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# Organic

**INSIDE LOOK** ■

# THE AGE OF ORGANIC TRANSITION

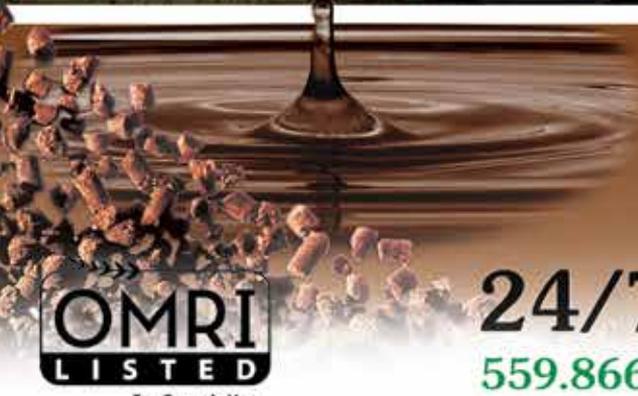


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# CERTIFIED Organic



22

## The Age of Organic Transition

*Is a big wave of newly-converted organic acreage and farmers in the United States on its way in a few years?*

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**SENIOR EDITOR** Rachel Witte

**ART DIRECTION/DESIGN** Sarah Watters

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## Are we entering The Age of Organic Transition?

Are we entering a new era of The Age of Organic Transition? Organic pioneer Mark Lipson explores this question in this issue's feature story.

This issue looms large for food companies, retailers, and consumers scrambling to source scarce domestic organic products and ingredients. The answers to this question will shape our dietary and physical landscape for decades into the future. Will we seize the opportunity to grow, or forgo the environmental, health, and economic benefits of organic agriculture?

Lipson identifies a series of tools and initiatives now underway that he suggests could double the size of U.S. organic production in the next 10 years. These include bolstering demand for transitional products, public and private investment in organic transition, and educational initiatives.

Doubling the acreage of U.S. organic production would mean an increase from 3.7 million to 7.4 million acres—which even then would be just 0.8 percent of total farmland in the United States, according to the 2012 U.S. Ag Census. This would translate into vital benefits, including improvements to soil and water quality, reduction in toxic chemical exposure, higher farm incomes, and billions of dollars in increased economic activity.

Organic pioneers, including Lipson, have spent decades building infrastructure to support increased organic production. It would be a disappointment to that legacy if we can't double that production in the next decade. In fact, this article may beg the question—is there a way to move more quickly? If we don't accelerate a 10-year timeline, will overseas organic imports fill the gap in organic supply, leaving those countries to reap the economic benefits? Will the myriad of competing eco-labels (natural, non-GMO, sustainable) also begin to fill the gap, again reaping the same benefits?

Lipson describes a convergence of tools and initiatives with the capacity to double the scale of organic production. But what if we set the goal post higher? The ambitious goals many U.S. states have set for renewable energy production could serve as an example for organic, as they have resulted in catalyzing change and progress. California's goal is to increase renewable energy production to 50 percent of the state's power by 2030. In 2009, 12 percent of California's power came from renewable energy, compared to 25 percent today. How about an organic production target for California agriculture? Even 10% by 2040 seems modest, but a goal like that could be the spark that sets the wheels of change in motion.

Historically, CCOF has been a force for driving change. Where will that lead us next? Stay tuned as we work to activate change that results in a world where organic *is* the norm.



**Cathy Calfo**  
CCOF Executive Director/CEO

## Issue Contributors

*The Age of Organic Transition*, page 22



**Mark Lipson** is a 30-year pioneer and leader of the organic farming and food community in California and nationally. Lipson recently received the "Champion of Sustainable Agriculture Award" from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. He served a four-and-a-half-year term of service as the organic and sustainable agriculture policy advisor in the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. Since completing his term at USDA in late 2014, Mark has been appointed as a research associate in organic agriculture policy at the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC), affiliated with the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.

Lipson graduated with honors from UCSC in 1981 with a B.A. in Environmental Studies. Since 1983 he has been a member in Molino Creek Farm, a multi-family organic farming cooperative near Davenport, California, and original home of the famed dry-farmed tomatoes. He served as the assistant executive director of CCOF (1985-1993) and policy director at the Organic Farming Research Foundation (1995-2010).

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## **Supporting Organic Elders and the Next Generation**

.....

A new study released by the American Farmland Trust and Land For Good paints an alarming picture for the future of farming. The study shows that in the next decade, nearly 30 percent of New England's farmers are likely to leave the farming profession, and of those leaving, only one in ten has a young farmer working under the senior farmer. The year-long study of U.S. Census of Agriculture data and results from farmer focus groups continue to make the case for encouraging more young farmers in this country.

The study analyzed who is ending their farming career and some of the challenges associated with succession planning. One of the primary issues is the question of who to pass the land on to. A press release from Land for Good reports, "92 percent of New England's 10,369 senior farmers do not have a farm operator under age 45 working with them. While this does not mean that these farmers don't have a succession plan, it suggests that the future of many of these farms is uncertain."

Other succession issues for the retiring generation range from retirement planning to understanding tax and real estate requirements. On the other side of the equation, young farmers are encountering obstacles including access to capital to afford farmland, affording and accessing business and farming education, and the financial viability of running a farming operation.

CCOF recognizes the urgency of this situation and has partnered with California FarmLink to launch the Organic Elders and the Next Generation Project. This long-term initiative provides business transition services to preserve the legacies of organic farmers approaching retirement. It also enables beginning farmers to harness the wisdom of our agrarian elders. Working with CCOF and other partners, FarmLink is offering support for farm succession planning, business and land financing strategies, conservation easements, estate and tax planning, and mentoring that will allow the next generation of organic farmers to invest in successful farms.

The project kick-off event, Planning for Succession: Organic Farmers and the Next Generation, hosted 51 farmers, ranchers, and other stakeholders in conjunction with the EcoFarm Conference for a day of discussion and educational sessions. Farmers from Laguna Farm, Burroughs Family Farms, and Frog's Leap Winery shared their inspiring and eye-opening succession stories. CCOF and succession experts provided participants with tools and resources, and FarmLink described ways its farm mortgage products can support farm transitions.

Plans are underway for succession workshops in California's central coast, north coast, and central valley regions. For personalized assistance with transferring your land and/or business to the next generation, or to learn more about farm succession, contact Liya Schwartzman at **(831) 425 - 0303, ext. 7017** or **liya@cafarmlink.org**.

---

*Your input is greatly valued! We invite farmers of all generations to take a few minutes to complete a needs assessment survey at <https://goo.gl/QU2REt>. Your responses will provide vital information to shape this work.*

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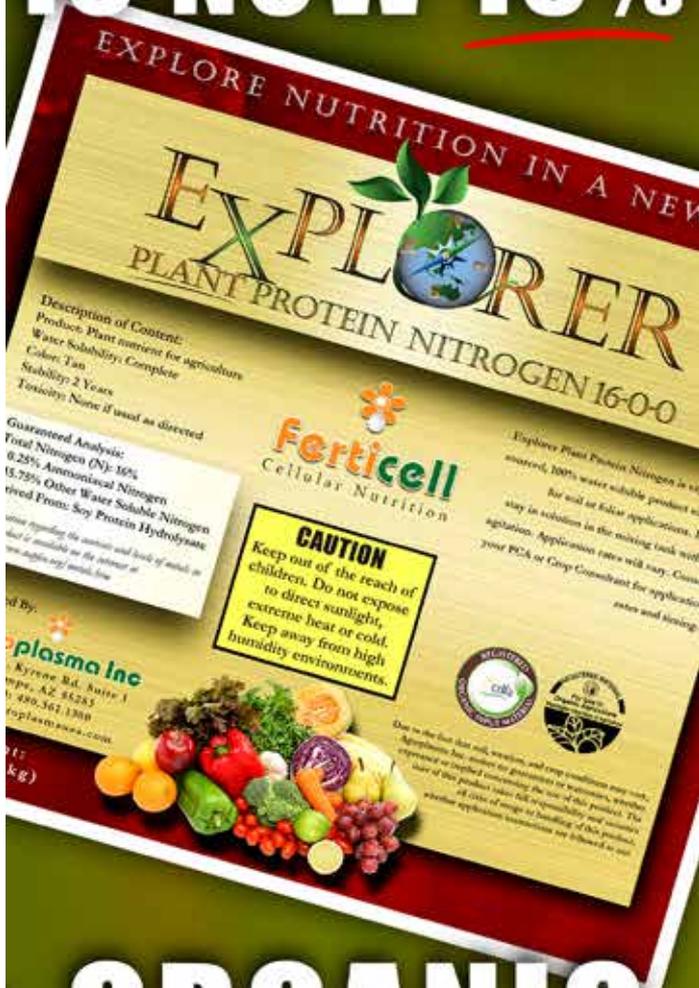
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## USDA Unveils Urban Agriculture Toolkit

In cities all around the country, empty lots formerly riddled with weeds and debris are being replaced with neatly groomed rows of crops, raised beds bursting with seasonal harvest, and produce stands that serve the surrounding community food grown right in their own neighborhood. This transformation of empty lot to food oasis is often romanticized, but urban food producers can face significant challenges just like any other entrepreneur. However, the urban and local food movement is growing, with U.S. local food sales totaling at least \$12 billion in 2014 (more than twice the 2008 total) and projected to hit \$20 billion by 2019. With this growth comes a slew of other benefits, including increased job opportunities, entrepreneurship, and access to healthy local food.

To further encourage growth of urban and local food, the USDA released a new online Urban Agriculture Toolkit in April to help urban farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs navigate resources, technical assistance, and financing opportunities for their businesses.

Resources in the toolkit address some of the most significant difficulties urban farmers face, including access to land, soil and water issues, infrastructure, markets, financing, and grants. Especially helpful for the ag entrepreneur are cost estimates for starting urban farms, information about best practices, and checklists for planning outdoor or indoor agricultural operations.

“Urban agriculture helps strengthen the health and social fabric of communities while creating economic opportunities for farmers and neighborhoods,” said Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack in a press release. “USDA’s Urban Agriculture Toolkit compiles guidance from our Know Your Farmer team and many private partners into one comprehensive resource to help small-scale producers manage all aspects of their business. From protecting soil health to marketing to schools and grocery store chains, USDA has tools to meet the needs of this new breed of innovative urban farmer and small business owner.”

The Urban Agriculture Toolkit is part of the USDA’s Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative. To learn more about the toolkit or find local food system resources in your area, visit [www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer](http://www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer).

Looking for resources to help you in your organic operation? The CCOF Foundation’s Organic Training Institute offers hands-on trainings, workshops, and seminars for organic producers that cover the latest organic research and best production practices to help you grow your business. Visit [www.ccof.org/oti](http://www.ccof.org/oti) to view our upcoming trainings or find recordings of previous trainings.

