

CERTIFIED

# Organic

## Rooting for Organic

8 Ways to Take it to the Next Level




**2020 CCOF Annual Meeting and Advocacy Day  
Risk Management Options for Livestock Operations  
CCOF Highlights Organic Agriculture as Climate Solution**

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Winter 2020

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# CERTIFIED Organic



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## Rooting for Organic: 8 Ways to Take it to the Next Level

*For many of us, our participation in the organic movement isn't just our job—it's our passion.*

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## A Partner in Your Success

As I write these first words, I am wrapping up our 2019 projects and putting the finishing touches on our ambitious plans for the year ahead. This issue's feature, "Rooting for Organic: 8 Ways to Take it to the Next Level," inspires me to share how CCOF is working to take organic to the next level in 2020.

The organic sector faces challenges and uncertainties with extreme weather conditions, new regulations, evolving competition, and changing markets. Small-scale farmers and businesses are especially challenged to keep up with the costs of doing business while longtime organic producers struggle to transition their businesses to the next generation.

Amidst these challenges, CCOF wants to be a partner in our members' successes. In 2020, we will improve our billing and renewals process; ensure our cost of services is fair and competitive; and invest in updates to our database and MyCCOF. We will also expand our food safety services and offer Organic Trust Plus Grass Fed certification. **As always, if you are a certified producer struggling to maintain your cost of certification, please reach out to [accounting@ccof.org](mailto:accounting@ccof.org).** We will help you set up a payment plan and share resources about our hardship assistance fund.

CCOF will also break down barriers and increase public investment in organic. Our forthcoming *Roadmap to an Organic California: Policy Report* is a comprehensive plan to double the amount of land farmed organically in California by 2030 and lay the groundwork for national change. Top priorities in 2020 include: advocating for organic school lunches; state

investment in assisting farmers transitioning to organic; and streamlining state organic regulations for processors.

Finally, our Foundation will fund organic education, sponsor organic National FFA Organization projects, and train organic producers. We will also launch a consumer education campaign to demonstrate how organic promotes health equity. Stay tuned for how you can join in on the campaign!

Sound like a big year? Well, we are doing our best to keep up with you. Our mission-driven energy is fueled every day by our CCOF family of members, donors, and partners who step up and do their own part to take organic to the next level.



*Kelly Damewood*

**Kelly Damewood**  
CCOF CEO

## Issue Contributors

### Rooting for Organic: 8 Ways to Take it to the Next Level, Page 18



**Sara Weinreb** is a writer, sustainability consultant, and design thinking facilitator on a mission to support people and businesses in being kinder and more connected to each other, the planet, and themselves. Weinreb hosts the Medium Well podcast, curates a weekly email, *Sara ... lately*, and is training to be an herbalist. Previously, Weinreb has consulted with EILEEN FISHER on their woman-owned business grant program and served as vice president of programs and strategy at PresentTense, a social entrepreneurship accelerator where she worked with over 300 entrepreneurs on building their mission-driven businesses, including developing design thinking curricula. Her expertise is in the intersection of business and social and environmental impact. Weinreb's writing has been featured in *Forbes*, *mindbodygreen*, *USA Today*, *Cherry Bombe*, *The Fullest*, and *AlleyWatch*, among others. When she's not writing and shopping in the bulk section of health food stores, Weinreb can often be found on the yoga mat, making herbal elixirs, singing karaoke, and attempting to keep her growing collection of plants alive.

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## 2020 CCOF Annual Meeting and Advocacy Day: Rooting for Organic

Walk the halls of the Golden State Capitol with CCOF as we sow the seeds for a nationwide movement. At our **Rooting for Organic** advocacy day on February 19, 2020 in Sacramento, California, stakeholders from across the organic sector will advocate for policies that support the growth of organic agriculture and increase access to organic foods. Together, we will showcase a model for advancing organic with policies that combat climate change; stimulate local economies; and enhance the health of farmers, farmworkers, and diverse consumers around the world.

Your voice and expertise can drive change when you are a part of these conversations with our elected officials. You won't want to miss this chance to connect with policymakers, farmers, and organic advocates, and root for the many ways organic makes our world a healthier place.

The night before the advocacy day, you have the chance to learn more about our plan to grow organic farmland by over one million acres in the next decade when we reveal the roadmap to get there at a release party on February 18 in Sacramento, California, hosted by the CCOF Foundation. We've synthesized research on the benefits of organic agriculture, then worked with organic experts and stakeholders to develop a set of policies for growing organic

and making our world a better place, outlined in *Roadmap to an Organic California: Policy Report*.

We'll celebrate with a live band, photo booth, signature cocktails, an organic menu, and clinking glasses with organic friends. Be a part of the exciting beginning of the new landscape of organic and leave energized and inspired for the following day at the Capitol.

The CCOF Annual Meeting and event is a yearly tradition that convenes the CCOF membership and supporters to celebrate successes and plan for the future. Root with us for the future of organic! Register today to lend organic your voice on February 19.

Learn more about the event and reception and register at [www.ccof.org/2020-event](http://www.ccof.org/2020-event).

### Tuesday, February 18 – CCOF Foundation Reception

**5:00-7:00 p.m.** – Release Party for the *Roadmap to an Organic California: Policy Report*

- Hosted by the CCOF Foundation

### Wednesday, February 19 – CCOF Annual Meeting & Advocacy Day

**7:30 a.m.** – Registration and breakfast

**8:30-10:00 a.m.** – CCOF Annual Meeting

- Keynote address from Bob Quinn, organic farmer and leader in promoting organic

**10:00-10:25 a.m.** – Prepare to advocate for organic!

**10:25 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.** – Advocacy day meetings at the Capitol

**12:00-1:00 p.m.** – Lunch

**3:45 p.m.** – Closing gathering



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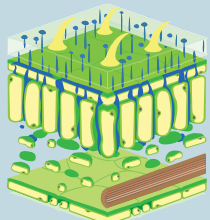
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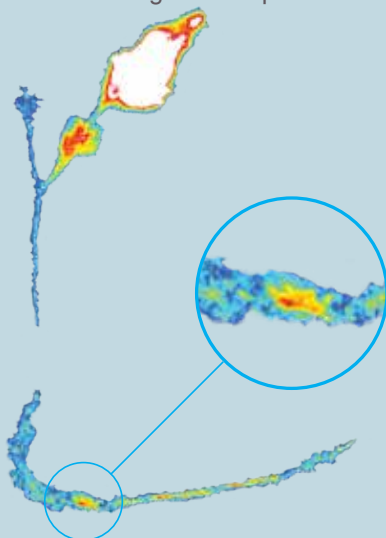
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## Tablas Creek Vineyard's Organic Commitment

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Based in Paso Robles, California, Tablas Creek Vineyard is a pioneer of California's Rhône movement with an emphasis on organic and biodynamic farming practices. As a testament to these practices, Tablas Creek's estate vineyard has 35 dry-farmed acres and 65 trellised acres that are minimally irrigated depending on the previous year's rainfall. There is a roving herd of 250 sheep, plus two Spanish mastiff guard dogs, alpacas, and a guard donkey. According to viticulturalist Jordan Lonborg, the goal of these practices is to "maximize the expression of place from our vineyard, and to produce grapes full of intensity and character." With historical roots in France and vines planted in California, Tablas Creek Vineyard follows the centuries-old Southern Rhône winemaking techniques of native yeast fermentation. The use of large, neutral French oak foudres for aging allows their wines to authentically reflect the grapes and their vintage and where they were grown.

