipped out across the world.

During the month of November—the prime time of year for chili—Jardine's donated a portion of earnings from their Chili

Kits back to the HCISD. This will help fund more vocational training and additional programs to assist the special education department.

If you are interested in learning more about Jardine's or if you would like to buy some of their products, go to their website and browse their online store at www.jardinefoods.com.

'Ohana Organics Wins a NEXTY

'Ohana Organics, based in Eureka, California, has set out to change the way personal care products are created and used. Their product line includes organic shea butter, solid perfumes, hand and foot salve, and most interesting, tattoo butter. Owner Tara Cooper takes pride in creating an all-organic product line that includes her self-grown organic herbs.

During the 2014 Natural Products Expo West, 'Ohana Organics' Tattoo Butter won a NEXTY Popular Vote Award. The award is given to the organization that best embodies the qualities of innovation, inspiration, and integrity.

Depending on skin type, the type of tattoo, and the level of professionalism of the tattoo artist, the amount of time it takes for a tattoo to heal can vary. 'Ohana's Tattoo Butter is a small-batch, vegan-based cream that can be used for the entirety of the healing process for new tattoos. Many tattoo studios are moving away from petroleum-based creams and are exploring different options that ensure ink retention. This tattoo butter is a fantastic alternative and has been known to expedite the process of tattoo healing.

Congratulations to 'Ohana Organics on this accolade! Visit www.ohanaorganics.com to read some of the testimonials and order your own organic personal care products. If your operation is winning awards, being creative, or is just quirky and fun, let us know at marketing@ccof.org.

The New Yorker Highlights Belcampo

With five butcher shops and restaurants across California, Belcampo Meat Company is expanding their storefront butcher shops/restaurants and organic livestock production. Like most livestock operations across the western United States, Belcampo—located in Gazelle, California—is having difficulties with the drought. Still, they are expanding their operation. Belcampo was included in the November 3, 2014 edition of *The New Yorker* in an exposé titled "Élite Meat". The piece reveals the inner workings of this organic operation finding



success despite drought, many cheaper conventional options for consumers, and the negative stigma of being organic in a valley of conventional. The author, Dana Goodyear, explores the organic philosophies of Belcampo's fearless leader, Anya Fernald. Whether it's the whole foods mentality or the alternative methods of grazing cattle, Fernald takes a calculated and methodical approach to increasing Belcampo's reach.

From farm to fork, the attentive nature of this operation is mirrored in their pricing. While the price of Belcampo products can be steep, the consumer is paying for more than just high quality meat. Belcampo doesn't isolate consumers from external costs like most conventional livestock producers. The cost of environmental upkeep, organic farming practices, transportation, and more are generally considered external costs. Belcampo figures in these costs as a way to help regulate demand and to make a statement about how consumers should make purchasing decisions. Fernald says, "I recognize that we're creating a product that is financially nonviable for a lot of people. But I'm also prepared for when the health impact becomes undeniable and people decide to reprioritize their budgets."

Not only is Fernald a consumer driven by a moral obligation to purchasing meat with high traceability, she is also a savvy business owner who can relay this moral conviction into a product that engages quality-conscious consumers. As mentioned by Goodyear, Belcampo only slaughters eight cattle per week. Fernald makes it a point to utilize every part of the animal for both ethical and dietary reasons. The degree to which Fernald is invested in the final product makes Belcampo a captivating and influential operation.

Congratulations to Belcampo Meat Company on this excellent press and opportunity to grow their business! Read the full article at www.newyorker.com.

Corn Silage Variety Trials Yield Results for All Growers

The coastal dairies of Humboldt County are well provided with grassy pasture, but supplemental feed is still a necessity. Corn that is held and fermented into silage is traditionally used to feed dairy cows; however, the cool climate and short growing

season in Humboldt County limits the corn varieties that can be grown and ensiled economically in the region.

CCOF members John LaBoyteaux and Paul Guintoli asked Jared Zystro with the Organic Seed Alliance to conduct a corn silage variety trial to discover what varieties would perform best on the coast. Zystro found 10 corn varieties that looked like they were early-maturing and would perform well under organic management. Half of the seed was sourced as organic; the other five varieties were only available as conventional untreated seed. Most of them were hybrid; one was an open-pollinated variety.

Zystro, manager of the project, noted that he didn't order the seed until spring, which narrowed the varieties available to them. "Now is the right time to call for organic corn seed," he said in November, because seed companies store seed through the winter and begin to apply chemical seed treatments to more batches of seed as it is stored longer.


The Humboldt-Trinity Chapter of CCOF was the major funder of the project, which was also supported by the Columbia Foundation and Organic Valley and cooperated with University Cooperative Extension. Guintoli donated land for the trials and also provided the labor to manage the plots.

Zystro reports that the trial was going well and the corn was approaching the 65-70% moisture level that is ideal for making silage when the field drew the attention of starlings, which started to feed on the corn. Because of the bird pressure, they had to harvest 7-10 days before optimum moisture level.

The corn was harvested, chopped, and sent to a laboratory in Wisconsin for quality analysis. The varieties "23L99" by Blue River and "ST-7141" by Eureka performed the best in terms of earliest and highest yield and quality. The trial will be repeated next year to confirm results.

The project takes on a greater significance in wake of the passage of Humboldt County's ban on genetically modified (GM) crops. Now conventional farmers, too, will have to source non-GM corn seed to produce their silage.


Zystro said, "Hopefully, this trial will be useful for all growers in the area now." A final report on the project can be downloaded from the Organic Seed Alliance website (www.seedalliance.org).



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CCOF "Likes"

Member News Meets Social Networking



Eel River Brewing Company via Facebook: "Does anyone know who these guys are????"



Eel River posted this relic on Facebook for #throwbackthursday. For those of you unfamiliar with Eel River Brewing, they began brewing organic beer in 1999 in Fortuna, California. They have a fantastic selection of beer, and in December, they celebrated their 19th anniversary! If you're ever in Fortuna, stop by the taproom and experience why Eel River has won over 300 awards and medals!



Boulder Granola via Facebook: "Our granola is from my mother's recipe and here are my Mom and Dad packaging during Thanksgiving! #thanksmom"



A 45-year-old recipe, organic ingredients, some helping hands, and a little love: this is only a small portion of what makes up Boulder Granola. This operation prides itself on creating a granola that supports an active lifestyle. Their product line is simple and contains an Original mix, Gluten-Free (certified), Cranberry, and Chocolate Chip. You can find their products in Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Kansas, California, and New York. Check www.bouldergranola.com for availability or order some to be shipped straight to your door!



Doguet's Rice Mill via Facebook: "I hope everyone's having a great weekend!! Who all is making gumbo today?!"



Who doesn't love a little food fun? Doguet's Rice Mill has been in operation since the 1920s and has been certified organic since the 1980s, making it the oldest certified organic rice mill in Texas—but they sure aren't stuck in old methods of farming! Doguet's works extensively with Texas A&M University Agriculture Research and Extension Center to assist in building modern and efficient methods to harvest rice in an environmentally conscious manner.



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The CCOF Foundation is Thriving!