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## *Family-Approved Organic Empanadas*

Welcome to the next generation of frozen food. No longer is the freezer aisle of the grocery store a wasteland of TV dinners and meals of questionable origin—organic is making its mark even there! The Empanada Shop is a new CCOF member that brings handcrafted organic empanadas to your dinner table via the frozen foods aisle. Not only are they organic, but they're also made with delicious ingredients from family recipes.

The Empanada Shop owner Ruben Frias left a career as an interactive creative director at creative agencies like Disney and Warner Brothers to follow his passion for cooking old family empanada recipes from Mexico. "The recipe is very simple, and it's been passed down for generations," explained Frias. "I started talking to my uncles about how they prepare the meat, and [my aunts] wrote me recipes, so I brought them back and really started shaping them: cilantro, onions, cumin, and cotija cheese, organic chicken, chilies (I do a combination of ancho and guajillo). And every weekend I would get a call from one of my aunts, 'Ok, so how did it go? Is it ready to go? Is it ready?' It really hits home that they feel that they were a part of it. ... These empanadas are really ready to be shared."

The Empanada Shop crafts its empanadas at LA Prep, a collaborative food production center that is made up of 54 separate production spaces that are each leased exclusively to one tenant. The Empanada Shop is one of the few certified organic food businesses in the facility.

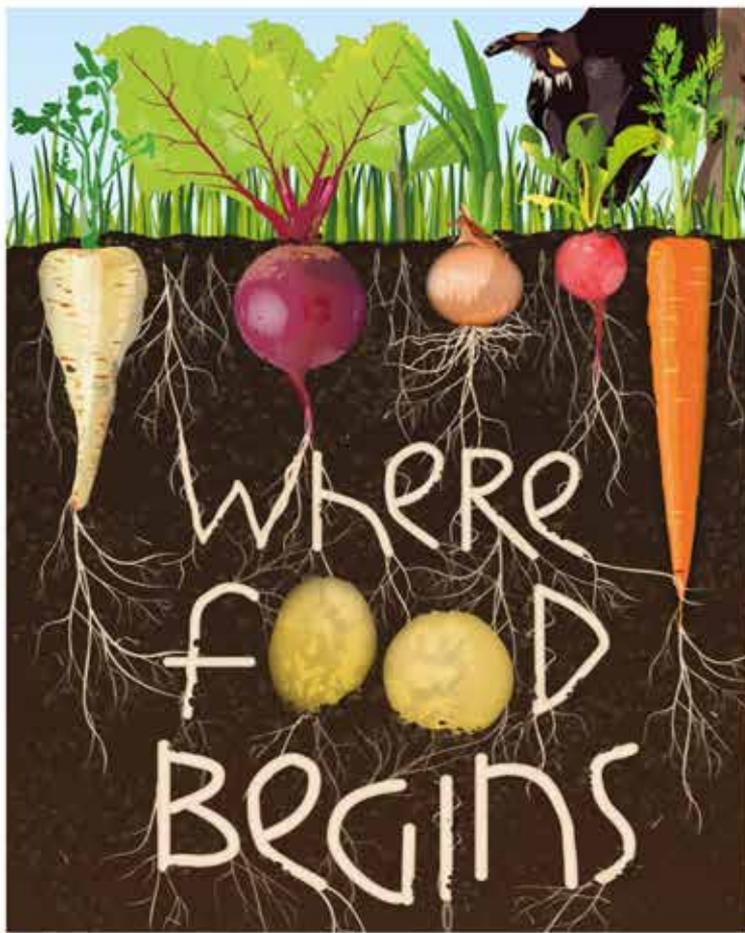
The Empanada Shop's products are now sold by natural foods grocers across the state of California. The company carries a full organic line of frozen single-serve empanadas, including chicken, beef, sweet potato and corn, and two breakfast choices. Even at higher production rates, Frias' product doesn't lose its handmade touch. "Every step of the process is extremely personal. From the farmers who produce our ingredients to our cooks who chop the anchos and roll our fragrant handmade dough, the utmost care is put into your food to ensure that your empanada experience is all that it should be," he said. "We love cultivating the joy of sharing good food."

Visit [www.the-empanadashop.com](http://www.the-empanadashop.com) to find out where you can get your empanada fix. Are you a processor or handler who is interested in getting your operation certified organic? Visit [www.ccof.org/certification](http://www.ccof.org/certification).

## **Tumbling Shoals Superheroes Dig Dirt**

Tumbling Shoals Farm is a CCOF member tucked in the foothills of Wilkes County, North Carolina, run by Shiloh Avery and Jason Roehrig with a seasonal team of farm "superheroes," as they call them. For Avery and Roehrig, the farming bug started when they returned from their two-year Peace Corps service as agriculture volunteers in Madagascar. Once back in the United States, Roehrig began working with farmers through the Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, while Avery started Central Carolina Community College's sustainable agriculture program with its first class of students in 2002.

Avery and Roehrig began farming as a partnership in 2003 in White Cross, North Carolina, on a loaned, idle plot of farmland.



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Member News Meets Social Media



**Eatwell Farm (@eatwellfarm)** via Instagram:

Tuesday morning lavender field. Harvesting starts at the beginning of June. We pick fresh for the farmers market and then fill our drying room. It is a hobby that happily got out of control. #ferryplazafarmersmarket #eatwellfarm #ccof #organic #permaculture #lavender



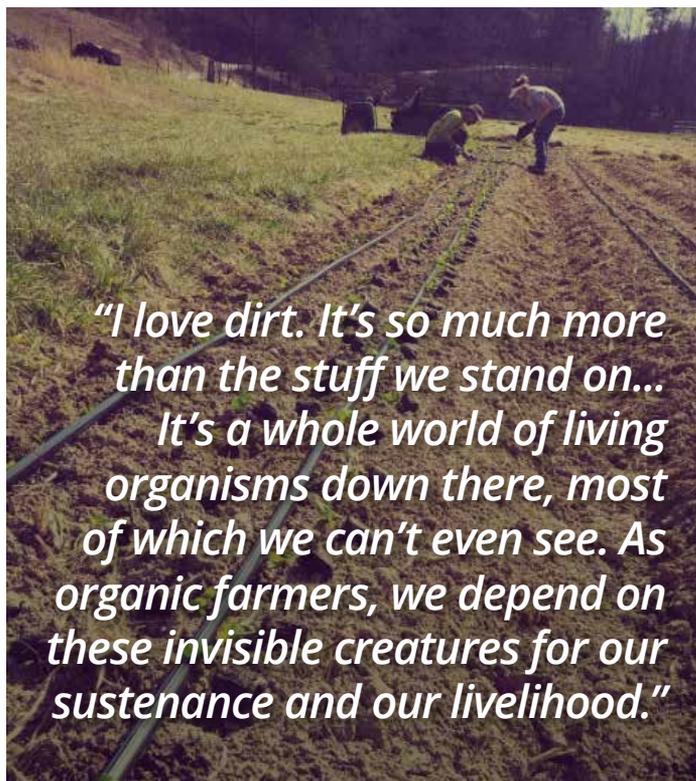
**Happy Boy Farms (@happyboyfarms)** via Instagram:

:) Return of the blossoms. Happiness is... eating flowers. #happyboyfarms #organic #squashblossom #fioredezucca #stuffitwithcheese #signsofsummer #delicacies #freshpicked #locallygrown #farmtofork #californiagrown #farmersmarket #appetizer



**Say Hay Farms (@sayhayfarms)** via Instagram:

Synchronized squashing #sayhayfarms #organicfarm #realfarmerswearplaid #andstrawhats



*"I love dirt. It's so much more than the stuff we stand on... It's a whole world of living organisms down there, most of which we can't even see. As organic farmers, we depend on these invisible creatures for our sustenance and our livelihood."*

Tumbling Shoals Farm was born in 2007 when the pair found a piece of land in Millers Creek, North Carolina, where they decided to plant their roots. Avery and Roehrig grow a variety of certified organic vegetables and fruits on the farm that they sell at local farmers' markets, through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscription program, and to local restaurants.

"We consider the effect of our farming practices on the land, the food, the local community, and the wider environment (including Tumbling Shoals Creek!)," said Avery. "Here at Tumbling Shoals Farm we focus on building healthy soils for healthy plants, encouraging biodiversity on the farm, natural plant nutrition, natural pest management through crop rotation, diversity, and natural pest enemies."

Although Tumbling Shoals Farm became a new CCOF member in 2015, the farm has been certified organic for many years. "People often ask me, 'What is organic farming?'" Avery explained. "It's a complicated answer, for sure, but on the most basic fundamental level, it's growing dirt. I love dirt. It's so much more than the stuff we stand on, and the stuff we try to wash out of our clothes. It's a whole world of living organisms down there, most of which we can't even see. As organic farmers, we depend on these invisible creatures for our sustenance and our livelihood. We are tasked with caring for critters we're only half aware exist. Without them, our crops couldn't even access the nutrients we provide for them. It's a bit nerve wracking—depending so entirely on things you cannot see. But they're precisely why I love dirt so much."

Visit [www.tumbingshoalsfarm.com](http://www.tumbingshoalsfarm.com) to find out more about Tumbling Shoals Farm. To see our answer to the "What is Organic?" question, visit [www.ccof.org/organic](http://www.ccof.org/organic).

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The Alexandre family, from left to right: Joseph, Stephanie, Blake, Savanna, Christian, Vanessa, and Dalton

## ***Bringing Organic Home to FFA***

The National FFA Organization (FFA) is the largest youth organization in the country. Today there are 630,000 FFA members aged 12-21 in 7,757 chapters across all 50 states. Stewarded by in-classroom agriculture educators, these students are cultivated to lead careers in agriculture through hands-on learning activities, enterprise projects, business preparation, and public speaking classes.

Since its inception, FFA has supported millions of students who have become farmers, politicians, agricultural entrepreneurs, biologists, veterinarians, and engineers. With numbers as impressive as these, the CCOF Foundation saw an opportunity to boost the organic workforce by collaborating with FFA to offer student grants specifically focused on organic production. Through our partnership, the organic family is now expanding to include youth in FFA who will become the next generation of organic farmers and food producers.

### **The Organic Family**

“We want to encourage an organic focus within FFA so kids can learn about the opportunities within organic production,” said Stephanie Alexandre of CCOF-certified Alexandre EcoDairy Farms. Alexandre’s five children went through the FFA program in Del Norte County, California, where their organic family dairy is based. When the children started getting involved with FFA, organic was just getting started, leaving organic mentorship to Alexandre and her husband Blake. With their parents’ assistance, the Alexandre kids all designed and managed successful organic Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE) projects on their home farm through FFA. The Alexandres’ involvement with their kids’ FFA chapter

had the added benefit of leading their advisor to learn more about organic through the family’s experience and the kids’ successes.