Every bottle of estate-grown Tablas Creek wine starts in their vineyards, which are farmed with a blend of organic and biodynamic practices. Cover crops minimize erosion, host beneficial insects, and return nitrogen to the soil. Their extensive composting program and their herd's mixed, mob-style grazing during the dormant season both keep soil fertility high. Compost tea promotes microbial growth in the soil profile and also helps control mildew on the vines, reducing the need for sulfur.

Integrated pest management strategies involve encouraging native vegetation to thrive, planting insect-friendly flowering plants to support a healthy mix of beneficial insects, using 37 dispersed owl boxes to control rodent pests, and maintaining bee hives for pollination services. These practices pay homage to Tablas Creek's friends and business partners at Château de Beaucastel in the Southern Rhône Valley of France. Tablas Creek follows French winemaking traditions, and says they "[b]elieve strongly in wines of *terroir*, the French term best translated as 'somewhereness,' and choose [their] vineyard and winemaking practices to maximize [their] chances of expressing [their] *terroir* in [their] wines."

Tablas Creek Vineyard came from a fascinating history of the New World recognizing the Old World for its commitment to organic farming practices and *terroir*. The vineyard is a realization of two of the leading families in the international wine world: the Perrin family of Château de Beaucastel and the Haas family of Vineyard Brands. Jacques Perrin, who oversaw

Château de Beaucastel from the 1950s through the 1970s, has been recognized for being a pioneer in organic farming and leading the revitalization of traditional grape varieties like Mourvèdre and Grenache. Perrin's work was carried on by his sons, Jean-Pierre and François, who became fast friends with Robert Haas. Haas and the Perrins were convinced that the Rhône grape varieties, which were well-suited to the sunny south of France, would thrive in California's Mediterranean climate. In 1989, the families purchased a 120-acre parcel in Paso Robles and named it Tablas Creek Vineyard after the small creek running through the property.

The property mirrors Château de Beaucastel in many regards, especially in the remarkably Rhône-like Paso Robles climate. The shallow, rocky limestone soils and ample rainfall in the winter give grapes a crisp acidity. The sunny summer days combined with the cooler temperatures from the Pacific Ocean at night allow the grapes to mature fully.

Tablas Creek continues to promote Rhône grape varieties by providing high-quality grapes for their own wines and other viticulturists around the United States. They started with importing new cuttings of Mourvèdre, Grenache, Syrah, Counoise, Roussanne, Marsanne, Viognier, Grenache Blanc, and Picpoul Blanc grapes from the Château de Beaucastel. In 1992, Tablas Creek planted rootstock fields and constructed greenhouse facilities to propagate and graft the cuttings. Eventually, these cuttings produced the grapevines used to plant out the estate vineyard. About a decade later, more cuttings were imported from France, including Bourboulenc, Cinsaut, Clairette Blanche, Muscardin, Picardan, Terret Noir, and Vaccarese grapes. The first of these cuttings were released in 2010 and the full Southern Rhône collection has been released this year. This makes Paso Robles the spiritual home of the American Rhône Movement, with Tablas Creek Vineyard leading the way.

The Tablas Creek commitment to organic and biodynamic farming practices and paying respect to France's Old World winemaking tradition translates to high standards in the vineyard and winery. This is evident in their successful vineyard operation, which values balance and diversity to ensure the Southern Rhône style of blending. Their grapes produce wines of great complexity, freshness, and minerality. While Tablas Creek Vineyard continues to delve deeper in the traditional farming world, it is clear that the whole team is dedicated to growing premium organic and biodynamic wine grapes and crafting world class wines for many generations to come.

For more information about Tablas Creek Vineyard, visit [www.tablascreek.com](http://www.tablascreek.com).



We proudly support the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund at the CCOF Foundation, educating the next generation of organic farmers and enthusiasts.



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We proudly support the CCOF Foundation in advancing organic agriculture for a healthy world.

We proudly support the CCOF Foundation in advancing organic agriculture for a healthy world.

Community Printers

# *Risk Management Options for Organic Livestock Operations in California*

We are always looking for ways to support organic livestock producers, especially in tough years like this one. Crop insurance is one of many tools that can help manage the risks of your organic farming or ranching business, but it can be tricky to know where to start. We are working with the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) to make sure you know your options for insurance that covers organic livestock operations.

The CCOF Foundation prepared the following information on risk management options for organic livestock and forage producers in California. What follows is a general overview of resources from the USDA RMA and Farm Services Agency (FSA) available to organic livestock operations in California. You can get more details about these options—including price quotes, application requirements, and possible premium subsidies—from your local crop insurance agent (for RMA products) or your county FSA office (for FSA programs).

We hope this information will help livestock operations in California get started in assessing whether any of these risk management options are a good fit for their operation.

## **USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA): Risk Management Options for Organic Livestock and Forage Production in California**

### **Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP)**

**Target Audience:** Producers of crops, livestock, and animal products.

**Organic Commodities Covered:** Various, including organic livestock, animal products, and crops. Check with your crop insurance agent to find out what animals, animal products, and crops/forages are considered WFRP commodities in your county.

**Geographic Availability:** All counties nationwide.

**RMA Program Summary:** Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) provides a risk management safety net for all commodities on the farm under one insurance policy and is available in all counties nationwide. This insurance plan is tailored for any farm with up to \$8.5 million in insured revenue, including farms with specialty or organic commodities (both crops and livestock), or those marketing to local, regional, farm-identity-preserved, specialty, or direct markets.<sup>1</sup>

WFRP offers premium subsidies to diversified farms that produce two or more commodities.

**What types of loss does WFRP cover?** During the insurance year, WFRP covers loss due to unavoidable natural causes, including adverse weather conditions and natural disasters. Damage due to insects, wildlife, weeds, and disease may also be covered if sufficient and proper control measures were taken but failed to protect the crop/livestock.

WFRP insures all farm revenue under one policy. Individual crop/commodity losses are not considered. It is the overall farm revenue that determines the loss. Check with your crop insurance agent for complete details.

**Limitations for Livestock Operations:** For 2020 policies and beyond, WFRP limits the coverage of animals and animal products to \$2 million in expected revenue.

**Other Livestock Considerations:** WFRP does not cover animals raised for sport, show, or pets.

There are some special considerations for livestock operations applying to WFRP. Check in with your insurance agent for more details.

**How much does WFRP cost?** Check in with your crop insurance agent to get a quote for your operation.

**How can I learn more about WFRP and apply?** For the most up-to-date information on WFRP, including eligibility requirements, program limitations, and application deadlines, contact your nearest crop insurance agent. You can find a listing of crop insurance agents at [www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.html](http://www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.html).

Find out more on the RMA WFRP webpage: <https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/Policy-and-Procedure/Insurance-Plans/Whole-Farm-Revenue-Protection>.



This material is funded in partnership by USDA, Risk Management Agency, under award number RMRM18RMEPP52C004 and produced in collaboration with California FarmLink.

## **RMA Crop Insurance for Organic Alfalfa in California: Forage Seeding Crop Insurance (Alfalfa)**

**Target Audience:** Alfalfa growers.

**Organic Commodities Covered:** Organic alfalfa and alfalfa transitioning to organic.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.rma.usda.gov/Policy-and-Procedure/Insurance-Plans/Whole-Farm-Revenue-Protection>

# The CCOF Foundation's ..... **ORGANIC TRAINING INSTITUTE** .....



Through hands-on trainings, workshops, and seminars, the Organic Training Institute provides resources to aspiring and current organic professionals about the latest organic research and best production and marketing practices.