One year ago, CCOF announced its renewed commitment to developing CCOF Foundation programs. Under the direction of the Foundation Trustees - Allen Harthorn, Malcolm Ricci, Karen Archipley, Phil LaRocca, and Lee Altier - and Executive Director/CEO Cathy Calfo, four primary Foundation programs were established and are thriving. Over the past year, the Foundation designed and implemented a nationwide granting program to support students interested in organic between kindergarten and college, hosted four organic-centered webinars and seven field days, expanded the country's only hardship assistance fund for organic farmers, and continued CCOF's tradition of educating farmers' market consumers about organic. It's been a full year!

Webinars

Webinars, though not the most interactive of educational platforms, seem to work well for the CCOF audience since they are convenient to participate in from any location and are recorded for later review. Farmers and foodies from all over the country tuned in to the CCOF Foundation's webinar series to learn from experts within the field of organic production and agriculture.

The Foundation kicked off 2014 with a Small Farm Financing webinar. Speakers from a diverse range of lending services that work with farmers (including the USDA Farm Service Agency, California FarmLink, Kiva Zip, and Wells Fargo) presented different strategies for accessing capital to start and maintain a farm-based business. The presenters explained the landscape of farm lending from purchasing land to getting a loan for equipment, and gave pointers on how to secure a loan at a low interest rate.

The Foundation also hosted a Nitrogen Management and Budgeting webinar where organic farm advisor Amigo Bob Cantisano and agronomist Karen Lowell discussed appropriate application rates and monitoring of different types of organic inputs.

The Breaking into Retail webinar, filled with photos of delicious food and hilarious start-up stories, was a great resource for small processors. Donna Sky of the Love & Hummus Company, Jessica Rolph of Happy Family, and Harvinder Singh of Whole Foods Market shared honestly about how much work (and love!) goes into starting a food business.

Lastly, the CCOF Foundation hosted an Alternatives to Antibiotics for Fire Blight Control webinar. The vicious Fire Blight disease affected many pear and apple growers during

this year's particularly warm growing season, and the ever-tightening restrictions and sometimes confusing treatment recommendations for organic growers made this an important educational offering. Sixty-five farmers, extension staff, and industry employees joined Ken Johnson from Oregon State University and Rachel Elkins from University of California Extension to hear about their research on controlling the blight. The crowd was engaged and the webinar went well over the planned time as technical questions were answered by both presenters and attending members.

If you missed any of the CCOF Foundation webinars, they are all recorded and available for viewing. Please email ccofoundation@ccof.org for more information.

Field Days

With the FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act winding its way toward completion, food safety is a growing concern for organic farmers small and large. Bigger operations can usually afford a quality assurance manager or other help with creating a food safety plan, but small growers are often left to interpret and cope with these requirements on their own. It was for this reason that CCOF decided to partner with the Community Alliance for Family Farmers to host two field days for small farmers to acquaint them with the complex new task of writing a food safety plan. Hosted at Abundant Harvest Organics just outside of Fresno, California, and at Archi's Acres in Escondido, California, participants learned and heard from food safety advisors and other farmers about best practices for designing a farm system that allows for optimal food safety planning.

In April, the CCOF Foundation continued the tradition of hosting a field day within the Los Angeles Wholesale Market. Led by the teams at Heath & Lejeune and Better Life Organics, producers from throughout Southern California and Mexico toured the expanding organic-centered facilities through which most organic produce in Southern California flows.

The Foundation also organized two workshops on accessing Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) resources. The workshops were primarily aimed at Spanish-only speakers and took place at the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA) in Salinas, California, and at the UC Cooperative Extension in Merced, California. Latino farmers connected with NRCS and Resource Conservation District personnel and explored possible collaboration on on-farm conservation projects.

The CCOF Foundation hosted over 350 agricultural professionals at our webinars, field days, and seminars in 2014.



Ben Burgoa addresses attendees at the NRCS Conservation Funding Workshop.

The Wild Farm Alliance graciously included the CCOF Foundation in organizing two field days in the Central Coast area focusing on habitat restoration. CCOF members were excited to tour on-farm restoration projects of fellow CCOF farmers!

All in all, the CCOF Foundation hosted over 350 agricultural professionals at our webinars, field days, and seminars throughout California in 2014. If you have ideas or suggestions for future organic educational events, please let us know at ccofoundation@ccof.org.

The Bricmont Fund - Hardship Assistance Grants

Perhaps the hardest part of the work here at the CCOF Foundation is to review applications for the Bricmont Fund, the nation's only hardship assistance fund specifically for organic operations. CCOF has distributed hardship assistance grants through the Bricmont Fund since 2007. Applications for hardship assistance through the fund are available to all organic growers nationwide. In a cohesive effort, multiple certification bodies, trade associations, and grower advocacy organizations spread the word to organic operations across the country. Applications have been received from operations as far-flung as Maine, Kentucky, Florida, Alabama, Montana, and California. Operators have experienced a wide range of disasters including hurricanes, floods, fires, and disease. Several operations also applied due to cases of pesticide drift, where conventional agrochemicals drifted onto their organic crops, effectively de-certifying their acreage. This year, the

Foundation raised additional money for the Bricmont Fund, and awards will total just over \$20,000. If you are interested in the Bricmont Fund, please contact ccofoundation@ccof.org or give us a call at (831) 423-2263.

Farmers' Market Cards

Every year, CCOF makes beautiful "Why Buy Certified Organic" cards for certified organic farmers to hand out to consumers at farmers' markets across the country. In 2014, with help from a grant provided by Organic Valley, organic farmers handed out 10,000 of these informative cards. The cards make it fast and easy for farmers to answer tough consumer questions like "what's the difference between all-natural and organic?" and "what does certified organic mean?" without having to take time out of their busy market schedule. Educated consumers buy organic, and for that reason, the CCOF Foundation plans to ramp up this campaign in 2015 to distribute 30,000 cards. If you're interested in sponsoring these cards, please contact us at ccofoundation@ccof.org.

If you'd like to make a difference in the organic community and contribute to these significant programs, please contact the CCOF Foundation at ccofoundation@ccof.org or (831) 423-2263.