Despite the absence of organic awareness in FFA at the time, Alexandre’s son Christian was awarded the National Poultry Proficiency Award from the National FFA Association and the National Star Agribusiness Award for his organic poultry projects. After completing a degree at California Polytechnic State University, Christian returned to the family farm where he founded and now operates a successful pastured organic egg and pork business—aptly named Alexandre Kids—with his siblings Joseph, Vanessa, Dalton, and Savanna. The siblings’ successful organic agriculture careers are in large part due to the mentorship of their organic farming parents and their early involvement in FFA.

### **Leaders Make the Difference**

Cindy Nelson didn’t come from an agricultural background, but she found her way to agriculture through FFA in the 1980s when she was recruited for FFA by a new agricultural teacher at her high school, Dave Caetano. At the time, she knew nothing about agriculture and had her sights set on becoming a veterinarian. During her time in FFA, Nelson quickly learned to love agriculture and working with young people, causing her to have a change of heart and set a new goal of becoming an agricultural teacher and FFA advisor. Nelson realized that dream and started teaching agriculture in 1989. Today, she teaches at Littlerock High School in rural southern California.

Nelson’s interest in organic started when she attended an FFA field day at the University of California, Davis with her students. While

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The CCOF Foundation's .....

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**SEPTEMBER 14, 2016** .....

*Online Webinar*

**Crop Insurance to Help Organic and Diversified Farmers Manage Risk**

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2016** .....

*Online Webinar*

**Healthcare for Organic Livestock**

**OCTOBER 6, 2016** .....

*Northern California*

**Go Organic! – An Organic Certification Workshop for Livestock Operations**

**OCTOBER 20, 2016** .....

*Online Webinar*

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**NOVEMBER 3-4, 2016** .....

*San Diego, California*

**Food Safety Training for the Organic Grower or Postharvest Handler\***

**NOVEMBER 17, 2016** .....

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**An Introduction to Organic Exports**

**NOVEMBER 29-30, 2016** .....

*Stockton, California*

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**DECEMBER 8, 2016** .....

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**San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market Tour**

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*\*This is a CCOF, Inc. event.*



Cindy Nelson's students use organic methods to maintain an orchard on the school grounds.

her students participated in competitions, she walked over to the Davis farmers' market, where she noticed that many of the vendors at the market had "certified organic" signage. This piqued Nelson's interest, and she began to research what the word organic meant. To involve her students in the subject of organic, Nelson gave them an integrated project between their English, math, history, and agriculture classes in which they researched and debated the pros and cons of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The project got Nelson and her students engaged in the history, politics, and current affairs of the organic movement.

In addition to classroom engagement around organic, Nelson's students now use organic methods to maintain an orchard on the school grounds. Her students care for almost 400 trees, including apples, peaches, and various nut varieties, the bounty of which supplies their school cafeteria with organic fruit.

Inspired by Nelson's enthusiasm and their experience with the organic orchard, two students from Littlerock FFA applied for and won \$1,000 grants from CCOF's Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund (FOFGF) to support their organic SAE projects. In 2014, Kimberly Vargas used her grant to raise an organic pig for her project. CCOF connected Kimberly to long-time CCOF-certified organic farmer John Teixeira, who was able to provide her with organic piglets, which are difficult to source. Vargas successfully raised her organic pig Mufasa and sold it at the Antelope Valley Fair.

In 2015, a second student of Nelson's, Mariah Samano, was awarded a FOFGF grant to raise organic poultry. She plans to showcase her birds at their local project competition and ag expo. As part of her project, Samano intends to help educate her community about the difference between raising animals organically and conventionally.

When asked about why more FFA teachers don't teach about organic agriculture, Nelson shared that some advisors are open

to it. However, she has also met "many who think organic is just a marketing craze," and who do not believe the standards mean anything. Nelson thinks that the FOFGF is a great way for FFA students, advisors, and chapters to begin learning about organic agriculture. She hopes opportunities like the CCOF grants will eventually incentivize more FFA teachers to investigate and incorporate organic agriculture into their lessons, and she is excited about the possibility of additional ways FFA can work with the organic community.

## Partnering for the Future

The CCOF Foundation paid a visit to the 2016 California FFA State Convention, and couldn't help but be energized by the sound of rock music and 6,500 screaming FFA students. We got a glimpse of the immense passion these high school students in blue jackets have to talk and learn about agriculture. With all that energy, we could only imagine the impact these students could have on the future of the organic movement.

Among the corporate sponsors attending the FFA convention, CCOF was the only one focused solely on the growth of organic. With supply of organic unable to keep up with demand, and with the farmer population in the United States continuing to age, we are calling out to you—the broader organic community. Now is the time for us to work together with FFA to encourage passionate young people into fulfilling organic careers.

CCOF and our partners are supporting dozens of FFA students' organic SAE projects across the United States through the FOFGF. There are many ways for you to get involved as well, and we hope you will consider joining us. Contact the CCOF Foundation for more information about our grant program, to get materials on organic to share with your local FFA chapter, or to have a representative of CCOF come speak to your local FFA chapter.

Applications for the next round of FFA SAE grants will open through FFA on September 1, 2016. Find more information and application requirements at [www.ccof.org/fofgf](http://www.ccof.org/fofgf).

*The Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund is a project of the CCOF Foundation with support from: CCOF, the UNFI Foundation, the CCOF Processor/Handler Chapter, the Clif Bar Family Foundation, Dr. Bronner's, Driscoll's, Duncan Family Farms, Forager Project, Frey Vineyards, Frontier Co-op, Green Ox Pallets, the Independent Natural Food Retailers Association, National Co-op Grocers, Organic Valley, and SunRidge Farms.*



Kimberly Vargas, Cindy Nelson, and Mariah Samano

## **CCOF Chapters Get in Formation**

The **Fresno-Tulare Chapter** met in mid-February at the Spike and Rail restaurant in Selma, California—the raisin capital of the world. Close to 30 people attended, including Trevor Lewis, District Director for Assemblymember Devon Mathis, who mentioned the importance of contacting your state legislator to communicate issues of importance to them. Board representative Vernon Peterson presented a board report, followed by Chapter Liaison Jane Sooby who spoke about the who spoke about the California State Organic Program and CCOF’s legislative effort to reform the program (AB 1826). The chapter held an election during which Peterson was confirmed as board representative, Dwayne Cardoza was re-elected as chapter president, and Eldon Thiesen was re-elected as treasurer.

The **Central Coast Chapter** met on March 28 at the Grange Hall in Aromas, California. Over 30 people attended, first enjoying a catered dinner featuring organic veggies sponsored by the chapter.

Plant pathologist farm advisor Steve Koike presented on an emerging new disease in strawberries, macrophomina. Calling it a potential “game-changer” for strawberry production in the state, Koike reported that once the disease appears in a field, it is very difficult to grow a strawberry crop there again. Symptoms of macrophomina are indistinguishable from those caused by fusarium; however, unlike fusarium, no strawberry varieties are truly immune to it, no products or fungicides are effective against it, and it kills plants in the field. Spores spread easily when soil is disturbed. The good news is that it seems to be a strawberry-specific pathogen, so other crops can be planted into fields where it has been found. Koike said that he is “afraid for your industry,” calling the new disease an “industry killer.”

Chapter president Steve Pedersen invited Lisa Bunin to give a talk on the Organic Strawberry Project she initiated in 2012. The goal of the Organic Strawberry Project is to cultivate a source of organic strawberry starts adequate to supply the entire organic strawberry industry. Bunin reported that the results of a 2015 field trial were favorable, but the starts cost \$1 each, which is not a sustainable price. She contacted James Rickert who grew organic strawberry starts from 2005-2009. Rickert was willing to give it another try, and is now growing 300,000-500,000 organic strawberry starts that will be available this fall. The price is anticipated to be 35¢ each.

Board representative Grant Briens described his experience at the Organic Seed Alliance conference. Then Sooby presented an overview on the California Organic Food and Farming Act (AB

1826) and Angela Giles with bill author Assemblymember Mark Stone’s office gave an up-to-the-minute update on the bill.

The meeting ended with a talk by Agricultural Research Service Horticulturist Eric Brennan, who described his work to refine mustard cover crops in strawberry furrows. This strategy is very effective at reducing the amount of soil that runs off from the field, but it can pose some challenges, particularly in killing the mustard at the end of the season.

The **Processor/Handler Chapter** met for the first time in a long time on March 30. Held online, the meeting accommodated participants from Arizona, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, Missouri, New Jersey, Maryland, and New York. The Processor/Handler Chapter is unique in that, unlike other chapters, it is not limited to a geographical region but instead is composed of CCOF’s processor members wherever they are located.

Outgoing chapter president Steve DeMuri welcomed the group. Thank you for your many years of service to the chapter, Steve! Board representative Renee Thresher provided an overview of recent board activity, and CCOF staff presented other updates. A motion was made and unanimously approved that the chapter donate \$10,000 to the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund.

Nominations were accepted during the meeting and an online election held afterwards. The results are: Board Representative Renee Thresher, Lundberg Family Farms; Chapter President Jeremy Johnson, Traditional Medicinals; Chapter Vice President Ann Marie Hourigan, Earthbound Farm; Chapter Secretary Veronica Wheat, Chef V; and Chapter Treasurer Rusty Brown, Fine Dried Foods International.

The **North Coast Chapter** met at the Panorama Meats office in Petaluma, California on March 31. Janis Phillips of Panorama talked about the origins of the business and what it takes to produce organic meat. CCOF’s Policy Director Kelly Damewood gave an inspiring overview of AB 1826.

Nominations for chapter leaders were accepted at the meeting and an online election held afterwards. The chapter leaders are: Board Representative Andrea Davis-Cetina, Quarter Acre Farm; Chapter President Eric Pooler, Boisset Collection; Chapter Vice President Carrie Hendrickson, Guayaki; Chapter Treasurer Gove Celio, Neal Family Vineyards; and Chapter Secretary Ian-Hero Serrano, Straus Family Creamery.

Thank you to Christian Cartano, Cassie Reiser, and Debby Zygielbaum, the inaugural North Coast chapter leaders who helped guide the chapter during its first two years back in the CCOF fold.

The **Big Valley Chapter** met at a popular new restaurant, Ralston's Goat, in downtown Modesto, California on April 18. CCOF board president Phil LaRocca attended, as did special guest Steve Pavich, who gave a talk on soil microbes and reminisced about the organic movement's early days. Board representative Brad Samuelson also gave an update. The meeting drew both seasoned and new chapter members. The group's consensus was to meet again later in the year and hold an election at that time.

Another popular restaurant, Preserve, this one in downtown Winters, California, was the location for the **Yolo Chapter** meeting on April 27. Board representative Thaddeus Barsotti led the discussion which covered a number of weighty topics

including how the chapter can function as a professional organization, whether hydroponic operations can be considered organic or not, and implementation of the agricultural orders regulating nutrient and sediment runoff from fields. Barsotti committed to continue representing the chapter at the board level, and, given the absence of a chapter president, to help plan quarterly chapter meetings. The next meeting will be on July 6.