Our educational offerings for 2020 include a diverse lineup of topics, including:

- Organic seedling production
- On-farm food safety
- Soil health and on-farm natural resources conservation
- Marketing strategies for farms that sell at farmers' markets
- Trainings for farmers' market managers on organic regulations

**Learn more about upcoming Organic Training Institute events at [www.ccof.org/events](http://www.ccof.org/events) »**

You can check out recordings of previous webinars in the CCOF Foundation webinar library.

Popular recordings include:

- How to Get Ready for a FSMA Produce Safety Rule Inspection in California
- Organic 101 for Small and Midsized Farms Webinar
- FSMA Basics for Small and Medium-Sized Produce Farms Webinar

**View recordings of past webinars at [www.ccof.org/oti-recordings](http://www.ccof.org/oti-recordings) »**

The Organic Training Institute's 2020 events are supported in part by funding from private donors, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the following entities within the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Agricultural Marketing Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and the Risk Management Agency.

**Geographic Availability:** Select counties in California. Check with a crop insurance agent for information on your county.

**RMA Program Summary:**<sup>2</sup> All the alfalfa (60 percent or more of the ground cover is alfalfa) is insurable if:

- You have a share;
- Planted during the current crop year;
- Replanted during the calendar year following planting; and
- You intend to establish a normal stand of alfalfa.

The policy does not cover any acreage that is:

- Grown to be grazed or grazed at any time during the insurance period; or
- That is interplanted with another crop, except nursery crops, unless allowed by written agreement.

**What types of loss are covered?** During the insurance year, Forage Seeding crop insurance covers loss due to adverse weather, earthquake, failure of irrigation water supply (if caused by an insured peril during the insurance year), fire, insect damage and/or plant disease (except for insufficient or improper application of pest or disease control measures), volcanic eruption, or wildlife.<sup>2</sup>

**How much does it cost?** Check in with your crop insurance agent to get a quote for your operation.

## **RMA Crop Insurance for Organic Alfalfa in California: Forage Production Crop Insurance (Alfalfa)**

**Target Audience:** Alfalfa growers.

**Organic Commodities Covered:** Organic alfalfa and alfalfa transitioning to organic.

**Geographic Availability:** Select counties in California. Check with a crop insurance agent for information on your county.

**RMA Program Summary:**<sup>3</sup> Alfalfa is insurable if:

- You have a share in the crop; and
- It is grown during one or more years after the year of establishment.

Alfalfa is not insurable if it:

- Does not have an adequate stand at the beginning of the insurance period;
- Is grown with a non-forage crop; or
- Exceeds the age limitations for forage stands contained in the Special Provisions.

**What types of loss are covered?** During the insurance year, Forage Production crop insurance covers loss due to adverse

<sup>2</sup> <https://rma.usda.gov/en/Fact-Sheets/Davis-Regional-Office-Fact-Sheets/Forage-Seeding-2017-CA>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/Fact-Sheets/National-Fact-Sheets/Forage-Production>

weather, earthquake, failure of irrigation water supply (if caused by an insured peril during the insurance year), fire, insect damage and/or plant disease (except for insufficient or improper application of pest or disease control measures), volcanic eruption, or wildlife.<sup>3</sup>

**How much does it cost?** Check in with your crop insurance agent to get a quote for your operation.

### How can I learn more about RMA crop insurance options and apply?

For the most up-to-date information on RMA crop insurance products for organic alfalfa, including eligibility, program limitations, and application deadlines, contact a crop insurance agent. You can find a listing of crop insurance agents at [www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.html](http://www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.html).

## USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA): Disaster Assistance Programs for Organic Livestock and Forage Production in California

### Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)

**FSA Program Summary:**<sup>4</sup> The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops to protect against natural disasters that result in lower yields or crop losses, or prevent crop planting.

**Target Audience:** Producers of crops not covered by federal crop insurance (noninsurable crops), including seeded pasture and native grass for livestock.

#### Organic Commodities Covered:

- Varies depending on the county. Check in with your county FSA office to see if crops planted and grown for livestock consumption, such as grain, forage crops, or native grasses/forage, are covered in your county. Some crops may have organic coverage rates, and some may not. The reason that a crop may not be covered in a particular county is because federal crop insurance may cover that crop. The only difference between organic/non-organic is the yield and price.
- You can request an organic rate/yield for most crops with a yield, if it is not already available. This is typically done on a county-by-county basis through your FSA county office. To request an organic rate for a crop, you need the following information: crop name, type, intended use, irrigation practice, and organic market price. Check in with your county FSA office for the complete details on requesting an organic rate/yield.

**Geographic Availability:** All counties in the United States. The

crops/forages covered vary by county, so do crops/forages with organic coverage rates. Check with your FSA office for information specific to your county.

### What types of loss are covered?<sup>4</sup>

Eligible causes of loss include the following natural disasters:

- Damaging weather, such as drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind, or hurricanes;
- Adverse natural occurrences, such as earthquake or flood; and
- Conditions related to damaging weather or adverse natural occurrences, such as excessive heat, plant disease, volcanic smog (VOG), or insect infestation.

The natural disaster must occur during the coverage period, before or during harvest, and must directly affect the eligible crop.

#### Apply and Pay the Service Fee Before a Disaster Occurs:

Unlike other FSA disaster assistance programs that come into effect after a natural disaster occurs, NAP is a risk management program that producers apply for before a disaster occurs. An application fee and a service fee are due by the application closing date, which vary depending on the crop. The basic NAP fee is waived and buy-up premiums are reduced for beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers/ranchers.

### Additional Disaster Assistance Programs

In addition to NAP, FSA offers numerous disaster assistance programs for livestock operations. While none of these programs are specifically for organic livestock operations, these operations are still eligible for disaster assistance. FSA's disaster assistance programs include Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP); Livestock Forage Program (LFP); and the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). These programs are available after a disaster occurs. Your county may be eligible for certain programs due to drought, fire, or other natural disasters. FSA recommends filing an annual acreage report with your county FSA office each year. This speeds up the application process for disaster assistance after a disaster has occurred.

### How can I learn more about FSA risk management and disaster assistance programs?

For the most up-to-date information on all FSA disaster assistance programs, including eligibility requirements, program limitations, and application deadlines, visit your county FSA office. Locate your county office using USDA's service center locator on [www.Farmers.gov](http://www.Farmers.gov).



*This material is funded in partnership by USDA, Risk Management Agency, under award number RMRM18RMEPP522C004 and produced in collaboration with California FarmLink.*

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafilms/FactSheets/2017/nap\\_for\\_2015\\_and\\_subsequent\\_years\\_oct2017.pdf](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdafilms/FactSheets/2017/nap_for_2015_and_subsequent_years_oct2017.pdf)



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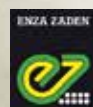


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## ***Leverage Your Power to Effect Change***

As organic producers face increasing challenges—from weather extremes and natural disasters to market fluctuations and uncertainty—strengthening relationships becomes a critical part of resilience.

CCOF's chapter system offers a unique avenue to connect CCOF members and leverage their collective power. The small in-person settings of chapter meetings allow for every voice to be heard and for members to make deep connections with other organic business owners and supporters. These connections are the building blocks for broader work and mobilization.