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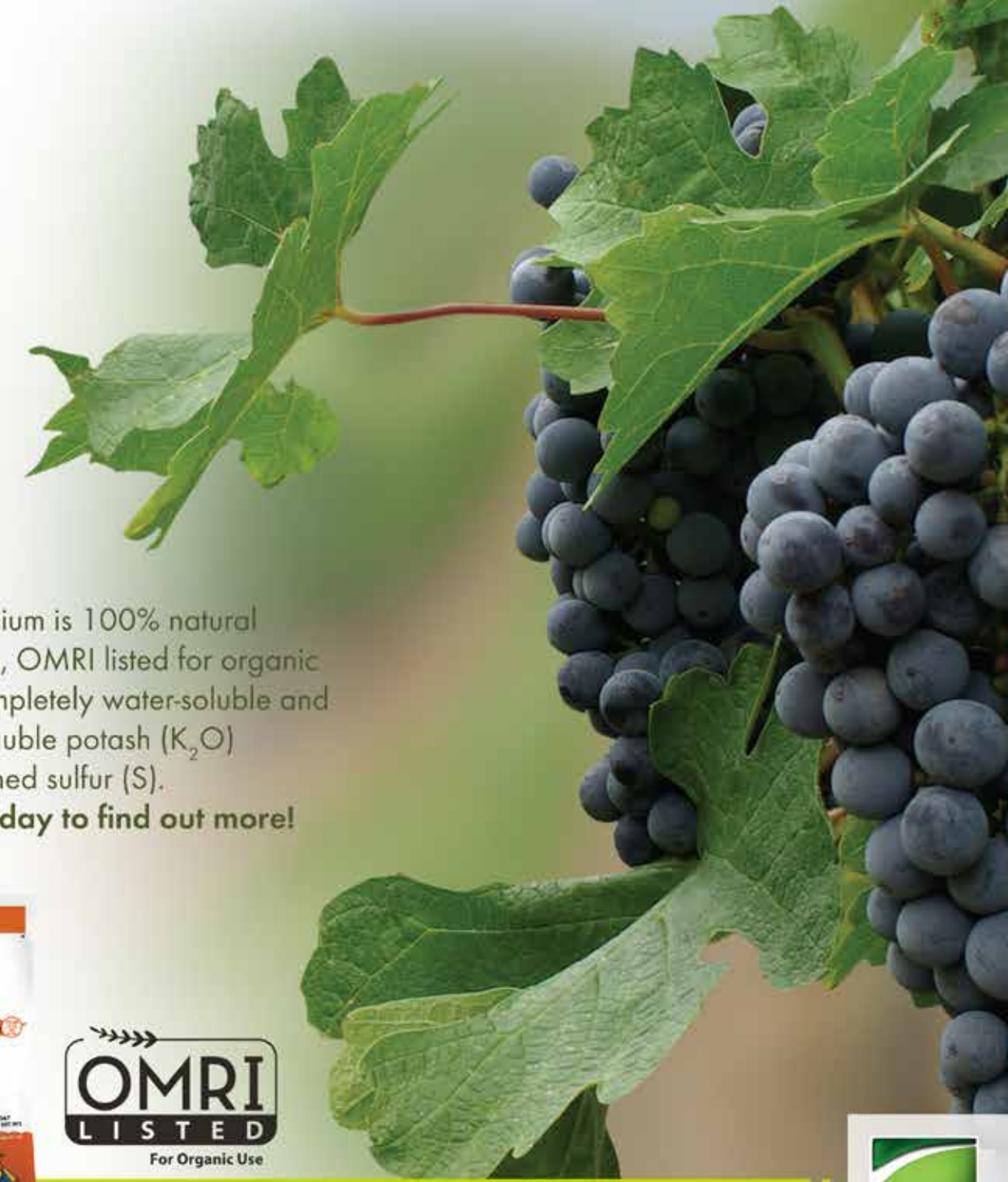


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chapter **UPDATE**

North Coast Chapter Formally Approved

At its September 2014 meeting, the CCOF Board of Directors approved the petition submitted by members in Sonoma, Napa, and Marin counties to reinstate the North Coast chapter. North Coast chapter representative Andrea Davis-Cetina now joins the CCOF Board of Directors. The other chapter leaders are Debby Zygielbaum, President; Christian Cartano, Vice President; Cassandra Reiser, Secretary; Gove Celio, Treasurer; and Alison Nosti; Alternate Board Representative.



North Coast Chapter leaders (left to right): Christian Cartano, Ali Nosti, Debby Zygielbaum, Andrea Davis-Cetina, Cassie Reiser, Gove Celio

Humboldt-Trinity-Sponsored Research Results Reported

The Humboldt-Trinity Chapter voted earlier this year to allocate some chapter funds to support a variety trial to select corn varieties best suited for organic silage corn on the Humboldt coast. Researcher Jared Zystro with the Organic Seed Alliance set up the trial, which compared 10 varieties of corn. You can read a summary of the research findings on page 12.

As the nights get longer and the weather colder, the season for chapter meetings begins!

Fresno-Tulare Chapter Meeting

The Fresno-Tulare Chapter held its quarterly meeting over lunch in Selma, California, on October 30. Chapter president Dwayne Cardoza presided and introduced organic crop consultant Devin Carroll of Bio-Ag Services who gave a talk on vine mealybug and vine hopper control. Carroll mentioned that even low applications of sulfur can increase mealybug population due to the disruption sulfur has on the community of beneficial insects which feed on crop pests. "Sometimes eliminating sulfur makes a huge difference," said Carroll.

He also described pheromone disruption and organically approved sprays, which both work best when pest populations are low. He presented slides showing a number of beneficials including the Nephus beetle (known as the little brown mealybug destroyer), the agrarian sac spider, and red midge maggots.

Fresno-Tulare board representative Vernon Peterson gave an update and Eldon Thiesen presented the treasurer's report. President Cardoza introduced Jamie Collins, a long-time organic inspector in the Fresno-Tulare region who has recently taken the position of Associate Inspection Supervisor for CCOF. Collins provided an update on CCOF's certification program. Chapter liaison Jane Sooby gave a presentation on trade association and foundation activities.

Kern Chapter Meeting

Hodel's in Bakersfield was the site of the annual gathering of the Kern Chapter on November 5. Chapter president Gisela Wittenborn moderated the meeting and gave a presentation on her attendance at the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting held the previous week in Kentucky. Wittenborn gave testimony at the NOSB meeting in favor of continuing to allow sulfur burners and ferric phosphate (the active ingredient in Sluggo) in organic farming. She emphasized how important it is that growers participate in the NOSB materials evaluation process and noted that more than 100 materials will be evaluated in 2015.

Pete Belluomini of Bel Lehr gave the treasurer's report and board representative Malcolm Ricci presented a board update. Jane Sooby offered updates from the CCOF office.

Guest speakers at the meeting included the new Kern County Extension Viticulture Advisor Ashraf El-Kereamy, who expressed enthusiasm about working with organic grape growers and soil conservationists Toney Tillman Jr. and James Booth with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Tillman explained that funds are available to share growers' costs for improving irrigation and energy efficiency on their farms. Some examples are upgrading irrigation systems, switching well pumps from diesel to solar or electric-powered, and tractor replacement. Tillman asked for the group's advice on how best to reach out to the organic community.

The meeting ended with a chapter leader election and the following were re-elected by unanimous consent: Gisela Wittenborn, President; Pete Belluomini, Treasurer; Kim Dixon, Secretary; and Malcolm Ricci, Board Representative.

Let the CCOF community know what your chapter is doing!

Please keep us posted! While we try to keep track of all chapter activities, there is always more to learn. Write to jsooby@ccof.org and we will publish your chapter update in the next edition of *Certified Organic*.

ORGANIC IS NON-GMO

WRITTEN BY
Zea Sonnabend

GMOs are prohibited in organic production— and we're fighting to keep it that way!

Many organic farmers share the trait of optimism. Farming is a highly speculative occupation. It's the hope for an abundant crop and good weather that keeps farmers motivated through the challenges of farming organically.

In a time when the future of agriculture, food, and health depends upon politics, business, and international relations, organic is a beacon of opportunity for human and environmental health.