**Let the CCOF community know what your chapter is doing!**

Write to [jsooby@ccof.org](mailto:jsooby@ccof.org) and we will publish your chapter update in the next edition of *Certified Organic*.



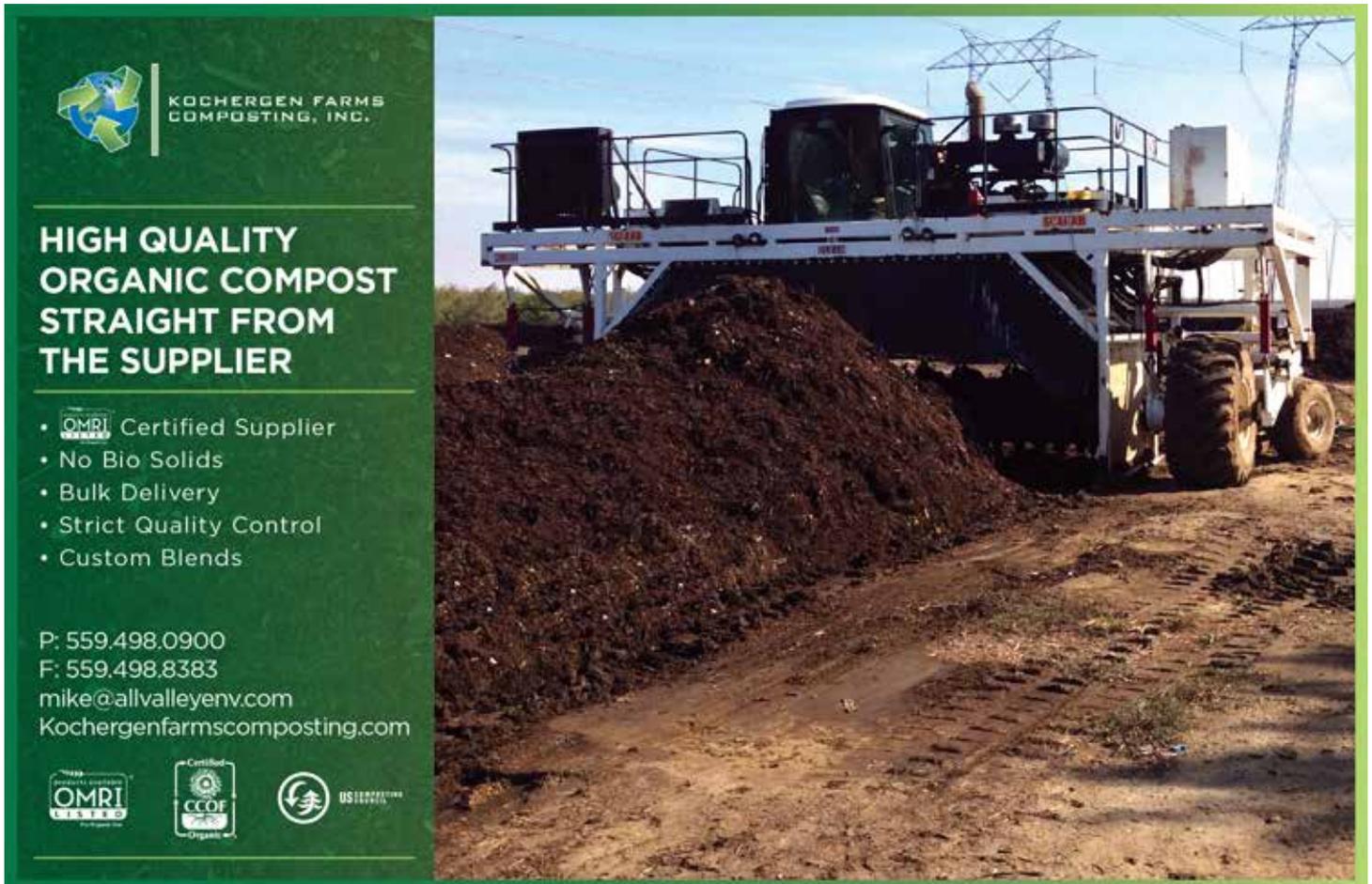
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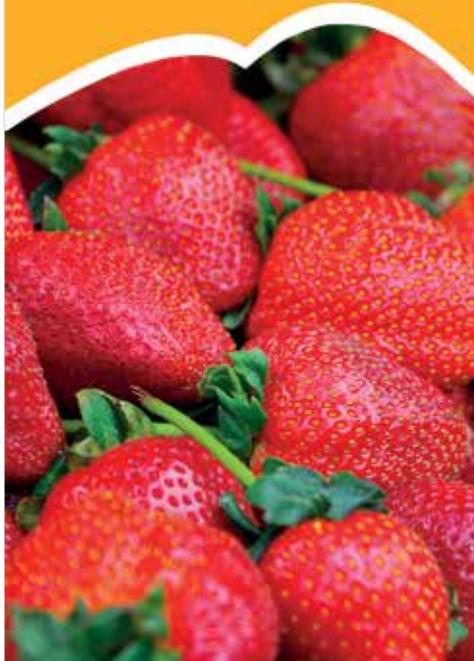
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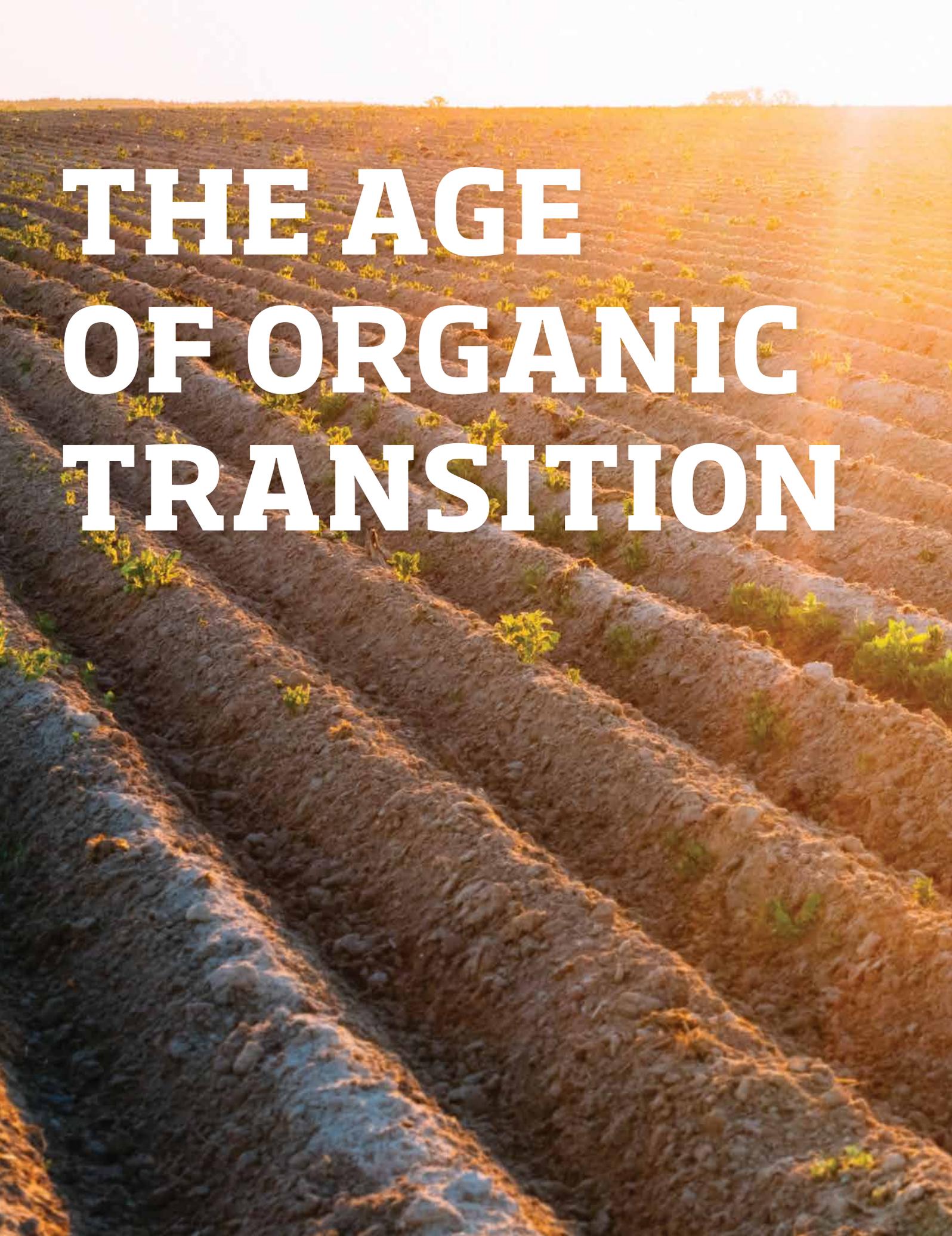
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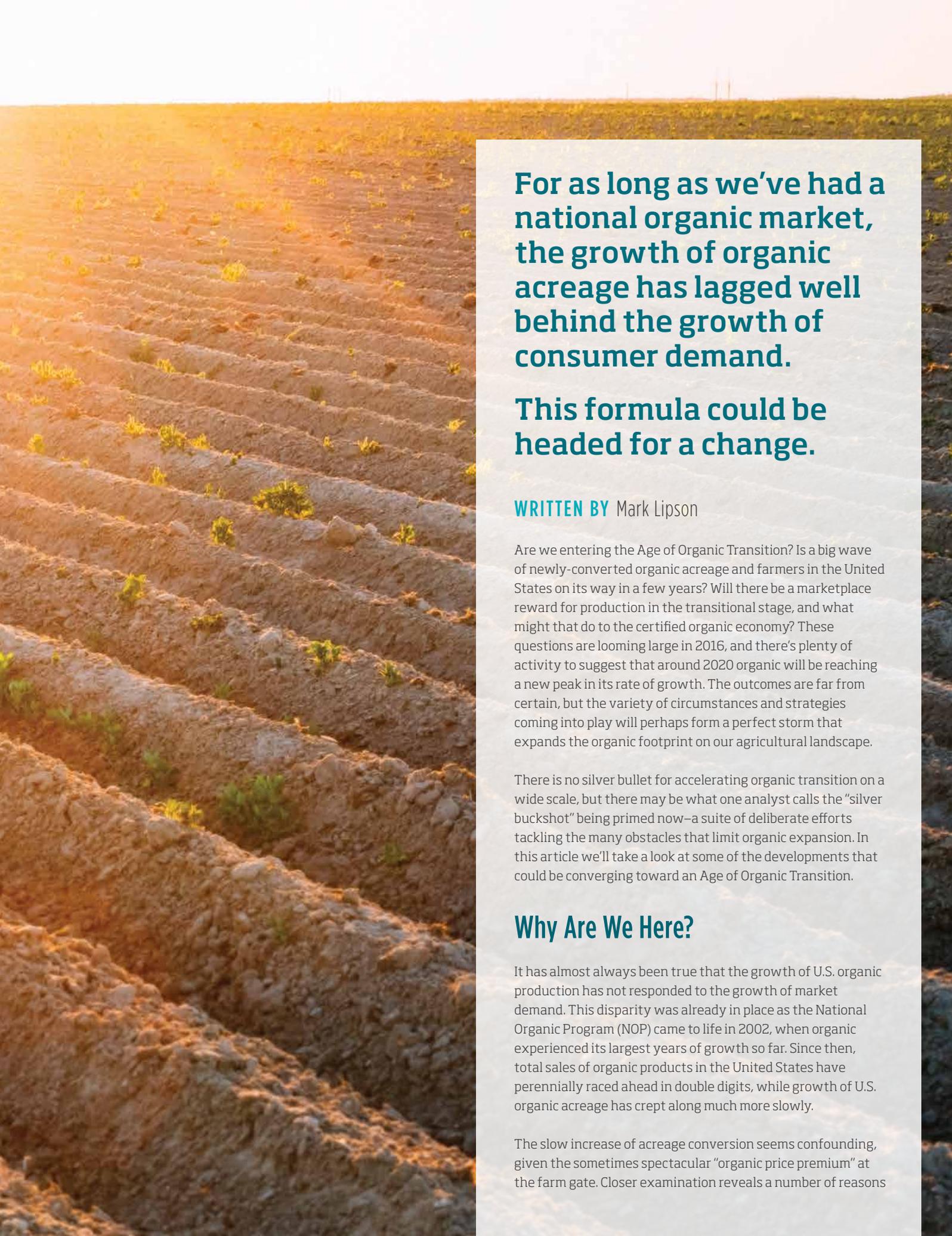
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An aerial photograph of a terraced agricultural field during the golden hour of sunset. The rows of terraces create a strong sense of perspective, leading the eye from the foreground towards the horizon. The soil is a warm, golden-brown color, and small green plants are visible in the furrows. The sky is a pale, hazy orange, and the overall lighting is soft and directional, coming from the right side of the frame.