The intimacy of chapter meetings allows for free-flowing information and camaraderie beyond computer screens. The ideas and suggestions generated at chapter gatherings drive CCOF's priorities. CCOF's policy team listens to the challenges our members face and finds ways to effect change. Whether it's streamlining regulations for organic producers; prioritizing organic practices for funding; building solid recommendations to inform the National Organic Standards Board; or communicating the positive impacts organic has on our economy, society, and the environment, the team's objective is always to support organic farmers and producers.

We know that elected officials want to hear from our farmers and producers. CCOF members' stories motivate decision makers to support organic producers by addressing the challenges they face. We work with our members to develop clear language, supported by data, that helps educate our representatives on the issues and garner support for organic. Together, CCOF and its members are a force to be reckoned with. Together, CCOF and its members can make a difference at local, state, and federal levels.

What issues are most important to you? Do you wish your kids' school served nutritious organic food? Does your local hospital buy local, organic food from you and your fellow organic farmers that's going to help folks recover or—better yet—prevent illness? Can you find a local organic extension agent in your area, or at all? Do you want to strengthen your ability to communicate effectively with your elected representatives? Do you want your chapter to provide

assistance for recovery efforts after hardship? These are all initiatives your chapter can rally behind.

There are 15 CCOF chapters with leaders who are always eager to hear from their fellow members. Your chapter's leadership is ready to amplify your voice. Chapter leaders convene with fellow members and CCOF staff to discuss challenges and ideas and to learn more about the leverage points to effect change. Chapters can also provide opportunities to partner with other organic-aligned organizations by inviting them to participate in a chapter meeting and meet with members. Holding a chapter meeting on your farm, at your business, or at home (which, for many, is all the same place!) builds relationships with folks in your community and creates the base for a movement.

A pivotal purpose of CCOF's chapter system is to unite our collective efforts and ensure a bright future for organic farmers and producers. We encourage our members to be creative and embrace this powerful tool backed by a team of devoted CCOF staff.

To learn more about how to get involved with your chapter, contact Adrian Fischer at [afischer@ccof.org](mailto:afischer@ccof.org) or (831) 346-6282. Find out more about your CCOF chapter at [www.ccof.org/chapters](http://www.ccof.org/chapters).

## **Chapter Elections Update**

### **Processor/Handler Chapter**

CCOF would like to congratulate and welcome the following newly elected Processor/Handler Chapter leaders: President Jeremy Johnson of Traditional Medicinals, Board Representative Vickie Hughes of Lundberg Family Farms, Vice President Julie Travers of JLZ Produce, and Secretary John McKeon of Taylor Farms/Earthbound Farms.

### **San Luis Obispo Chapter**

CCOF would like to congratulate and welcome the following newly elected San Luis Obispo chapter leaders: President Ashley Gable of SLO Creek Farms, re-elected Board Representative Jutta Thoerner of Manzanita Manor Organics, and Vice President Ron LaBastida of Babe Farms.





# Rooting for Organic

## 8 Ways to Take it to the Next Level

WRITTEN BY Sara Weinreb

*For many of us, our participation in the organic movement isn't just our job—it's our passion.*

We care deeply about advancing the organic movement and the organic sector, even outside of our day-to-day jobs. As organic advocates, we can root for organic by steering policy, impacting our communities, inspiring our colleagues and the next generation, helping the movement grow, and continuing to make an impact. Here are eight ways you can take your support of organic to the next level and use your expertise and knowledge for the benefit of your community, California, the country, and the movement overall.

### 1. Connect with Your Local FFA Chapter to Teach About Organic

In addition to hosting on-site student visits, teaching about organic farming is an important and meaningful way to inspire the next generation. Kevin Hesser, Calaveras High School agriculture teacher and National FFA Organization advisor, decided to get involved with teaching organic agriculture to deepen his work as a teacher and connect students to the movement. "We run a high school farm that uses all organic practices," he shares. "Teaching students the importance of growing food with organic methods and informing them about the benefits to the food, soil, plants, and community as a whole is integrated into everything that we do. From the soil testing we do to the ingredients we use in the recipes we prepare, organic farming is at the center of the conversation."

There are many ways to get involved with FFA, CCOF Foundation Program Manager Josaphine Stevenson explains. "Make a presentation at your local FFA chapter, mentor an FFA student, encourage National FFA to support more organic programming, or contribute to the CCOF Foundation Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund and help provide grants directly to students for their organic Supervised Agricultural Experience projects."



National FFA Organization students at Calaveras High School get the chance for hands-on learning about organic through the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund.



Both Stevenson and Hesser agree that FFA goes well beyond learning about agriculture, serving as a leadership development opportunity as well. “My favorite part of being involved with the FFA is watching our students grow and learn on so many levels. FFA is one of, if not the best, youth leadership development organizations in the country. Working with students to help them develop their leadership and communication skills, getting them involved in community service projects, and seeing them grow and develop as individuals are very rewarding,” Hesser shared. He further explained that there are multiple avenues for engagement with the program, including speaking with classes about organic agriculture, offering field trip opportunities for on-site learning, and even providing on-site work-based learning opportunities.

CCOF partners with FFA to further the organic movement through the Future Organic Farmer Grant Fund, which provides grants for middle school and high school students’ Supervised Agricultural Experience projects. “We see tremendous opportunity to raise awareness among FFA students and advisors about the benefits of organic farming and production. We want FFA students to know that organic is an option for their projects and their future careers,” shared Stevenson.

To get involved, reach out to your local FFA chapter, which you can find at [www.ffa.org/chapter-locator](http://www.ffa.org/chapter-locator).

## 2. Host School Visits

By hosting school groups at your farm or facility, you have the opportunity to create an experience for students that will help them understand the process of organic farming and production. It also helps you connect more deeply to your community and local consumers and impart pivotal knowledge on the coming generations.

Students learn more thoroughly about our food system through an immersive, on-site experience than they do walking down the aisles of a grocery store. School visits can be a vital link in

students’ understanding of our food system, leading to health and environmental benefits and an important connection to what’s on their plate. “When the students touch a calf, that’s a moment they remember forever,” explained Christian Alexandre of Alexandre Farms. “When they visit and we explain that we’re organic, and they see how we work with nature and wildlife, they learn how the farm affects the climate around us. It changes their perceptions and fear of farming that they see in the media when they are on an organic farm.”

School visits to your farm or facility may also inspire students to consider organic farming and agriculture as they explore future career aspirations. Reach out to your local schools to connect with teachers who may be interested in bringing their students to learn about an organic business. You can also search for a local chapter of Agriculture in the Classroom to find ways to reach local students. Visit [www.agclassroom.org](http://www.agclassroom.org) for more information.

## 3. Join a Regulatory Board

Share your knowledge and expertise in the organic movement by joining a regulatory board, which may be through local, statewide, or national organizations. This could look like applying to join the California Organic Products Advisory Committee (COPAC), which “advises the California Secretary of Agriculture on California’s State Organic Program’s enforcement activities;” the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), which regulates the “production, handling, and processing of organic products;” or a California Regional Water Quality Control Board, among other local and regional opportunities.