To keep organic strong, CCOF and our allies, such as the Organic Trade Association (OTA), fight for sound state and federal policies and regulations. One of our most important efforts is to keep genetically modified organisms (GMOs) out of organic. Under federal organic standards, GMOs are prohibited in organic production, and consumers can rely on and trust that foods labeled organic are always non-GMO.

But as the use of GMOs increases in the United States, the organic community must strengthen and protect its production methods as well as state and federal policy. Today, genetic engineering is rampant throughout the entire food chain. Some examples include bread yeasts, cheese rennet, Roundup Ready corn, and soy present in most processed foods. There are even insects genetically engineered to be sterile, which disturb pest reproduction when released. Thus, keeping the integrity of organic as a non-GMO food source is a top priority for CCOF.

The Fight Against GMOs

The fight against GMOs and the risk they pose to organic integrity must happen on all fronts. CCOF applauds colleagues who document the hazards of GMOs and fight for consumers' right to know what is in their food through mandatory GMO food labeling. We want to improve the current regulatory system that allows GMO approval without rigorous evaluation of all potential impacts.

At CCOF, we support all efforts to keep GMOs out of organic, and we have specifically focused on what can be done from within the organic regulations. Since the establishment of the National Organic Program (NOP) standards, organic has had a significant and a meaningful presence within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Now, the NOP must send the message

to the other branches of the USDA such as the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), which coordinates federal regulation of GMOs. They need to understand that the threat of GMOs to organic is an important issue that must be addressed.

The Role of the NOSB

To strengthen the NOP's message on the risks and threats of GMOs to organic, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) addresses GMOs through its subcommittee work and review of organic standards. In 2012, the NOSB—a 15-member federal advisory committee comprised of members of the organic community—formed an ad hoc GMO Subcommittee. The subcommittee's first action was to write a letter to USDA Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack about shared responsibility for GMOs. The letter states, "The NOSB, speaking for the organic community, believes the USDA's actions on genetically engineered crops have been insufficient to protect the organic industry." It goes on to explain that responsibility for preventing GMO contamination should be shared between organic producers and those who develop, use, and regulate GMOs.

Additionally, the GMO Subcommittee examines the issue of seed purity—the availability of non-GMO seeds for use in organic production. Seed purity is a complicated issue because seed contamination can also happen in the field. After a yearlong effort, a GMO Subcommittee report on seed purity concluded that the NOP could set a standard to test seed purity. However, the costs of testing and the burden of negative test results should not be on the shoulders of organic producers. The businesses and operators that use the GMOs that in turn contaminate organic farms should take responsibility and pay for losses due to contamination. To move forward with seed purity solutions, many are calling for more research and point to the need for survey data to fully evaluate the extent of the problem.

The NOSB is also addressing GMOs by evaluating and updating the definition of "excluded methods". This term, under federal organic standards, lists the use of GMOs in organic production practices as a prohibited method. Since the term was originally defined in 1995, GMO technology has undergone many changes and does not maintain the same meaning as it did then. Thus, "excluded methods" is an outdated term that requires revision to more clearly prohibit genetic engineering from organic.

Know Your GMOs

Do you know which GMO crops are commercially produced in the United States³?



A. Alfalfa B. Canola C. Corn D. Cotton
E. Papaya F. Soy G. Sugar Beets H. Zucchini & Yellow Summer Squash

The next NOSB effort on GMOs will be a guidance document on preventing GMOs from ever coming in contact with organic crops, livestock, and handling operations. The initial discussion of this guidance will take place this spring at the NOSB meeting where the public may comment on the prevention methods discussion document. The discussion document will include practices and techniques that most organic producers already use, and it will also set forth a coherent program for keeping GMOs out of organic food and farms.

Signs of Success

While it often seems like an uphill battle, the signs are clear that consumers are making the choice to buy organic and in turn ensure their food is GMO-free. As Gary Hirshberg of Stonyfield Farm put it in a 2014 blog post¹, "The same forces that are creating demand for food free of genetically engineered ingredients are also contributing to increases in organic food sales. And, those forces are growing stronger every day."

A *Consumer Reports* survey published in October 2014 tested for GMOs in many packaged foods². More than 80 products containing corn and soy ingredients were tested. None of the certified organic products tested contained GMOs. Most of the products that made claims of "natural" (which has no law or

testing program behind the label) contained GMOs, and nearly all the products tested that did not have any labeling claims at all, such as organic or non-GMO, had GMO content. These findings underscore the importance of fighting to maintain organic integrity and for mandatory GMO labeling to allow consumers to make informed choices about their food.

Many members of the organic community support continued discussion of these important topics, especially within the context of federal organic policy. Because all branches of government are responsible for GMOs, our policymakers must understand the full consequences of their actions. We cannot afford to ignore GMOs and the risks they pose to the organic community. While we have seen small successes, there is still a long way to go.

Want to stay informed about organic policy and opportunities to make your voice heard?

Policymakers need to hear from organic farmers, businesses, and consumers about the issues you care about. Visit www.ccof.org/advocacy to learn more and stay up-to-date on organic policy.

¹<http://tinyurl.com/onlyorganic-nongmo>

²<http://tinyurl.com/gmos-hide>

³<http://tinyurl.com/what-is-gmo>

Traditional Seed Breeding

The Alternative to Genetic Engineering

WRITTEN BY

Jared Zystro, Organic Seed Alliance (OSA)
with assistance from Kristina Hubbard, OSA

Plant Breeding Terminology

Traditional Plant Breeding

The word "hybrid" is often a source of confusion. Some of the confusion stems from the fact that the word hybrid has more than one meaning. In the most general terms, a hybrid is formed whenever two non-identical parents cross. For example, children are hybrids of their parents. In a diverse open-pollinated population of plants going to seed, many hybrids are formed between the different plants in the field.

When you purchase a "F1 hybrid" variety from a seed catalogue, you are almost always getting a cross of two parents within the same species. The "F1" is shorthand for the first generation of offspring after a cross is made. Many people believe that F1 hybrid plants will not produce viable seed, yet this type of hybrid is almost always fertile. However, if the parents that produced the cross had very different physical appearances, the seed you save from F1 hybrids will produce a wide array of different looking plants.

This diversity of plants is great for starting an on-farm plant breeding project, where you would select from this diversity generation to generation. However, if you want to grow plants that look the same as they did the year before—plants that reproduce true to type—you will need to start with a well maintained non-hybrid variety. Non-hybrid varieties, often referred to as open-pollinated or pure-line varieties, are produced by saving seed from plants that are all very similar to each other in appearance. The Organic Seed Alliance website has a basic seed saving guide that provides guidelines for many common crops (www.seedalliance.org).

Hybrids are also created through the crossing of two different species, known as "interspecific hybrids." The offspring of these crosses are often sterile. The most common example would be a mule, which is a sterile cross between a horse and a donkey. However, these crosses can also produce fertile offspring. For example, the grain triticale is derived from a cross of wheat and rye, while modern wheat itself was derived from natural crosses between three species of grass.

With all of the controversy surrounding genetically engineered crops, people want to know exactly what makes a crop genetically engineered.