# THE AGE OF ORGANIC TRANSITION



**For as long as we've had a national organic market, the growth of organic acreage has lagged well behind the growth of consumer demand.**

**This formula could be headed for a change.**

**WRITTEN BY** Mark Lipson

Are we entering the Age of Organic Transition? Is a big wave of newly-converted organic acreage and farmers in the United States on its way in a few years? Will there be a marketplace reward for production in the transitional stage, and what might that do to the certified organic economy? These questions are looming large in 2016, and there's plenty of activity to suggest that around 2020 organic will be reaching a new peak in its rate of growth. The outcomes are far from certain, but the variety of circumstances and strategies coming into play will perhaps form a perfect storm that expands the organic footprint on our agricultural landscape.

There is no silver bullet for accelerating organic transition on a wide scale, but there may be what one analyst calls the "silver buckshot" being primed now—a suite of deliberate efforts tackling the many obstacles that limit organic expansion. In this article we'll take a look at some of the developments that could be converging toward an Age of Organic Transition.

## **Why Are We Here?**

It has almost always been true that the growth of U.S. organic production has not responded to the growth of market demand. This disparity was already in place as the National Organic Program (NOP) came to life in 2002, when organic experienced its largest years of growth so far. Since then, total sales of organic products in the United States have perennially raced ahead in double digits, while growth of U.S. organic acreage has crept along much more slowly.

The slow increase of acreage conversion seems confounding, given the sometimes spectacular "organic price premium" at the farm gate. Closer examination reveals a number of reasons

# Operations that enter into certification during transition are more successful and avoid mistakes along the way.

why the problem is much more complicated than simply shifting supply to meet pricier demand. The most basic obstacle is that the rewards for transition are delayed until organic certification is achieved and products are sold—three or four years from beginning the transition process in most cases. But there's much more to contend with.

## Barriers to Transition

### Financial Disincentives:

- Lack of financial reward during the three-year conversion period
- Increased operating costs
- Lack of marketing and distribution infrastructure
- Complete lack of markets for necessary rotational crops

### Financing & Risk-Management:

- Limited crop insurance appropriate for organic operations
- Lack of lender support and experience
- Uncertainties about contamination from genetically modified organisms (GMOs), NOP rules

### Knowledge Deficit:

- Steep learning curve for conventional producers
- Limited availability of technical assistance from Cooperative Extension and others providing agricultural support
- Limited research and educational commitments from universities

Retailers who can't come close to meeting their customers' demands for organic foods are also exploring arrangements directly with suppliers to support new organic production. Costco is the most prominent of these retail players, but not the only one. Costco's CEO Craig Jelinek was quoted by *The Seattle Times* at a recent shareholder meeting that the company "cannot get enough organics to stay in business day in and day out." To address the scarcity, Costco has begun loaning funds to organic growers for land acquisition and major expansion.

These "B2B" (business-to-business) arrangements—commitments made by buyers that eventually put organic product in the pipeline—have been underway for several years now, and the initial results are just starting to show up on the organic market. However, despite the model's success, B2B arrangements are generally farm-by-farm, management-intensive projects for the buyers, and the growing consumer hunger for organic product will need to be satisfied by other means.

The next big move to incentivize transition is establishing the basis for a consumer market of transitional product. Will a "Transitionally Grown" or "Certified Transitional" label find a successful niche in the jungle of product identities? Historically, development of such a category had mixed results. "Natural foods independent retailers had a great market for transitional apples 20 years ago," said David Lively, CEO of Organically Grown Company. "Then we hit the point when there was a strong supply of organic fruit and the transitional product wasn't needed." Mainstream retailers were generally not successful with "transitional" labels in the past, due to insufficient supplies, lack of experience by the retailers, and low quality product. This discouraged retailers from selling labeled transitional product for many years, until recently.

Some producers who have achieved organic status can also be leery of a transitional label, as they do not want to see a market category mislead consumers to think they are getting "organic lite" at a cheaper price. The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 made it very clear that "transitional organic" or "in transition to organic" were not allowed as product claims. Technically, this still left room for certification and marketing of product that was in the transition pipeline, as long as the word "organic" was not associated with the label or the claim.

CCOF, Oregon Tilth, and other certifiers have maintained such programs all along, but these have had only very limited use in the retail marketplace. "We find that operations that enter into certification during transition are more successful and avoid certification mistakes along the way," said Jake Lewin, President of CCOF Certification Services, about providing transitional certification at CCOF. "I believe that while there is not always a retail home for transitional at this time, it still has a very important role to play in supporting the expansion of

## Boosting "Transitional" Production

Finding a way to provide an up-front reward for transition is the focus for many organic players. Manufacturers who need organic ingredients are taking a number of approaches to incentivize transition, from the outright purchase of farms to contract agreements for future organic production that start paying during the transition phase. Companies like General Mills are trying to define a "holistic" approach, according to Shauna Sadowski, Vice-President of Annie's Organics (now a subsidiary of General Mills). "We are trying to move many parts of the supply chain together," she said. "So it has to be done in a coordinated way—including many kinds of crops, infrastructure for handling, and marketing at the end of the chain."



organic acreage. My hope is that we can leverage transitional over time as a way to get to a bigger organic future.”

Now many players judge that the severity of organic supply shortages makes it timely to have a consumer-facing label for transitional product. This surge in interest has turned the focus to *how*—not *whether*—the label should be developed. Some basic principles have emerged from the discussion, including:

- ➔ Transitional product has to be independently certified, and must meet all NOP requirements for organic except the length of time under organic management.
- ➔ Certified transitional status can only pertain to the harvests from the second and third years of the transition period.
- ➔ Once organic status is achieved, that product can no longer be sold as transitional.
- ➔ Land that fails to achieve organic status should not “recycle” indefinitely back into transitional status, also known as “permanent transition.”

There are certainly risks in this strategy: certifiers will have to be up to the task, the price points will still have to make it worthwhile for both consumers and producers, consumer confusion may be a problem, and the impact on prices and market share for existing organic product could be detrimental and spark a backlash. But if the main principles can be successfully implemented and other problems avoided, then certified transitional labels may indeed provide a key piece of the puzzle for significantly increasing organic acreage in the United States.

Even in the best case, however, an economic payoff in the transition phase is still only one part of the variety of strategies needed to bridge the gap between organic supply and demand. Fortunately, progress is also being made on other fronts.

## USDA Support for Transition

Despite the rhetoric of free markets and the independent farmer, agriculture in the United States is highly interwoven with governmental policies and programs. Beyond the more obvious impacts of specific crop subsidies, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is also deeply involved with a variety of incentives and protections for many aspects of farming and ranching. Thus the role of federal policies is also crucial to producers’ decisions about organic transition.

Risk management in agriculture includes a very complex bundle of tools and structures, with both government and private players. There are many layers of legislation, regulation, and insurance company imperatives. Changing the equation for organic producers, specifically small farms, has been a struggle underway for many years. In the last several years that struggle has begun to bear fruit.

Risk management strategies like crop insurance are particularly fundamental to the production of grain and oilseed crops, where organic transition has lagged most severely. A significant obstacle for conversion of corn and soy operations in the Midwest has been the unavailability and insufficient pricing of crop insurance for organic and transitioning operations. This problem is compounded by the fact that lenders in many parts of the country will not make an operating loan without crop insurance as collateral. This means that potential transitional growers not only cannot hedge their own risks, but they are also unable to offer their bankers any hedge on their risk.

With initial direction from Congress in the 2008 Farm Bill, USDA had slowly begun to collect the data necessary for offering crop insurance on organic crops—at organic prices—in the late 2000s. Organic crop insurance policies began to be issued on a few crops, but they were very costly and not desirable for good organic growers. Around 2011, however, the process of devising better solutions for organic growers gained some technical momentum and political commitment from the leadership at USDA.

Among the innovations established recently are new types of policies for diversified operations, including Whole-Farm Revenue Protection that covers all commodities on the farm under one insurance policy, removal of a 5 percent surcharge on policy premiums for organic growers, and a contract-pricing option that replaces averaged crop prices with contracted prices so growers can be insured for the actual value of their production. The contract-pricing option may prove to be especially effective for operations when combined with some of the manufacturer and retailer programs for recruiting transitional growers.

One specific area of risk for organic and transitional growers which has not been solved, despite much discussion, is contamination from GMO crops and their pollen. Unintended presence of GMO traits, even at very low levels, can cause rejection from organic buyers. In particular, transitioning to organic corn production in most of the country has this additional challenge. Risk management—including crop insurance—for accidental GMO presence in organic crops has been an explicit topic of interest for Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. It's a thorny problem, but an ongoing advisory committee of organic and biotech groups continues to try and come up with solutions under the theme of coexistence.