Through your involvement on a regulatory board, you can help set guidelines and policies and share your valuable experience in the field. “We can achieve more together, and it is important for the industry to make its concerns known so regulators aren’t working in the abstract,” explained Jeremy Johnson, senior counsel at Traditional Medicinals and co-chair of COPAC. “By participating in COPAC, I can help provide insight into the



CCOF staff attend NOSB meetings—this one in Washington D.C.—but anyone can submit public comments on agenda items in advance of the committee's meetings.

real-world consequences to the state and try and help achieve our mutual goals of a strong organic system and market in California.”

Serving on a board can also help you connect to others in the field and provide a valuable learning experience. Johnson cites “the collegial environment, both between the [COPAC] members, as well as with the members and the state,” as one of his favorite outcomes of his involvement with COPAC. He also values the knowledge he gains through his participation. “There is so much to learn from other members and the state, and it is always fascinating to get to hear their perspectives, experience, and just learn in general.”

Mindee Jeffrey, formerly a product and standards analyst for Good Earth Natural Foods, shared that through her role representing retailers (and later as chairperson) on COPAC, she experienced the behind-the-scenes elements of the organic movement. “I love the people, the debates, and witnessing the processes behind governance. Organic policy work lets America be a functional democracy in a truly unique way,” she says.

Jeffrey also added that being on the board of COPAC was a way to dive more deeply into relevant issues and be a part of a larger movement. “I feel really proud to be a part of a group of people that can get contentious and know we’re on the same team working towards the same good. How often do we get to see our government being curious and responsive to our concerns about food and agriculture? Serving on COPAC gives a person that opportunity.”

## 4. Join Local or Commodity-Specific Agricultural Organizations

Another way to get involved is to use your voice to advocate for organic within existing agricultural organizations. In

California alone, there are hundreds of these organizations, such as general agriculture groups like the Farm Bureau, commodity-specific groups like the California Strawberry Commission and the California Avocado Commission, or the board of your local farmers’ market or chamber of commerce. Your voice as an organic farming advocate can help influence the work and agenda of these organizations by bringing organic to the table. You can use your experience and expertise to provide pivotal information about organic to these groups as they are creating their own strategic decisions, governance, and more, ensuring organic lands on the agenda.

Another avenue for involvement is to link up with your local CCOF chapter, which helps to advance the organic agenda in the local community and provide members support among fellow organic business owners and organic advocates. There are 13 regional chapters that span California and Mexico, a chapter for those outside of the regional chapter boundaries, and a chapter for processor/handler certified members. Through your local CCOF chapter, you can take your involvement to the next level by running for a leadership position that speaks to you. Learn more at [www.ccof.org/chapters](http://www.ccof.org/chapters).

## 5. Lend Your Voice by Commenting on Rules and Regulations

Did you know that rules and regulations resulting from bills and policies passed by the state and federal government go through public commenting periods before being finalized? As someone who works in the organic sector, you are on the front lines of the movement, and understand how it works, the challenges, and the best practices, which gives you a unique viewpoint on legislation. By commenting through written input on rules and regulations, you can help shape these bills and advance the organic agenda while ensuring your thoughts and concerns as someone with expertise in the movement



Elected officials love to hear from organic farmers, and are especially interested in seeing organic first-hand through farm tours. Here, Congressman Jimmy Panetta is pictured with CCOF CEO Kelly Damewood



are heard. You can offer relevant context and point out areas where the legislation is lacking or is even incorrect, something legislators might not have deep knowledge about if they lack hands-on experience.

If you are new to commenting, CCOF can help you learn the ins and outs of making a powerful statement. First things first, sign up for CCOF Action Alerts at [bit.ly/action-alerts](https://bit.ly/action-alerts) so you can stay informed about new policy as it is being released and get notified when there is an open comment period. CCOF also provides information about commenting periods and specific regulations on the CCOF blog at [www.ccof.org/blog](https://www.ccof.org/blog), as well as examples of CCOF's comments for your reference. The Organic Trade Association at [www.ota.com](https://www.ota.com) also frequently posts specific guidelines for commenting on organic-focused legislation.

## 6. Partner with a University or Organization to Conduct On-Site Research

Partnering with organizations or universities for on-site research not only contributes to the organic movement overall, but it also can benefit your organic business. "Partnering to do research on your farm can provide financial and technical assistance to help you test new strategies while minimizing risk. Working with a researcher that understands your region will provide information that is specific and applicable to your farm, soil type, climate, pests, etc., and help you document the results," explains Brise Tencer, executive director of the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF).

Through collaboration with your research partner, on-site research can help you address issues that you are looking to examine in your own operation, potentially creating long-term solutions that further your production, business, and the organic movement as a whole.

"One of the projects we worked on was evaluating various cover crops to determine optimal nitrogen-fixing potential," says Tim Schultz, vice president of research and development at Lundberg Farms about one of the research projects the company was a part of. "The on-site research benefitted us by identifying two varieties of beans that have the highest nitrogen-fixing potential that we are now scaling up as a cover crop in our production. This project benefitted other rice growers by helping them to identify a source of green manure so that they can minimize their need for supplemental inputs." If you are considering exploring on-site research, Schultz advises having a clearly articulated research question you want to be answered, working with the researcher to define the scope of the study, and making sure you understand the resources required on your end.

The benefits of conducting research on-site may extend beyond the study itself, Schultz explained. "The researcher becomes familiar with your farm and can often provide insight into other questions you may have. They may also utilize students to carry out the research who may then be interested in working with your farm after they have completed their education," he said.

If you're interested in exploring on-site research on your farm, Tencer recommends reaching out to OFRF at [www.ofrf.org](https://www.ofrf.org), and they can help connect you to a researcher in your area.

## 7. Reach Out to Your Elected Officials to Talk About Organic or Host Them On-Site

Elected officials can play a pivotal role in advocating for organic agriculture, and you can help. By keeping your local legislators informed about your needs and what you are seeing in the field, you can help ensure that they are informed about policies that impact organic that they are voting on and can also advocate for your needs.



At CCOF's *Roadmap* project stakeholder meeting at 123 Farm, organic producers and business owners shared their visions for how policy can help advance organic.

"Central Coast farmers and ranchers have always been on the leading edge of organic production. As congressman, my role is to act as the bridge between our communities and Washington D.C., to advocate for their needs and break through the bureaucracy when they are not getting the answers or funding that they need to keep innovating and growing," shared Congressman Jimmy Panetta of California's 20<sup>th</sup> congressional district. "Hearing from community members and seeing firsthand the work that they are doing at home helps give me the evidence that I need to take to Washington D.C. and make sure that we continue to support organic farming," the congressman explained.

You can also take advantage of an opportunity to meet with Californian elected officials at CCOF's Annual Meeting and advocacy day in Sacramento, California on February 18-19, 2020. We'll be advocating for organic agriculture, and invite you to lend your voice to the discussion. Learn more at [www.ccof.org/2020-event](http://www.ccof.org/2020-event).

Hosting elected officials at your farm or business also facilitates learning and education, and furthers their understanding of your work and the organic movement.

## 8. Learn from the Roadmap to an Organic California Project

To successfully advocate for the organic movement, it's imperative to understand the scientific evidence of the benefits of the movement, and the path forward. Through the *Roadmap to an Organic California* project, CCOF released a *Benefits Report* that cited over 300 scientific studies that demonstrate the long-term impact the organic movement can have on California overall. In 2020, CCOF will release the *Policy Report*, which uses that information to outline a roadmap for how to expand the organic movement in California and beyond.