When you see the word “hybrid,” it is worth stopping to ask yourself which of these meanings is being used. Once you know what type of hybrid is being described, you will have a much better idea of what you can do with it on your farm, especially if you are interested in seed saving.

Genetic Engineering

With all of the controversy surrounding genetically engineered crops, people want to know exactly what makes a crop genetically engineered. One of the best definitions is from the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which sets international food standards:

Modern biotechnology means the application of:

- i. in vitro nucleic acid techniques, including recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and direct injection of nucleic acid into cells or organelles, or
- ii. fusion of cells beyond the taxonomic family, that overcome natural physiological reproductive or recombinant barriers and that are not techniques used in traditional breeding and selection.

The first part of this definition fits what is generally considered genetic engineering: injection of DNA from one organism into another. In this process, DNA is identified that codes for a trait of interest, such as herbicide tolerance (i.e., crops engineered to survive applications of Roundup and other herbicides). This DNA has almost always been found in nature in a related species or even in an entirely different kingdom, such as bacteria. Now, scientists are beginning to develop entirely new genes in the laboratory.

Once the DNA is isolated, it is combined with other pieces of DNA that help with insertion into the targeted organism to express the trait of interest. Genetic engineers then inject this whole package into the targeted organism. This process has generally been done either by using bacteria that infect the plant, inserting the DNA, or by coating particles of heavy metal with the DNA and blasting the particles into the plant. The result is recombinant DNA (DNA combined together from multiple sources). New methods of gene insertion are now being practiced, but this is the general process.

The second part of the Codex definition broadens the term “biotechnology” beyond the process of genetic engineering described above to include other lab-based methods known broadly as cell fusion. This method takes plant cells from different species and utilizes various techniques (such as applying electrical currents or exposing the cells to chemicals) to produce hybrids between the species.

The National Organic Program (NOP) issued a clarification last year about what types of cell fusion are and aren't allowed in certified organic production. The policy states that cell fusion is only prohibited when cells are transferred across taxonomic families or when using recombinant DNA technology. The role of cell fusion in producing certified organic crop varieties is an issue that the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and the NOP continue to evaluate.

CCOF Members Breeding Seed to Fill a Need

When faced with the challenge of finding adequate seed for their organic crops, these CCOF members tackled it the old fashioned way—by breeding their own!

Home Grown Seeds by Sustainable Seed Company

Unlike so many seed companies these days, Sustainable Seed Company doesn't just distribute seeds—they put in the research required to farm and confidently sell over 1,700 varieties of organic seed (over a third of which are grown on their farm).

After traveling through Central America collecting and growing seeds, owner John Fendley was inspired to leave his corporate career to work towards a greater mission of seed preservation. Certified organic by CCOF since 2010, the company now trials hundreds of seed varieties each year on their 15-acre farm, including organic heirloom veggies, rare fruit and nut trees, and heirloom grains.

Utilizing a climate-controlled seed bank and the loyalty of growers around the world, the organization has been able to sustain varieties and proliferate their use in commercial agriculture as well as home gardens. Sustainable Seed Company receives seeds every year from other growers around the world that they either store for future development or test and trial for public sale. Not only is the farm preserving history through their seed work, but they are also helping ensure organic seed availability as the market becomes more infiltrated by genetically modified (GM) seed. Anti-GMO advocacy comes naturally to the farm, which is located in California's Mendocino County—the first in the United States to ban the cultivation, production, and distribution of GMOs. WPassion for upholding organic runs deep through this community, and Sustainable Seed Company gives back to the people who support it through fruit and vegetable sales at the local farmers' market, making food donations to local schools and charities, and by providing seeds to non-profit gardens.

Innovative Seed Selection by Coke Farm/Jardines, Inc.

Dale Coke has long been an innovative farmer who tested the limits of what “could be” in regards to organic. He began with strawberries in 1981, after he was challenged by a neighbor who said strawberries couldn't be grown organically. Proving that theory incorrect, Coke Farm continued to challenge barriers by establishing relationships with upscale restaurants in the San Francisco Bay Area. The farm's strawberries, snow peas, and squash were in high demand and were discovered by Chez Panisse early on. He also pioneered “spring mix.” With fields full of lettuce leftovers and a stroke of entrepreneurial brilliance, he mixed the baby lettuces and passed them on to restaurant chefs, sparking a nationwide love for what is now a modern-day organic staple. Today, Coke Farm is a successful 500-acre working farm and production facility shipping specialty and seasonal organic fruits and vegetables daily from their state of the art cooler in San Juan Bautista, California.

Coke was prompted to select better seeds after after encountering poor quality golden beet seed. While there were no restrictions on seeds in the early days of organic, standards that apply to certified organic seed use today can make the hunt for strong varieties challenging. According to Coke, finding good organic seed continues to be difficult for certain varieties. While many farmers, including Coke himself, never envisioned they would become experts at seed selection, the organic requirements and infiltration of GM seed has added this skill to the job description. Seed production is an area Coke puts effort towards each year, trialing two to six varieties annually, not counting grain crops. Vegetable production, harvesting, and selling are still the core of the farm's business, but trial and selection are important for maintaining the best possible crop production—and for ensuring GMO-free seed security for the future.

Monsanto-Free Hybrid Tomatoes by Dirty Girl Produce

As many farmers have seen, seed security isn't only about creating GMO-free seed, but also about ensuring the availability of varieties in the future. With so many industry favorites held under lock and key by a few large corporations, some have become concerned that we might reach a point where there aren't enough varieties to go around. The “Early Girl” tomato is a perfect example. The seed was first introduced in the 1970s and has been well-loved over the last four decades for its deep red color and undeniable bold flavor. This popular hybrid is owned by Seminis, which was purchased by Monsanto in 2005. While thousands across the nation grow and eat this prolific producer, the seeds still have to be purchased again each year because it's a hybrid (see pages 25-26 for explanation). Unlike open-pollinated plants whose seeds can be collected and replanted each year, the Early Girl variety remains under the control of the seed industry.

For some, the association with Monsanto is enough to walk away from the popular plant. For others, such as Dirty Girl's Joe Schirmer, there was also a curiosity to see if releasing this variety from the controls of corporate seed giants was even possible—and the answer was a resounding YES! Schirmer spent the last few years working towards an open-pollinated Early Girl spinoff that he calls the “Dirty Girl.” Seed control and risk of GMO-contamination were part of what fueled Schirmer's endeavor, but much like Dale Coke, he was also just looking for a crop that met his specific climate and growing needs (this hearty plant favors dry farming). Once again, patience and the exploration of what is possible resulted in a beautiful new plant—the Dirty Girl tomato is a San Francisco Bay Area favorite!