Another area of improvement at USDA is in administration of conservation programs. Organic operations have historically had difficulty being recognized and rewarded for their conservation benefits by USDA. In the last several years, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has made important strides in educating their own workforce about organic. In turn, this has made it easier for local offices to understand the needs of both organic and transitional growers. Thanks to a collaboration with Oregon Tilth and the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program's (EQIP) Organic Initiative, a national staff position has been created to expand the training materials NRCS staff and organic professionals use to support conservation work on organic farms. EQIP offers financial and technical assistance for organic and transitioning producers on a wide variety of topics, from establishing buffer zones to improving soil quality and organic matter while minimizing erosion. NRCS also worked with partner organizations to compile a comprehensive technical manual about organic agriculture to help further integrate organic and transitional systems into USDA conservation programs.

The biggest recent effort at USDA to support organic is in the area of research. Here too there are new outcomes specifically related to the science of organic transition.

## Knowledge for Transition

Given the improvements in progress on economic and risk-management incentives for making the transition to organic, the next big obstacle is simply knowledge about how to do it. The biophysical changes that need to be made on a conventional farm reliant on synthetic fertilizers and pest controls remain a fundamental challenge. "Quitting chemicals" may sound simple,

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but everything from seed varieties to machinery has to be relearned. One reason that organic acreage has only grown slowly is the reality that some farms do not succeed in making the transition to ecological agronomy and aren't able to make it as profitable organic operations. Even if the three-year period is fulfilled on a legal level, specific pest problems or soil health issues can limit productivity, and growers can be discouraged from sticking with it over the long term.

The historical deficit of basic and applied scientific research on organic has left growers mostly dependent on each other and a small group of rebel organizations like the Rodale Institute and the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF). The organic farming community is also using online tools to connect and collaborate, such as the Transition to Organic Network (TON)—launched by Oregon Tilth—that provides a forum for transitioning business owners to discuss questions, resources, and educational opportunities related to transition.

The CCOF Foundation has also tapped its network of seasoned organic farmers to hold a series of educational events in person and via webinar for individuals interested in organic transition. These Go Organic! programs prepare participants to take the next steps toward transitioning their businesses and provide resources and a community to support their success.

The university-level agricultural research community is also reaching a new threshold of capacity to support organic transition. Beginning in the early 2000s, thanks to OFRF and others, federal funding for organic farming research was established by Congress. Starting from an almost blank slate, there has been a slowly accumulating body of scientific work supported with public funds and in the public domain, and annual funding for organic research and education at USDA now is in the neighborhood of \$40 million.

Public agricultural research is notoriously slow to make its way into practical application on the ground—and this is no less

true for organics—but we are now beginning to see the output from this pipeline, including a large new wave of good science coming online to support organic transition. For example, the USDA Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), the flagship source of public funding for organic research, supported innovative work at the University of Minnesota where Robert King, Timothy Delbridge, and others examined the economics of transitional grain rotations to find the most profitable paths to successful conversion. In addition to the scholarly papers, this group has produced a comprehensive “Business Planner” for transition, published by USDA’s SARE program.

Because of sustained federal funding, there is now a growing cadre of experienced scientists and graduate students specializing in organic production and economics. There is also a dedicated electronic extension service for organic agriculture: the eOrganic “community of practice” is a robust professional network and resource library providing cutting-edge knowledge to support organic and transitional producers.

## Transitional Convergence

Significant growth of successful organic transitions will have to take an “all of the above” approach. For the first time, all these pieces are being deliberately put in place and applied with intention. Experts observing this process think this convergence of tools and initiatives could double the size of U.S. organic production in the next 10 years. If we get anywhere near that kind of success, it could dramatically change the overall impact of the organic sector. We could start to think about the thresholds of critical mass for affecting communities and landscapes in ways we have only imagined. Yes, it will be great for business, but it will also be about all the benefits that organic food and farming bring for workers, for the environment, and for consumers’ health.

Bring on the Age of Organic Transition!



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

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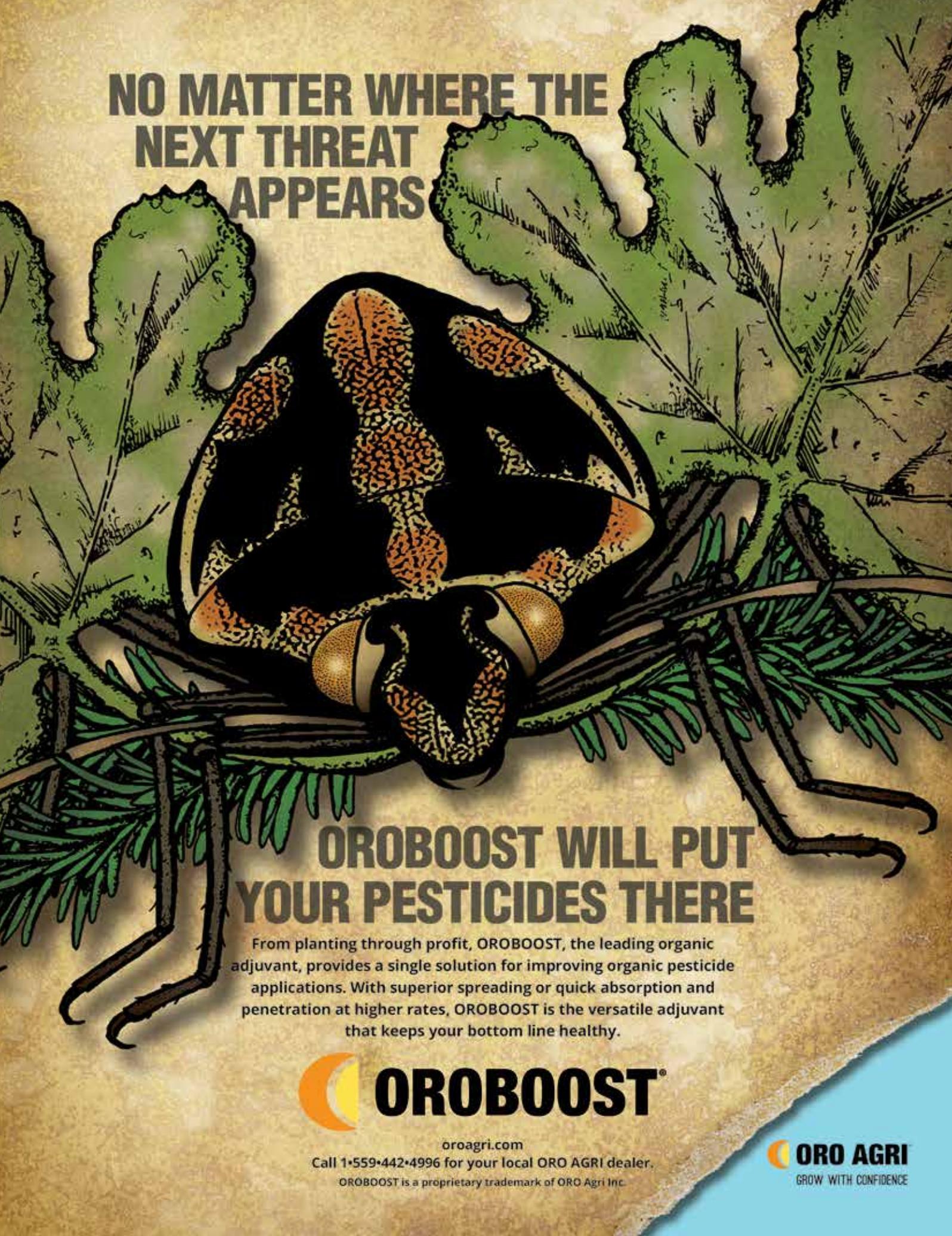


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## **NOP Releases New Animal Welfare Standards**

The National Organic Program (NOP) announced on April 7, 2016, that it will propose amending the organic livestock and poultry production requirements. The proposed regulation, which is based on recommendations from the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), is an effort to achieve consistency in organic livestock practices. It covers a range of topics, including health care practices and living conditions for organic animals. Highlights of the proposed rule include the following:

- » It sets forth separate living condition standards for mammals (e.g., cattle, sheep, and pigs) and poultry.
- » It specifies which physical alterations are allowed and prohibited in organic livestock and poultry production.
- » It establishes minimum indoor and outdoor space requirements for poultry.
- » It specifies required practices when transporting organic livestock for sale or slaughter, and clarifies organic slaughter practices.
- » It adds multiple new definitions, including “stocking density,” “soil,” and “outdoors.”

CCOF will submit comments to the NOP with recommendations for final language and standards. For the full text of the proposed rule, visit [www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic-livestock-and-poultry-practices](http://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic-livestock-and-poultry-practices).

WRITTEN BY Kelly Damewood

## **Annual Conference Highlights**

On February 29, over 170 organic farmers, producers, policy makers, researchers, and business leaders came together in Sacramento to discuss the future of organic at CCOF’s 2016 Annual Meeting & Conference. At the Annual Meeting, keynote speaker Nikiko Masumoto set the tone for the day with an inspiring talk about being a second generation farmer. The *Blueprint for an Organic World* conference followed with discussions about the future of organic, including the California Organic Food and Farming Act, soil health and climate change, organic research needs, and the importance of investing in organic transition to ensure we can meet rising demand.

California Governor Jerry Brown and California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross joined the celebration at the evening reception honoring the recipients of the CCOF Foundation’s Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund. Learn more about the fund at [www.ccof.org/fofgf](http://www.ccof.org/fofgf).

Let’s build on the momentum from this event—join us in creating a blueprint for an organic world! Download the session presentations at [www.ccof.org/2016-event/presentations](http://www.ccof.org/2016-event/presentations).

## **Balancing Supply and Demand: The Case for Organic Transition**

A highlight of the 2016 CCOF Annual Conference was the “Balancing Supply and Demand: The Case for Organic Transition”

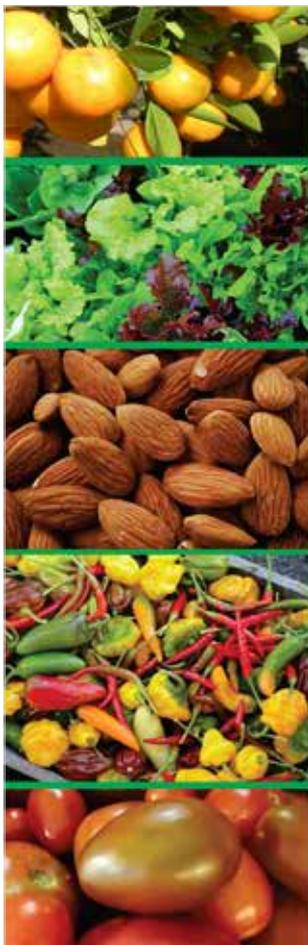


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## The California Organic Food and Farming Act (AB 1826) is moving quickly—track the bill's progress and voice your support at [www.ccof.org/COFFA!](http://www.ccof.org/COFFA!)

panel. The panelists included Dennis Hoover, formerly of Costco Wholesale; Peter Golbitz of Agromeris (a consulting firm for grain and soy production); Wendy Larson of Big Tree Organic (an almond cooperative); Jake Lewin of CCOF Certification Services; and Laura Batcha of the Organic Trade Association (OTA). The panelists discussed shortages in organic crops and livestock as well as how each level of the supply chain can better support transitioning producers.