CCOF convened organic stakeholders from throughout the sector in three meetings to talk about the barriers and solutions to advancing organic agriculture in California. With that information and the proven benefits of organic outlined in the *Benefits Report*, the forthcoming *Policy Report* has a deep foundation in creative solutions that have been vetted by the people they will impact. "The *Roadmap* is a 'how-to' guide to using organic to help solve big problems," explained Laetitia Benador, research fellow at CCOF.

By keeping up to date on how organic benefits our planet and communities, and learning about the policies and strategies that can grow the movement, you can both advocate for organic while also finding the right policy or recommended strategy to grow organic in your community. "From climate change to economic and health crises, CCOF's *Roadmap* highlights how organic is crucial to California's future and creates a common language for diverse experts across sectors and districts. By bringing together farmers, health professionals, educators, scientists, and advocates, the *Roadmap* creates a shared vision of a stronger, healthier California," shared Benador. Learn more at [www.ccof.org/roadmap](http://www.ccof.org/roadmap).

## How Will You Take Organic Advocacy to the Next Level?

We already have you on the frontlines of the organic movement, and with your expertise and experience, you have the power to push the movement further. There are countless ways to get involved, but start with what calls to you, and where you think your experience will be most relevant. And, of course, make sure the opportunity seems fun and that it's a place to connect to others, as connection with our communities is what truly advances change. Join us in rooting for organic!

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## CCOF Policy Team Highlights Organic Agriculture as Climate Solution

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The Mediterranean climate that makes California our country's most productive agricultural state is changing dramatically, and organic farmers, ranchers, and farmworkers are literally feeling the heat. Crop and animal losses, inconsistent yields, dangerous working conditions, and natural disasters that devastate rural communities are threatening organic businesses throughout the state.

This October, California experienced another devastating wildfire season that destroyed many farms and ranches and disrupted others with evacuations and widespread electricity blackouts. In the face of this new climate reality, massive state and federal investments are necessary to increase agriculture's resilience and reduce carbon emissions. Ongoing research has shown that organic agriculture can be a powerful driver of both climate resiliency and emissions reduction by building healthy, carbon-rich soils. Since only four percent of farmland is currently certified organic, policymakers have a great opportunity to expand these climate benefits.

CCOF is interested in this research because it can support our vision of a world where organic is the norm. With the *Roadmap to an Organic California* project, the CCOF Foundation and CCOF

policy staff are working to educate policymakers about these climate benefits and present policy solutions that support organic farmers and ranchers.

A key source of organic climate research comes from the Russell Ranch research facility at the University of California, Davis. The ranch's 100-year comparative study of agricultural systems, or "century experiment," is in its 25<sup>th</sup> year. For years, researchers at the ranch have been releasing data that demonstrate the benefits of organic management. A recent study led by senior author Kate Scow found particularly promising results. The 19-year study showed that the combination of cover cropping and compost application on certified organic soil resulted in a 12.6 percent increase in organic carbon, much of which was found deep in the soil. These results suggest organic agriculture is already providing significant climate benefits to the state. If organic acreage were expanded, the sector could play an even more important role in sequestering carbon in soils and fighting climate change.

While the study's certified organic plots demonstrated substantial benefits, conventionally managed plots yielded disappointing results. A conventionally managed plot that incorporated cover crops saw some carbon increases in the first 12 inches of the soil but lost significant amounts of carbon below that depth. These results underscore the benefits of the organic systems approach, which builds soil fertility without synthetic fertilizers, rather than a piecemeal approach that incorporates some climate-smart practices while relying heavily on conventional inputs. CCOF's *Benefits Report*, the first phase of the *Roadmap* project, presented a wealth of research that found that organic farms sequester more soil carbon than their conventional counterparts.

## You can help support our efforts. Join CCOF at our 2020 advocacy day at the California State Capitol.

State policymakers have taken note of the climate benefits of organic practices and invested in new programs such as the Healthy Soils Initiative, which pays farmers to use practices such as compost application, hedgerow plantings, cover cropping, reduced- or no-till, and mulching. The Healthy Soils Program has been popular among both conventional and organic producers, and government estimates say the program has already achieved significant emission reductions. However, the program has untapped potential. By utilizing grant funding to encourage organic transition, the state could ensure the use of these practices long after grant funding expires.

That's where CCOF comes in. In August 2019, CCOF sent a letter to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) recommending that the agency add an organic transition package to the Healthy Soils Program. In the letter, CCOF presented multiple ways that CDFA could support organic transition, including funding the development of an organic systems plan to support the process. This additional benefit would tie funding for organic practices to a crucial component of the organic transition process. By assisting with the cost of

building healthy organic soils and reducing costs associated with certification, the Healthy Soils Program could remove some financial barriers associated with organic transition. With significant funding coming in 2020, this year is a perfect time for the program to expand its reach and impact. CCOF will advocate that CDFA direct some of the \$25 million in available funding to encourage long-term climate benefits of organic farming.

CCOF is pushing for organic transition funding as part of our vision to expand organic acreage in California. To achieve this goal, we need support from the state. With California facing economic, environmental, and public health challenges, it is time for policymakers to invest in organic agriculture as a solution. In a 2017 blog post describing his vision for the state's environmental policies, Gavin Newsom said that he would "double down on the production of organic and sustainable food." It's time for us to come together as an organic community and demand that California does just that.

You can help support our efforts. Join CCOF at our 2020 advocacy day at the California State Capitol. For more



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information, visit [www.ccof.org/2020-event](http://www.ccof.org/2020-event). Learn more about the *Roadmap to an Organic California* project at [www.ccof.org/roadmap](http://www.ccof.org/roadmap).

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## National Organic Standards Board Wraps Up 2019

In October, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held its second biannual meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At the meeting, the board re-listed 50 of the 52 substances it reviewed on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List), passed seven proposals to the National Organic Program for approval, and considered three discussion documents.

The Pittsburgh meeting was also the final meeting for NOSB members Tom Chapman of Clif Bar, organic livestock producer Ashley Swaffer, retailer Lisa de Lima of MOM's Organic Market, and environmental/resource conservationist Harriet Behar.

The board elected NOSB members Steve Ela as chair and Scott Rice as vice chair. Ela is an organic fruit producer based in Colorado and Rice works for the Washington State Department of Agriculture's Organic Program. Jesse Buie of CCOF-certified Ole Brook Organics was elected as board secretary.

## 2021 Sunset Reviews

NOSB voted to recommend re-listing of all but two substances as part of their 2021 sunset reviews. The board voted to remove dairy cultures and alginic acid from the National List. USDA will now consider NOSB's recommendation and pursue rulemaking on the substances. Stakeholders will have an additional opportunity to submit comments on the substances before they are prohibited. USDA will release a proposed rule on their removal with a public comment period.

The board determined that dairy cultures was a redundant listing on the National List because dairy cultures are also included under the listing of microorganisms. Because of this redundancy, dairy cultures will continue to be allowed in organic processing and handling.

The board also recommended to remove alginic acid from the National List and prohibit it from use in organic processing and handling. Alginic acid is used as an emulsifier, formulation

aid, and thickening agent for soups and soup mixes. No CCOF member uses the substance in their products.

## Fall 2019 Proposals and Discussion Documents

NOSB passed all seven proposals it considered in Pittsburgh, including recommending that two new substances be added to the National List. The board voted to allow the use of fatty alcohols as sucker control in organic tobacco production and potassium hypochlorite for use as irrigation water treatment. USDA will now consider the recommendations and pursue rulemaking to add the substances to the National List.