Pictured left to right Cesar, Lupe, Roy Jr., Roy and Ilse

Growing Organic is a Family Business

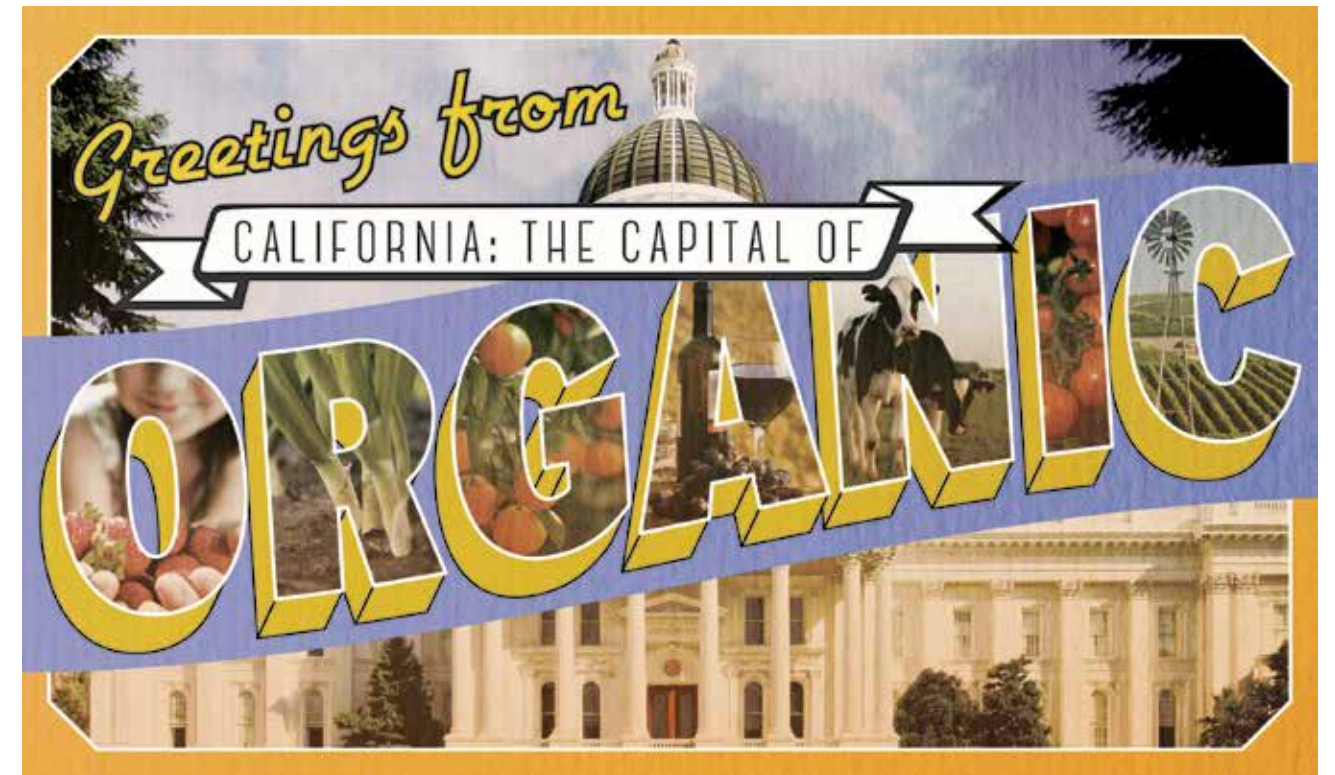
Meet Roy Fuentes and his family. Together, they plant, grow and harvest organic berries for Driscoll's. Roy first began organic berry farming in 1994.

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Driscoll's is passionate about growing great organic berries and dedicated to farmland preservation and sustainability. To learn more about our organic and sustainable farming practices, please visit us at driscolls.com.



organic ADVOCACY



California: The Capital of Organic

CCOF members and staff will head to the California State Capitol on February 11, 2015, for a full day of events to celebrate California as the Capital of Organic. The day will begin with our Annual Meeting, featuring keynote speaker Karen Ross, the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). Then we will head to the State Capitol for Policy Day and finish with a reception honoring CCOF members who serve on the California State Board of Food and Agriculture.

Secretary Karen Ross to Speak at 2015 Annual Meeting

This year, we are proud to announce Secretary Karen Ross of the California Department of Food and Agriculture as the keynote speaker for the Annual Meeting. Secretary Ross will speak about California's leadership in organic production and help set the stage for a day of meetings with elected representatives at the California State Capitol.



Secretary Ross was appointed Secretary of the CDFA on January

12, 2011, by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. Secretary Ross has deep leadership experience in agricultural issues nationally, internationally, and here in California. Prior to joining CDFA, Secretary Ross was chief of staff for U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, a position she accepted in 2009. Before her time at the United States Department of Agriculture, Secretary Ross served more than thirteen years as President of the California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG), based in Sacramento. During that same period she served as the Executive Director of Winegrape Growers of America, a coalition of state winegrower organizations, and as Executive Director of the California Wine Grape Growers Foundation, which sponsors scholarships for the children of vineyard employees. Among Secretary Ross' many achievements at CAWG, the most substantial achievement was the creation of the nationally-recognized Sustainable Winegrowing Program, which assists wine grape growers in maintaining the long-term viability of agricultural lands and encourages them to provide leadership in protecting the environment, conserving natural resources, and enhancing their local communities.

We are thrilled to have Secretary Ross join us as we celebrate California as the Capital of Organic. Note that our Annual Meeting will take place directly before the CCOF Policy Day and Reception.

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CCOF is developing programs and tools to help transitional producers and interested businesses achieve organic certification.

Policy Day at the California State Capitol

California is leading the nation in organic production—more than 20% of U.S. organic farms call the Golden State home! We're taking this message to the state capital and working with our representatives to grow organic.

The goal of Policy Day is to give CCOF members the opportunity to meet with Senators, Assembly Members, and other key representatives in Sacramento to discuss organic agriculture and food production. CCOF members represent a strong and diverse group of growers, ranchers, handlers, processors, and retailers. Together, we have a strong voice and can work together to help educate our elected officials on the economic challenges and opportunities of organic agriculture in California.

Reception with Special Honorees

Following the 2015 Annual Meeting and Policy Day events, CCOF is privileged to host a reception honoring CCOF members on the California State Board of Food and Agriculture. CCOF members hold six of the 15 board seats.

To register for the 2015 Annual Meeting and Policy Day events, visit www.ccof.org/2015-event.

This year, the materials originally added to the National List are up for discussion and review. This means that NOSB will be taking action on a significant amount of materials. NOSB will also review key topics such as the definition of "excluded methods" (a term prohibiting the use of GMOs).

Action

When a substance is up for sunset review, the public has several opportunities to comment. The NOSB must review and discuss comments it receives, so members should submit any information they want NOSB to be aware of as it makes its decisions.

CCOF submits comments on behalf of our membership, but we also strongly encourage you to submit comments on your own behalf and on your operation's behalf. Public participation is key to sunset review. NOSB needs to hear firsthand from organic operations why certain inputs should or should not remain on the National List.

CCOF's Policy Team is eager to register any interested members for the upcoming meeting as well as help prepare comment and testimony. Stay informed of all relevant NOSB and materials review updates through our website, blog posts, and email alerts.

Organic Standards Update

A significant amount of materials used in organic production are up for discussion at the next National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting. The National Organic Program (NOP) is hosting the next NOSB meeting in late April in the San Diego area, and members of the public are encouraged to attend.