The panelists made the case for organic transition clear—organic food sales continue to rise as consumers look for the USDA organic label when shopping for food produced without the use of GMOs, antibiotics, and toxic inputs. For example, Costco only started carrying organic products like milk and chicken a few years ago. Today, 6 percent of the \$12 billion per week of Costco's Northern California produce sales is organic. Similarly, handlers who have worked with organic crops for many years see tremendous opportunity for more producers to supply the flourishing organic marketplace.

Despite retailer and handler efforts to increase their organic sales and source more organic product, domestic production is not growing at the levels necessary to fulfill demand. According to the panelists, \$400 million worth of organic product (approximately 500,000 acres of corn and soy) was imported in 2015. The high volume of imported organic product is a missed opportunity for domestic producers, especially for crops in high demand like almonds, grains, and soy.

The panelists not only made the case for transition, but they also identified the three year transition period as the most significant challenge to increasing organic production. The organic regulations state that any field or farm parcel from which harvested crops are intended to be sold as organic must have had no prohibited substances applied to it for a period of three years immediately preceding the harvest of the crop. Although no significant evidence exists that three years is necessary, stakeholders agreed to a three-year period when they worked to pass the federal law that now regulates organic production and marketing claims. Therefore, the three-year transition period is a requirement by law that all producers must comply with to achieve organic certification.

During the three-year transition, producers often do not receive organic prices. Transitioning producers do not yet have a widely-accepted label or certification to communicate with buyers or consumers that they are using organic practices during the three-year period, because organic standards do not require certification while land is transitioning. Additionally, these transitional operations incur costs as they implement new production practices and enter a new market. For these reasons, buyers are looking for tools to better support transitioning

producers during their three-year transition period, such as a certified transitional label.

One tool that could better support transitioning producers is incentives from buyers and handlers. For example, some buyers use contracts where the farmer stays with a processor through transition and for at least one year of certified organic production. The farmers receive a mid-priced premium (somewhere between conventional prices and organic prices), and the processor potentially covers this premium but has the guarantee of organic product at the end of transition. Producers emphasize that transition does not depend on market alone; it also depends on support from buyers and availability of industry information. Thus, mutually beneficial contracts are one tool buyers can use to help transitioning producers overcome financial and technical challenges.

Another intriguing suggestion was to alter the “made with organic” category to allow a certain percentage of transitional product. Products may be labeled as “Made with organic [insert certain category of ingredient]” if the product contains at least 70 percent certified organic ingredients. The product may contain 30 percent non-organic ingredients, but all ingredients must be produced without GMOs or other prohibited substances, such as most synthetic pesticides. The “made with” must be followed by a specific category of ingredient such as “made with organic grains,” and 100 percent of that ingredient must be certified organic. Currently, if a product is labeled as “made with organic grains,” then it must contain *only* certified organic grains. The suggestion posed by the panel was that a small percentage of the grains in this example could be transitional grains.

Allowing a small percentage of transitional product in certified organic goods could be a new means to encouraging the growth of organic acreage. It would give producers a clear market for crops grown on transitioning land and promote sustained growth of organic acreage. If certifiers can verify that crops grown on transitioning land have met all organic requirements, then these ingredients would clearly meet consumer expectations. Therefore, allowing some transitional product in certified organic products would not likely pose risk to the integrity and strength of the organic standards; rather, it would help create a market for producers who have been verified to be in full compliance with organic standards except for finishing their three-year transition period.

The panelists made a clear case for organic transition and identified several promising tools to better support transitioning producers. CCOF will continue to work closely with its members, buyers, OTA, the NOP, and other stakeholders to further flesh out these ideas and work to achieve our organizational vision of a world where organic *is* the norm.



# GROUNDBREAKING CHECK-OFF

*The organic sector is thriving. We need more farmers, research, and consumer education to keep it that way. GRO Organic check-off will help organic continue to grow.*

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*Hire organic technical specialists in every state to work with transitioning and existing organic farmers.*



*Leverage federal funding opportunities and provide matching funds for organic research priorities.*



*Create grants, scholarships, and apprenticeships to help young farmers develop their career in organic.*



*Launch a national public education campaign about the benefits behind the "USDA organic" seal.*

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Program dollars would be used to promote organic without disparaging other sectors of food and agriculture.

## GET THE FACTS

- ✔ Organic producers and handlers already contributing to a check-off would get to choose which program to invest in.
- ✔ Those that already pay into state order funds for research or promotion could receive a credit up to 25% of their federal organic check-off investment.
- ✔ Organic farmers would hold at least half of the voting seats on the check-off board and be directly elected by producers in their region.
- ✔ If organic stakeholders are not satisfied they can vote to end the check-off.

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### BY THE NUMBERS

**5,000+**  
organic stakeholders have weighed in on establishing the check-off

**\$30m**  
collected year after year for research, technical assistance, promotion and education

**\$250,000**  
farmers and handlers could voluntarily contribute if their revenue is under this amount

**75%**  
potential earmark for research activities and technical assistance spending

## *OTA Proposes Transitional Certification to Encourage More Organic Farmers*

A significant limit to the continued growth and sustainability of the U.S. organic industry is the gap between domestic supply of organic ingredients and raw products and consumer demand. Overcoming barriers to the growth in domestic organic acreage will require a multifaceted and regionally-oriented approach. Formally recognizing farms in transition to organic production through a federally-administered process verification could be a piece to this puzzle.

In recent work, the Organic Trade Association's (OTA's) Transitional Task Force looked at the potential benefits of transitional certification primarily from a producer-centric vantage point. The task force identified the need for transitional producers to have better access to support programs, and concluded that institutionalizing transitional certification could provide more streamlined access to USDA support programs like conservation incentives, appropriate crop insurance, and farm loan programs. From a buyer's perspective, transitional certification is a partial answer to supply chain management as it provides transparency in future growth of organic acreage that could facilitate appropriate business planning for buyers. Additionally, transitional certification creates the prospect of transitional markets where developing a market premium for transitional crops can incentivize producers to move towards organic, and can reduce the financial burden that a three-year transition period poses.

The success of a harmonized transitional certification program will require federal oversight of accredited certifying agencies (ACAs) offering such a program to their clients. Transitional certification of farms and products under OTA's transitional standards will use the oversight mechanisms provided by USDA's Quality Systems Assessment (QSA) Program to harmonize the verification process for transitional operations and provide added assurance that certified transitional operations are truly on their way to organic production. QSA allows for referencing existing federal standards—in this case, the USDA organic regulations—and audits for accredited third-party certifiers much like the National Organic Program does for ACAs currently. The annual inspection requirement,

federal oversight, and reference to the existing USDA organic regulations ensure that producers enrolled in this transitional certification program will set themselves up for a seamless transition into certified organic production.

Currently, anyone in the process of transitioning their operation to organic can label their product as "transitional" without any mandatory oversight by a third party. There is currently no assurance that a crop labeled as "transitional" in the marketplace is coming from a producer who is actually planning to attain organic status, or that the crop has been grown on land free of prohibited substances for a minimum of one year. Formalizing transitional certification and, by extension, transitional labeling with USDA will add consistency to any transitional claims in the market, and assurance that the farms from which the products were sourced are on their way to organic certification.

Transitional certification, as envisioned by OTA's plan, must act as a springboard to long-term, sustainable organic production, and not create an entirely new, distinct, and independent label and market. Since transition, by definition, is not a static state but rather a move towards organic, additional components must be built into any formalized transitional program. The framework for OTA's transitional certification standards includes mechanisms to prevent "arrested transition" by requiring a minimum of 12 months free of prohibited materials prior to eligibility for transitional status, limiting the number of times an operation may enter and exit the transitional program, strict guidelines on labeling and limitations on the use of transitional logos or seals, and the issuance of transitional certificates that expire once land has been free of prohibited substance for 36 months and is eligible for organic status. Additionally, producers and handlers certified under this program will have the ability to distinguish their products from other "transitional" products by utilizing the phrase, "USDA Certified Transitional." We expect this distinction to be attractive to operations seeking a market premium for transitional products.

OTA has submitted the standards and certification requirements for a USDA Transitional Certification Program and anticipates ACAs will be able to apply for accreditation under USDA oversight in the early summer 2016. Once ACAs have obtained this accreditation, they will be able to roll currently certified transitional operations into this new program and begin certification of new transitional operations to the standards.

Transitional certification will not act as a silver bullet in solving the organic industry's supply shortage, but we do see it as a fundamental element of the comprehensive, collaborative plan to make organic production an attractive and attainable option for U.S. farmers.

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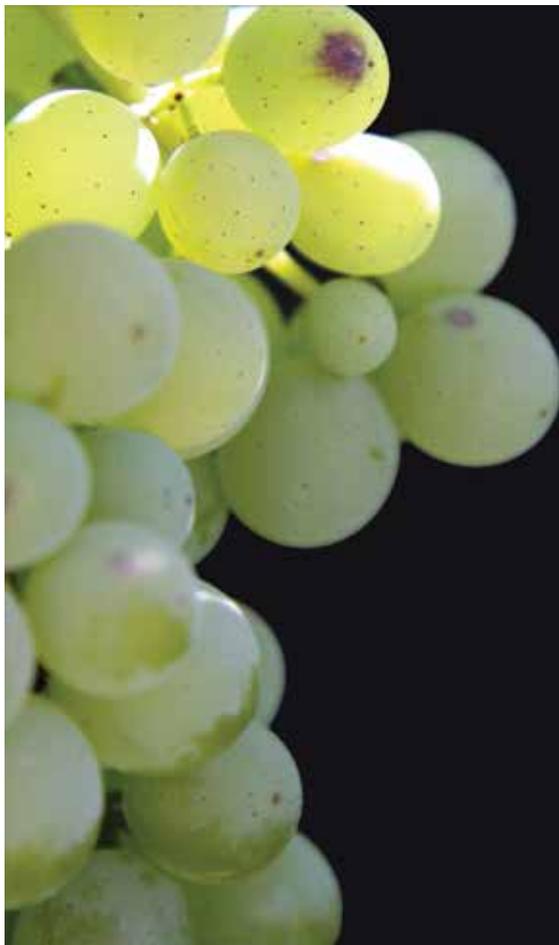
\*Systems using CO<sub>2</sub> and ammonia are exempt from this regulation.  
[www.arb.ca.gov/cc/rmp/rmprefrigerants.htm](http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/rmp/rmprefrigerants.htm)

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# Action Item Revolution: Compliance Report and Action Item Tracker

CCOF is continually updating and refining our systems and tools to make managing organic certification as simple as possible. After revolutionizing the approach to materials and building the industry-leading online certification management tool MyCCOF, we've focused on ways to improve how we create, communicate, and process compliance requirements. This will make certification simpler and inspections more efficient.