Final NOSB recommendations and USDA's response to them can be read online at [www.ams.usda.gov/event/national-organic-standards-board-nosb-meeting-pittsburgh-pa](http://www.ams.usda.gov/event/national-organic-standards-board-nosb-meeting-pittsburgh-pa).

The board also passed a proposal on allowing livestock vaccines that are produced using excluded methods to be allowed when non-GMO versions are not commercially available. Other proposals included updates to their Policy and Procedures Manual, updates to NOSB's research priorities, prohibition of induced mutagenesis produced via in vitro nucleic acid techniques, and an instruction document to certifiers on organic seed.

The board is continuing its work on paper pots and other crop production aids and the use of marine materials in organic crop production. At the 2020 spring meeting, NOSB will likely bring forth a proposal requiring seaweeds used in organic fertilizers to be certified organic to the wild crop standards.

## NOSB in 2020

The National Organic Program did not announce new board members in Pittsburgh. Going into 2020, five of the 15 seats on the board are vacant. However, the National Organic Program did announce the dates and locations of the 2020 NOSB meetings. The spring meeting is scheduled to take place in Crystal City, Virginia on April 29 through May 1, 2020. The fall meeting will be held in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, from October 27 through 29, 2020.

CCOF frequently shares information on NOSB and their work in the CCOF Newsletter. Sign up at [www.ccof.org/subscribe](http://www.ccof.org/subscribe). For information from the National Organic Program, subscribe to the Organic Insider at [www.ams.usda.gov/reports/organic-insider](http://www.ams.usda.gov/reports/organic-insider).

# JOIN US AROUND THE GLOBE IN 2020

**WHO:** Any U.S. company representing organic products made of 51 % or more U.S.-based ingredients can directly benefit from our export promotion programs. We work with all types of stakeholders to represent U.S. Organic, worldwide.

**WHY:** Whether it's market access, technical assistance, consumer promotion, or export readiness, the U.S. Organic Worldwide program can help you achieve your export goals and uncover new opportunities.

**HOW:** To participate in our programs, understand more about export opportunities, source U.S. organic products, or suggest a new international collaboration, contact the Organic Trade Association.



The Organic Trade Association (OTA) is the membership-based business association for organic agriculture and products in North America. We are the leading voice for the organic trade in the United States, representing over 9,500 organic businesses across 50 states.



**CONTACT:**  
Alexis Carey  
acarey@ota.com  
(202) 403-8515

The Organic Trade Association's Organic Export Program is funded through the Market Access Program of the Foreign Agricultural Service of USDA. OTA does not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, national origin or ancestry, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation or military status. Persons with disabilities who require alternate means for communication of program information can contact us at [info@ota.com](mailto:info@ota.com).

Organic Trade Association sponsorship for most international trade show and trade mission events includes economy airfare and hotel room for one person as well as countertop exhibition fees.

## SIGN-UPS STILL BEING ACCEPTED

### February BIOFACH\*

OTA will host 14 U.S. organic companies in Germany. OTA will also speak at several education sessions during the show.

### GULFOOD\*

OTA will host 6 U.S. organic companies in Dubai for the first time in 2020.

\*Registration is currently closed for these two specific activities.

### March EXPO WEST

OTA will co-host a buyers mission at Expo West. Meet buyers from 15+ different international markets all under one roof during the trade show.

### FOODEX JAPAN

OTA will return to Tokyo, hosting a pavilion of 8 companies. Japan is one of the top 5 international markets for U.S. organic products.

### March-April FOOD AND HOTEL ASIA

OTA will exhibit in Singapore for the first time in 2020. Come explore the Asian market at this wide-ranging show!

### June U.K.-E.U. TRADE MISSION

Come explore the European Market for U.S. organic at this first-time activity. OTA will bring U.S. organic companies to meet with buyers in the U.K. and Netherlands and exhibit at the Free From Food Expo in Amsterdam.

### July ORGANIC PRODUCE SUMMIT

OTA will host a mission with buyers from Mexico and the Pacific Rim.

### September FINE FOOD AUSTRALIA

OTA will take 5 companies to this show in Melbourne for the first time in 2020.

### IFOAM WORLD CONGRESS

OTA will present on current topics, attend fish bowl discussions, and meet with EU counterparts regarding organic equivalence.

### EXPO EAST

OTA will co-host a mission with a focus on buyers from the Middle East and Europe.

### October SIAL PARIS

OTA will return to 2020's largest food and beverage trade show. The OTA organic pavilion will host 8 companies at the show.

### Ongoing GLOBAL ORGANIC TRADE GUIDE & FIND.organic

The top online resources to learn about export markets, trade regulations, and U.S. organic products available for export.

### CONSUMER PROMOTIONS

OTA will collaborate with key importers, distributors, and retailers around the world to highlight your organic products. Activities are planned for Asia, the Middle East, Canada, and Mexico.

## *Growing Markets for U.S. Organic Producers*

The Organic Trade Association will showcase U.S. organic products at events throughout the world in 2020, including the leading retail shows in the Pacific Rim, Australia, and Canada. Bolstered by trade-related funding from the USDA, the Organic Trade Association's robust export promotion efforts in 2020 will return to tested venues and try out potentially rewarding new markets. These could offer possibilities for your company as you contemplate exporting organic products this year.

"The significant increase in export promotion funding from USDA in 2019 is allowing us to both explore new markets and dig in deeper where we have seen success in recent years. Right now, U.S. companies are uniquely situated to expand and diversify the global organic marketplace, and should take advantage of the numerous opportunities available," says Alexis Carey, international trade manager for the trade association.

The Organic Trade Association has been an official cooperator in USDA's Market Access Program (MAP) for almost 20 years, investing in the promotion of U.S. organic agricultural products in global markets and connecting buyers and sellers to create new organic customers around the world.

These activities are open to the entire U.S. organic industry, not just Organic Trade Association members. All of the products promoted must be USDA-certified organic, produced in the United States, and made of 51 percent or more of U.S.-based ingredients either by value (cost of the ingredients) or volume (against overall weight of the product). For more information or to sign up, visit [www.ota.com/resources/global-market-opportunities](http://www.ota.com/resources/global-market-opportunities).

In 2019, the Organic Trade Association hosted 14 companies in the USA Pavilion at BioFach in Germany. Out of the 14 companies, half were new to BioFach, and four were first-time participants in any international event with the trade association. The participating companies recorded projected sales of over \$4.9 million. A total of 18 exhibitors also took part across three shows where we hosted organic pavilions: FoodEx Japan, SIAL Canada, and Seoul Food and Hotel. Our exhibitors reported projected sales of over \$5.6 million, with several on-site sales totaling \$545,000.



While registration for BioFach 2020 is already full, there are many other export promotion events you can plug into in Asia, Australia, and Europe.

Meanwhile, the Organic Trade Association has received funding for two Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) programs. The first project will develop an equivalency application template for other countries to use when applying for organic equivalency with the United States. The trade association is partnering closely with USDA on this project, as OTA aims to develop a tool that not only evaluates compatibility with U.S. standards, but also capacity to uphold USDA organic oversight and compliance in applicant countries.

The second TASC project centers on changing regulations in the EU. Over the course of the project, the Organic Trade Association will complete a GAP analysis for USDA regarding technical and non-tariff barriers to the trade of U.S. products to the EU. The project, as part of the GAP analysis, will also include a conformity assessment that details the oversight infrastructure supporting enforcement and compliance to U.S. organic regulations currently in place in the EU. An impact assessment will also be developed for U.S. organic exporters should an organic equivalency arrangement with the EU not be possible.