Background

NOSB advises the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on which substances should be allowed or prohibited in organic farming and processing based on criteria under the Organic Foods Production Act. Generally, synthetic substances are prohibited unless specifically allowed and non-synthetic substances are allowed unless specifically prohibited. Exceptions to this rule are included in the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (the National List).

NOSB reviews every substance on the National List every five years in a review process referred to as "sunset" review.

Tools for Transition

Whether it's the cost of certification, recordkeeping requirements, or the three year waiting period to move land into certified organic production, CCOF has helped many producers overcome barriers to organic certification. Now, CCOF is taking this work one step further through a new contract with the National Organic Program (NOP). Under this contract, CCOF is developing outreach programs and tools to help transitional producers and interested businesses achieve organic certification.

Specifically, CCOF is working on three unique projects. The first project involves a series of six workshops that break down organic certification into simple, achievable steps. The second project is a set of publicly available online tools, including a checklist of steps to organic transition, an online self-assessment tool, and a demonstration video. Finally, CCOF will host two focus groups to learn from farmers about economic barriers to transition. CCOF is eager to bring these projects and tools to the public as it works to expand opportunities for all organic producers.

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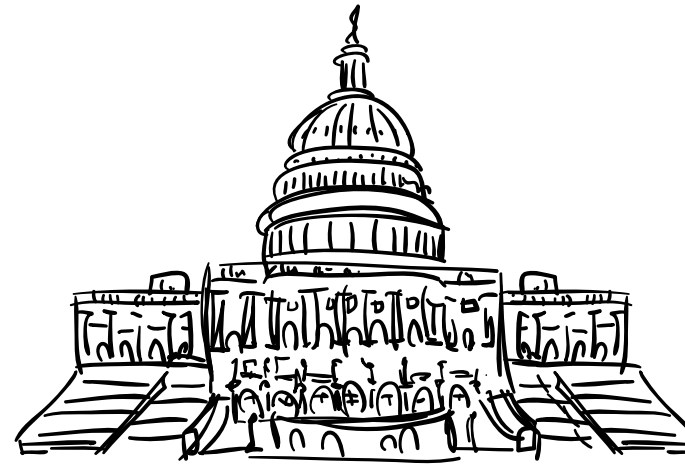
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OTA UPDATE



Post-Election Climate Calls for Continued Organic Advocacy

In the aftermath of the U.S. November election, it is important to consider how changes in the political climate may affect prospects for organic agriculture in the coming years.

The potential for change in this midterm election was strong, with every seat in the House of Representatives and 36 seats in the Senate up for grabs. And change there will be, with many new faces bound for Congress in January. This offers new challenges—and perhaps a few opportunities—as we share our messages about organic agriculture and the importance it plays in our country’s agricultural and economic landscape with policymakers in Washington, D.C.

In addition to retaining control of the House of Representatives, Republicans have now won control of the U.S. Senate, with the re-elections of Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky) and Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kansas), and the capturing of at least eight seats currently held by Democrats in Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Montana, North Carolina, South Dakota, and West Virginia. Thus, the Senate will have at least 54 Republications, 44 Democrats, and two Independents.

Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kansas) is expected to become chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee in January. Senator Thad Cochran (R-Mississippi), who also won re-election, is expected to remain on the Senate Agriculture Committee but chair the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Meanwhile, Republican control of the House has grown, with a gain of at least 14 seats. The next House of Representatives will have at least 243 Republicans and 176 Democrats. Current House Agriculture Chairman Frank Lucas (R-Oklahoma) won re-election, but is stepping down from his chairmanship. Congressman Collin Peterson (D-Minnesota), the ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee, won his bid for a 13th term. Congressman Michael Conaway (R-Texas) also won re-election, and is expected to become chairman of the House Agriculture Committee in January.

We can also expect changes in play as the House Organic Caucus regroups. Of the current 46 members, seven are retiring, and it is clear that at least three lost their bids for re-election. Cultivating allies for organic in the House will be an important priority.

In 2014, passage of the Farm Bill was a big milestone for organic. Now, it is crucial that we build relationships within Congress to protect the gains we won throughout implementation. Only in continuing to foster our relationships with those in Congress who have proven to support provisions for organic and cultivating relationships with new leaders can we protect and grow organic’s profile in D.C.

In the coming days, we see a growing role for our Farmers Advisory Council (FAC), of which CCOF is a part. In 2013, OTA formed FAC to elevate the voices of organic farmers and to provide guidance on how to constructively engage with national policy leaders. FAC helps bring farmer ideas to the attention of the OTA Board for consideration so that, in the words of co-chair Perry Clutts, “OTA can better serve the entire organic sector, from farm to plate.”

In its annual report, FAC has identified some common themes of importance: the supply shortage of organic ingredients, especially grain, and ways to encourage transition to organic production; analysis and feedback on critical regulatory issues like the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and animal welfare; organic crop contamination from prohibited residues; information on the proposed organic check-off program; access to land for beginning organic and transitioning farmers; concerns regarding shortages; and international trade barriers.

Going forward, OTA has created a Farmstead Membership open to organic farmers whose annual income from organic sales is less than \$250,000 and who have current membership in one of the farmer-driven organizations—like CCOF—with which FAC has formed a strategic alliance. Farmstead Membership farmers get the full benefits of an OTA membership, including the right to vote in OTA’s annual Board of Directors election and a voice in OTA’s national advocacy.



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CCOF Expanding Regional Representation

Did you know that in addition to regional staff located throughout California, CCOF has representatives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Asheville, North Carolina (2 representatives!); Bend, Oregon; and State College, Pennsylvania? These CCOF out-of-state certification employees will be playing a new role in their local regions to learn about organic matters and represent CCOF. Whether attending conferences, trade shows, field days, participating with like-minded organizations, or simply meeting other organic-minded people, CCOF is working to give our regional staff opportunities to connect with their local and regional organic communities. Look for a new listing of regional staff on our website, and please contact CCOF if you would like to invite us to participate in a regional event.

Intensive Grazing Prior to Harvest Intervals

Effective June 1, 2015, CCOF will require that orchards and other crops no longer utilize intensive grazing within 90 days of harvest of a crop where the edible portion does not touch soil or soil particles. This interpretation of existing raw manure restrictions is being phased in during 2015—with an expectation that growers update their practices and organic system plans by June 1, 2015—to ensure compliance during the 2015 production year and beyond.

This policy pertains to the regular or planned grazing of animals, and not to accidental or incidental manure from unplanned events such as pets or wildlife. CCOF is working to balance integrated cropping systems with National Organic Program (NOP) section 205.203(c) and emerging food safety concerns, inquiries, and other communication we've received. We would like to understand your specific situation, mitigation measure, and perspective on these requirements. Please contact Jake Lewin, President of CCOF Certification Services, at jake@ccof.org to tell us more.

Welcome Jamie Carr

CCOF is proud to welcome our newest Associate Inspection Supervisor Jamie Carr to the team!

Jamie Carr has worked with CCOF for several years as an organic inspector in the Fresno area. Jamie will be managing a broad swath of operations from Southern California to Sutter and Yuba counties. Jamie brings solid inspection and food systems knowledge as well as familiarity with CCOF inspection systems and inspectors. She holds a B.S. in Plant Science from California State University, Fresno.