Starting in late July 2016, instead of laboriously sifting through bulky letters, each requirement will be listed by CCOF as a separate item you can view online. You will be able to find every request or reminder easily on the new CCOF Compliance Report, or simply respond online with Action Item Tracker (beta). You won't need to find old letters or guess if there's something outstanding because you will be able to generate your Compliance Report at any time and it will include all your outstanding action items!

## Compliance Report

In conjunction with Action Item Tracker (beta), you will begin receiving Compliance Reports to help you stay organized and keep your operation in compliance. This custom report will give you an immediate understanding of your operation's current state of compliance, from recently-closed action items to pending items that need to be addressed. Use your Compliance Report to:

- » reduce clutter! No more saving and searching through letters to find your compliance items. The report will be a reflection of real-time information available at any time through MyCCOF.
- » quickly assess issues where you need to take immediate action. Items will be sorted by importance, with the most important at the top of the report. You will be able to use Action Item Tracker (beta) to answer them directly!
- » reduce confusion around your options for compliance. All requirements will be clearly outlined per item.

Take a tour of the new Compliance Report on page 39!

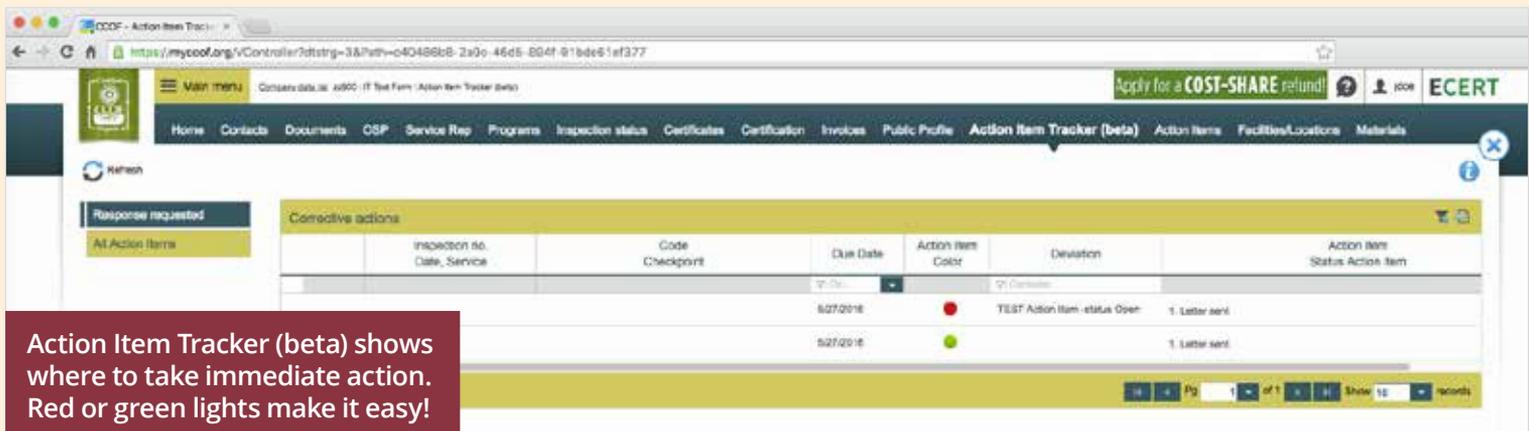
## Action Item Tracker (beta)

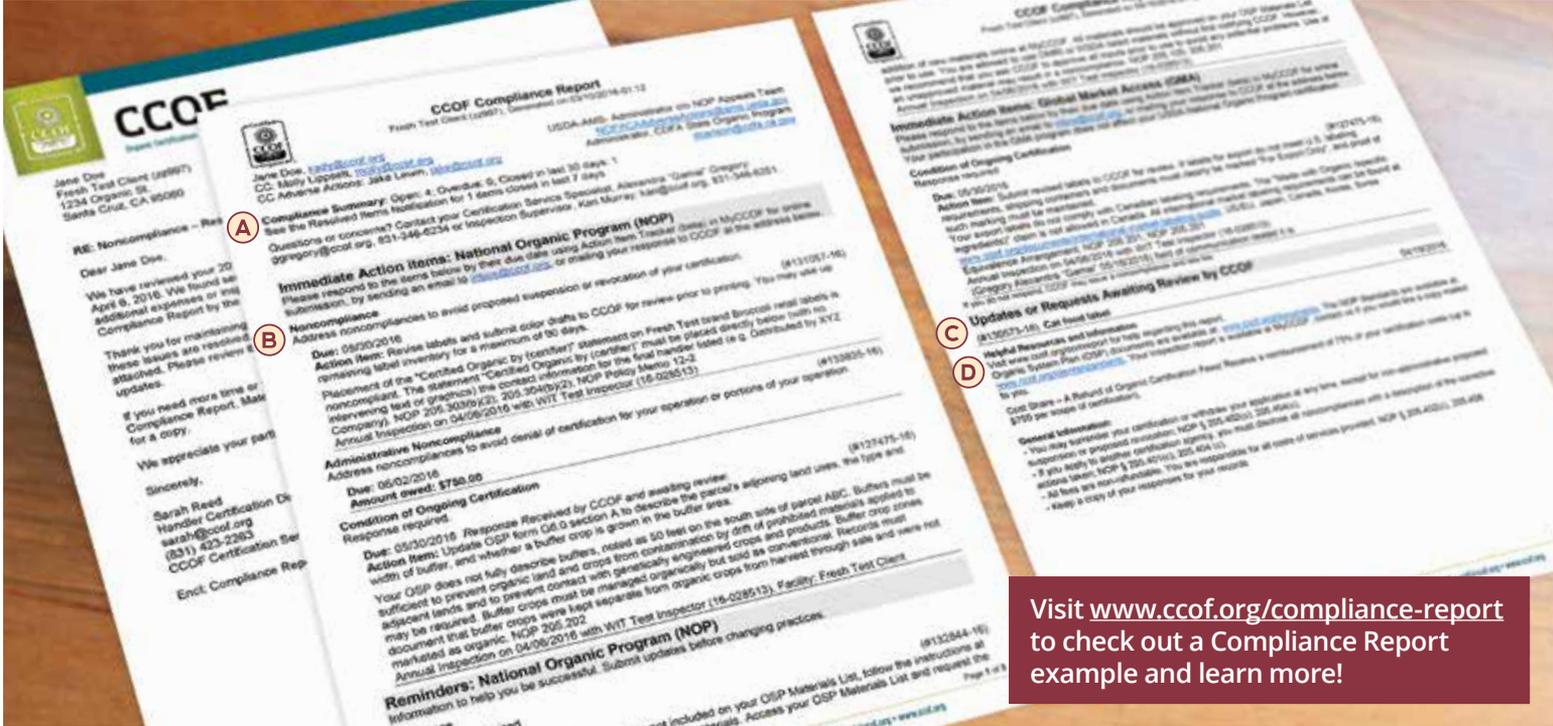
We are pleased to announce the latest improvement to MyCCOF: Action Item Tracker (beta), the innovative companion tool to the new Compliance Report. Starting in late July, you will be able to address compliance requests quickly and easily online! No need to write a letter or reference specific items. Instead, when you use Action Item Tracker (beta), you will be able to answer each item clearly and easily without any additional work. With Action Item Tracker (beta), you will be able to:

- » reply to action items directly, including attaching relevant documents, and
- » view a history of your operation's action items—no need to store old letters anymore!

Soon, inspectors will be able to search your action item history, saving you inspection time and making compliance matters more transparent and easier to follow from start to finish.

Visit MyCCOF in late July to check out Action Item Tracker (beta) and [www.ccof.org/MyCCOF](http://www.ccof.org/MyCCOF) for instructions.





Visit [www.ccof.org/compliance-report](http://www.ccof.org/compliance-report) to check out a Compliance Report example and learn more!

**A Compliance Summary:** Open: 4; Overdue: 0; Closed in last 30 days: 1  
See the Resolved Items Notification for 1 items closed in last 7 days

**Compliance Summary:** The top of every Compliance Report includes an overview of open, overdue, and closed items for your operation. Easily see everything that is outstanding.

**Resolved Items Notification:** If any major issues were closed in the last seven days you'll be notified here, and the item details will show up on the last page of the report, making it easier for you to see you've closed all outstanding major issues.

**B Noncompliance**  
Address noncompliances to avoid proposed suspension or revocation of your certification.

**Due:** 05/30/2016 (#131057-16)  
**Action item:** Revise labels and submit color drafts to CCOF for review prior to printing. You may use up remaining label inventory for a maximum of 90 days.

Placement of the "Certified Organic by (certifier)" statement on Fresh Test brand Broccoli retail labels is noncompliant. The statement "Certified Organic by (certifier)" must be placed directly below (with no intervening text or graphics) the contact information for the final handler listed (e.g. Distributed by XYZ Company). NOP 205.303(b)(2); 205.304(b)(2); NOP Policy Memo 12-2  
Annual Inspection on 04/06/2016 with WIT Test Inspector (16-028513)

**Action Item:** This is one action item, clearly explaining any actions you need to take, and the details surrounding the item. By separating the action items out, you can scan the content and find the serious items that require immediate attention.

**C Updates or Requests Awaiting Review by CCOF**  
(#130573-16) Cat food label 04/19/2016

**Updates/Requests Awaiting Review by CCOF:** Keep track of items you've submitted to CCOF for review. No more confusion about whether we've received the item.

**D Helpful Resources and Information**  
Visit [www.ccof.org/comreport](http://www.ccof.org/comreport) for help regarding this report.  
Organic System Plan (OSP) documents are available at: [www.ccof.org/documents](http://www.ccof.org/documents). The NOP Standards are available at: [www.ccof.org/clients/standards](http://www.ccof.org/clients/standards). Your inspection report is available at MyCCOF, contact us if you would like a copy mailed to you.

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**Helpful Resources and Information:** This section makes communicating CCOF member benefits and other important organic news easier than ever.



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**Almond Lane Inc.**  
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**Alpine Fresh, Inc. DBA BCRC Cooling and Distribution**  
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**Better Buzz Coffee Company**  
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