To participate in our programs, understand more about export opportunities, or suggest a new international collaboration, contact the Organic Trade Association. Alexis Carey can be reached at [acarey@ota.com](mailto:acarey@ota.com).

**All CCOF-certified members receive a new member discount of 25 percent for their first year of Organic Trade Association membership. Learn more about becoming a member at [www.ota.com/membership/become-member](http://www.ota.com/membership/become-member).**

# Certified organic products aren't just non-GMO, they're **Non-GMO & More!**



Use CCOF's "Organic is Non-GMO & More" seal on your packaging at no extra cost to recognize the many contributions organic makes to a healthier world.

Visit [www.ccof.org/non-gmo](http://www.ccof.org/non-gmo) »



## Visit CCOF at Expo West booth #2419 to learn more about how our seal can help your business!



## ***Organic Strawberry Planting Stock Field Trials and the Commercial Availability Requirement***

The National Organic Program (NOP) section 205.204 requires that producers search for organic strawberry planting stock (crowns, plugs, etc.) before resorting to using non-organic stock. CCOF is aware that organic strawberry planting stock is becoming more widely available commercially.

In order to ensure compliance with NOP 205.204, growers must make adequate ongoing efforts to source organic strawberry planting stock suitable for their operation in form, quality, or quantity. **CCOF will verify that growers contact known suppliers and will look for efforts to increase use of organic strawberry planting stock over time.** We maintain a current list of organic strawberry planting stock suppliers known to CCOF for your reference at [www.ccof.org/organic-seed-planting-stock](http://www.ccof.org/organic-seed-planting-stock). Growers should be prepared to discuss this topic at future inspections.

Adequate ongoing efforts should

- **Include known suppliers.** Searches must include sources known to supply organic strawberry planting

stock, such as those on our known supplier list at [www.ccof.org/organic-seed-planting-stock](http://www.ccof.org/organic-seed-planting-stock).

- **Occur well in advance.** Growers must contact known suppliers with enough advance notice to allow for production of adequate supply. In addition, Mexico growers importing planting stock should plan for any additional time needed to comply with phytosanitary requirements.
- **Include non-organic suppliers.** Since organic suppliers are few at this time, growers should also request organic from other suppliers that offer planting stock with the desired characteristics (i.e., variety, disease resistance, quantity).
- **Include trialing.** Producers who cannot find the form, quality, or quantity of organic planting stock needed to meet all their production needs should trial available organic planting stock to show their effort and commitment to meet the commercial availability requirement.
- **Take into account form, quality, and quantity.** Cost alone is not a sufficient reason to avoid utilizing organic strawberry planting stock. Growers must use organic planting stock if it is available in the form, quality, or quantity that meets your operation's needs.
- **Occur annually.** Growers must re-evaluate commercial availability annually.
- **Be documented.** Use our sample form, or record your efforts in another format. Our sample form can be found at [www.ccof.org/sample-commercial-availability](http://www.ccof.org/sample-commercial-availability).
- **Be made even if you do not select/buy your planting stock.** If a buyer or other third party determines your planting stock, they must provide you with documentation annually showing that they have met the requirements above.



# CCOF: Food safety by and for organic.

Applying our organic certification experience,  
innovation, service & integrity to meet your needs.



Helping you get there with cost-effective food safety certification and audits.  
Visit [www.ccof.org/food-safety](http://www.ccof.org/food-safety) »

# *We are appreciative of the leadership and long-term efforts of many growers, individuals, businesses, researchers, and others ...*

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The USDA NOP regulations are a process-based standard, and CCOF is committed to continual improvement, including the use of commercially available organic strawberry planting stock as intended in the letter and spirit of the organic regulations. To support growers' efforts to source organic seed and planting stock, CCOF permits growers to deduct the cost of organic seed and planting stock from their organic production value (OPV) to reduce certification fees.

We are appreciative of the leadership and long-term efforts of many growers, individuals, businesses, researchers, and others to move the industry forward in this important area.

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## CCOF Fee Changes

To meet service needs and keep up with the cost of doing business, we are making modest adjustments to annual certification fees. The Crop/Livestock Fee Category 5 (organic production value between \$100,001 and \$200,000 annually) is increasing from \$740 to \$750. The Handler/Processor minimum fee will increase from \$740 to \$750. These increases are effective November 1, 2019 for all new applicants, and January 1, 2020 for existing clients.

Also effective on January 1, 2020 for all clients are the following fee increases:

- Inspection fees for on-site time are increasing from \$72.50 to \$80 per hour. This fee has not been raised since 2015. This increase covers the cost of inflation and adjustments for compliance with new labor requirements. The inspection fees for travel time are not changing at this time.
- The expedited fee is increasing from \$2,250 to \$2,300.
- Rush fees are increasing by \$25 each; a five-business-day rush will be \$200 per item, and a two-business-day rush will be \$400 per item.

A full fee schedule can be found in the CCOF Certification Services Program Manual, on the back of annual invoices, and online at [www.ccof.org/fees](http://www.ccof.org/fees).

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## Preparing for Food Safety in 2020

As the shortened days and long nights of winter begin to lighten, organic producers are spending time with family, poring over seed catalogs, considering cropping plans, and maybe even scouting for new ground. While not at the top of the list of things to do, preparing for the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)

requirements is a wise way to spend the slow winter months. This includes obtaining mandatory trainings for key staff, understanding compliance dates, and potentially preparing for buyer-required third party food safety audits.

The FSMA Produce Safety Rule, written for producers of crops generally eaten fresh, lumps farms into three tiers with corresponding compliance dates. **This coming year is significant because the last group of growers (very small businesses averaging more than \$25k to \$250k in annual produce sales over the last three years) are required to be in compliance by January 26, 2020.**

If you only grow products on FDA's list of rarely consumed raw products (see [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)), if the products you grow are commercially processed using a verified "killstep", or if you average less than \$25k in gross annual produce sales, your operation is fully exempt from the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. If you average less than \$500k in total food sales (not just produce, but also items such as milk, eggs, wheat, etc.) and you sell over 50 percent to qualified end users (such as direct sales to restaurants or retail stores located within 275 miles of your farm), then you are eligible for a "qualified exemption," meaning only some of the FSMA rules apply. Ultimately, all growers should understand the requirements and take action to reduce food safety risks on the farm.

Training is the linchpin in a good food safety program, and growers who are required to comply with the FSMA produce safety rule must have at least one person on the farm who has taken the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) training. Generally, these trainings are subsidized, offered in English and Spanish, and being held regularly throughout the country. Visit the Produce Safety Alliance website at [www.producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu](http://www.producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu) for a list of upcoming trainings.

CCOF food safety certification staff have had a busy harvest season. We traveled to speak at the CCOF Pacific Southwest Chapter meeting in September, marched on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. to lobby for food safety certification cost share, attended the United Fresh Food Safety & Technology Council meetings to ensure organic voices were represented, and hosted a panel, Organic Farming in the Era of FSMA, at the Organic Grower Summit.

CCOF's food safety program offers competitive, GFSI benchmarked food safety certifications for farms and packinghouses. Often, we can combine your organic and food safety inspection. Contact Director of Food Safety Jacob Guth at [jacob@ccof.org](mailto:jacob@ccof.org) for more information.

# member LISTINGS

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