CCOF Inspection Services - Here to Help!

CCOF's five-person inspection operations team works together to manage CCOF's 4,000 inspections annually. Inspection supervisors work with inspectors and clients to assign and manage regional inspection operations, ensuring CCOF inspections are performed on time and are cost effective. The inspection operations team works with a group of nearly 65 inspectors to assign inspections, manage the process, and ensure client and organizational needs are met. Inspection operations are a core function in the organization, responsible for ensuring incoming workload is manageable and client needs are met at all times, even when an add acreage or new facility inspection is needed immediately.

This hardworking team oversees a massive geographic area while working to minimize travel, maximize efficiency, and control costs. All of this occurs while also ensuring that inspections happen at appropriate times to meet the NOP expectations and client preferences whenever possible.

Inspection supervisors also participate in inspector training, calibration, oversight, and recruitment. We are extremely proud of our team, made up of Sean Feder, Elizabeth Whitlow, Kari Murray, Becky Witty, and, now, Jamie Carr.



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Inspection Supervisors work hand in hand with Certification Service Specialists to meet client needs. You can identify which CCOF employees are assigned to your organization by reviewing recent letters or visiting the "Service Rep" tab in MyCCOF at www.ccof.org/myccof.

Program Manual Updates

CCOF has recently revised important sections of the CCOF Certification Program Manual. These changes include the following:

- Updated the inspection requirements for operations inspected under the European Union regulations, including a reference to the International Standardized Profile (ISP) manual on this point, and clarification in that manual of the requirements.
- Added the fee for expedited review of annual inspections.
- Clarified the process for CCOF's acknowledgement of complaints.
- Clarified the process for CCOF's receipt of appeals under applicable CCOF Certification Programs. GLOBALG.A.P. was added as an example of an applicable program.
- Clarified the definition of impartiality to include both direct and/or indirect conflict of impartiality, including examples of indirect conflicts of interest.
- Updated the organic certification fee schedule chart to clarify the handler/processor minimum fee of \$650.
- Clarified the possibility of additional fees charged to new applicants if they wish to have more than 100 products listed on their CCOF Client Profile. The fee covers the cost of the data entry.
- Clarified that applicants located outside of the United States are subject to a minimum fee of \$650 per year (note, this is a reduction in this fee).

CCOF has also revised important sections of the CCOF USDA NOP Standards Manual to reflect the changes made to the NOP standards. These are summarized here:

- Biodegradable biobased mulch film will be allowed in organic crop production.
- Expired listings for nonorganic hops (*Humulus lupulus*) and unmodified rice starch will be removed from the National List. CCOF has been enforcing this change regarding nonorganic hops and rice starch since the annotation for each was first updated.

Biodegradable Mulch Standards Finalized

On September 30, 2014 the USDA published a final rule to amend the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (the National List). The ruling, based on the recommendations from the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), allows the addition of one substance to the National List, and removes two expired substances. The ruling became effective October 30, 2014, and resulted in the following:

- Biodegradable biobased mulch film is allowed in organic crop production.
- Expired listings for nonorganic hops (*Humulus lupulus*) and unmodified rice starch have been removed from the National List.

The rule amended the NOP organic regulations section §205.2 Terms to define the additional substance as:

- Biodegradable biobased mulch film. A synthetic mulch film that meets the following criteria:
 - Meets the compostability specifications of one of the following standards: ASTM D6400, ASTM D6868, EN 13432, EN 14995, or ISO 17088 (all incorporated by reference; see §205.3);
 - Demonstrates at least 90% biodegradation absolute or relative to microcrystalline cellulose in less than two years, in soil, according to one of the following test methods: ISO 17556 or ASTM D5988 (both incorporated by reference; see §205.3); and
 - Must be biobased with content determined using ASTM D6866 (incorporated by reference; see §205.3).

Biodegradable biobased mulch film has been included in the National List section §205.601 (Synthetic substances allowed for use in organic crop production) as paragraph (b)(2)(iii): "Biodegradable biobased mulch film as defined in 205.2 must be produced without organisms or feedstock derived from excluded methods."

CCOF is not aware of biodegradable mulches that currently meet this standard, however, we expect them to be developed in accordance with the rule in 2015. CCOF will likely require that new mulches seek OMRI listing rather than reviewing these internally. After discussion at the National Organic Standards Board and a subsequent proposed rule, we are interested in whether these materials may present a positive contribution to sustainability.

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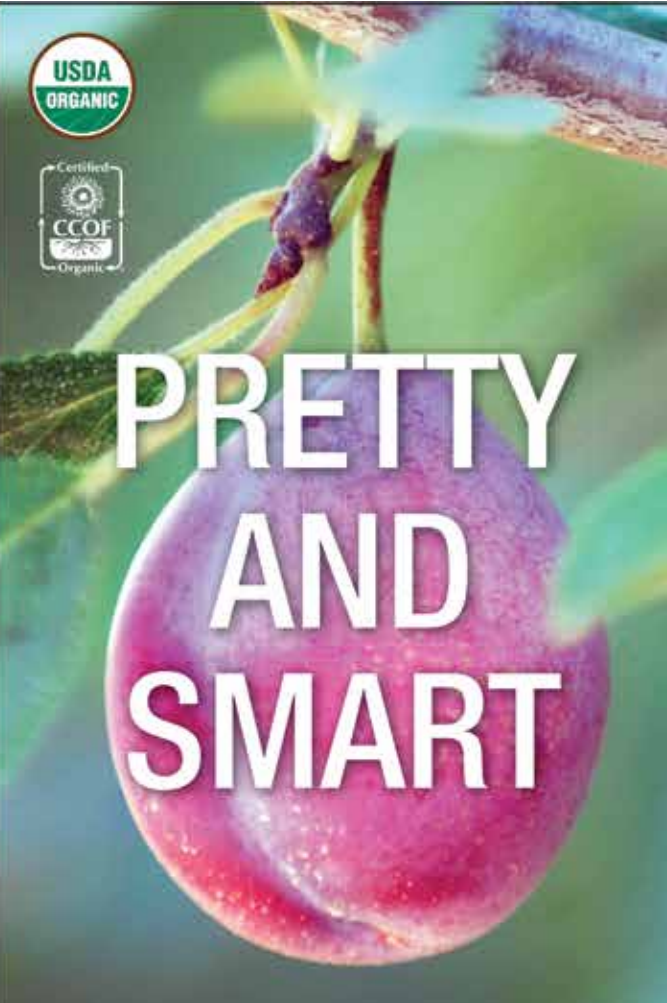
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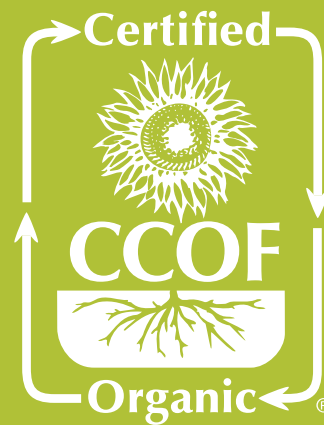
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