

## Michigan Organic Connections

Dear MOFFA Colleague,

Greetings and welcome to the Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance's inaugural electronic bi-monthly newsletter. You are receiving this January 2012 edition because of past, current, and ideally future support of our organic farming and food systems. We appreciate you allowing us the liberty of your inclusion in this circle of individuals seeking to promote and grow a healthy planet by example. If for any reason you choose not to receive this offering from MOFFA please communicate that to us and we will immediately remove you from our list. Knowing that we all are inundated with information overload our attempt here is to present a concise yet relevant synopsis of current Michigan organic issues and news. This being a definite work in progress we wholeheartedly seek your input. Our goal is continual improvement in content and format.

This year we celebrate 20 years as a non-profit, all volunteer, education, service, and outreach organization. MOFFA has been so very fortunate to have included within its ranks many dedicated and wonderful individuals and families who have been instrumental in defining and reshaping awareness of the organic food system. Each does their part accordingly to how their independent spirit manifests. As we move forward in a world that more then ever needs our voice, the Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance strives to be all-inclusive - there is plenty of room for us all. The more individuality the better to make our collective efforts of an organic livelihood and footprint most effective.

The Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance needs to be relevant and of maximum assistance to the farm and consumer community alike. To that end it is critical to us to know what functions and endeavors MOFFA needs to perform to fulfill our role and what exactly should that role be as we move into our third decade. Our next newsletter will have a link to a brief on-line survey to gauge the voice of our membership. Please take a moment to give us input. In the meantime contact us anytime at [moffaorganic@gmail.com](mailto:moffaorganic@gmail.com) with your questions and concerns and opinions.

Enjoy,  
John

### MOFFA WEBSITE

We are working to make the MOFFA web site, [www.moffa.org](http://www.moffa.org), more informative and user friendly. Our employment tab is available to anyone connected to the farming and growing community, as well as those in other food related enterprises, to post notices of opportunities available. As the world of 21st Century agriculture grows younger a large commitment on

### Con't on Pg 2

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).  
Questions or comments? E-mail us at [moffaorganic@gmail.com](mailto:moffaorganic@gmail.com).



*Promoting organic  
agriculture and  
the development  
and support of  
food systems that  
revitalize and  
sustain local  
communities.*

### In This Issue:

2012 Michigan Organic Conference .....	Pg 2
On the National Scene .....	Pg 2
Michigan Organic Reporting Session & Grad Student Poster Contest ..	Pg 3
What's New at MSU .....	Pg 3
Organizing Around the Farm Bill	Pg 4
A Vision for a Statewide Collation Around Policy Work .....	Pg 5

### UPCOMING CONFERENCES

January 28th is the Northern Michigan Small Farms Conference in Grayling. Everyone is encouraged to attend this excellent conference, info is available at their web-site [www.smallfarmconference.com](http://www.smallfarmconference.com). MOFFA is one of the many sponsors and this year we are presenting a track of sessions. One of the commitments the board has made is to be more participa-

Con't on Pg 2

## Michigan Organic Connections

### MOFFA WEBSITE (CON'T)

our part is to the youth and the beginning farmer or entrepreneur. If you have a position please post it with us.

The "Eating Organic" guide is a current project that we are endeavoring to have updated in mid spring so the consumer has easy access to all our organic farms throughout the state. The focus here will be mainly on growers to begin with. Once that is complete we will add other categories, i.e. farm markets, retail stores, processors, etc.

# www.moffa.org

### UPCOMING CONFERENCES (CON'T)

tory in the many like-minded conferences held throughout Michigan. We have offered sponsorship and exhibited throughout the years at numerous conferences but now additionally we are offering to assist in development of the educational segments.

Lansing's 3<sup>rd</sup> annual local food system conference, "Everyone Eats" will be held on February 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. "Everybody Eats" expects an attendance of 300 growers, restaurateurs, cooks, grocers, processors, distributors, emergency food providers, institutional food preparers and interested citizens. For registration or additional information, call (517)432-1034, or visit the website, [www.every-body-eats.com](http://www.every-body-eats.com).

### 2012 MICHIGAN ORGANIC CONFERENCE

There has been literally hours of discussion and debate on how best to offer and stage our annual Michigan Organic Conference. This year's conference will be held on November 10, 2012. The change in date reflects the board's belief that this is a most opportune time to maximize attendance as well as celebrate the culmination of the traditional growing season. In addition to this major change in the time of year, we are also seeking a new venue that will allow greater flexibility to us as the Conference organizers, as well as ease of access for all. A conference committee is currently being formed, and in an effort to present the best possible conference we desire this to be a much larger group of individuals than in the past. If you would like to be involved in any capacity please e-mail me at [hooperjwr@hotmail.com](mailto:hooperjwr@hotmail.com) or contact anyone on the board either in person or thru the web-site.

### ON THE NATIONAL SCENE

A new video released from the "Just Label It" campaign. "Labels Matter" is a new video encouraging consumers to fight to know what is in their food. The video is the result of collaboration between the Just Label It campaign and filmmaker Robert Kenner (who produced and directed the Oscar-nominated and Emmy-winning documentary *FOOD, INC.*). Check it out and pass it on to friends and family! [www.justlabelit.org/robynlabelit](http://www.justlabelit.org/robynlabelit).

Your Senator, Debbie Stabenow, is Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee — which means she has a critical voice in the policies that will dictate the safety and sustainability of our food system for years to come. For the new year, voice your support to 'level the playing field' for small and medium farmers. As we approach closer to the 2012 Farm Bill, take action by contacting Senator Stabenow on this important issue, and let's work to help protect Michigan farmers! Here's the link from our friends at Food and Water Watch heading up this communication. [http://action.foodandwaterwatch.org/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=9193](http://action.foodandwaterwatch.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=9193).

### MOFFA MEET & GREET

The MOFFA "MEET & GREET" at this years Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo was a huge success. We thank those farmers that provided the food and all those that came to partake of both the food and the stimulating conversation. It was great to see the smiling faces of new and old (one must be somewhat cautious in the use of this potentially sensitive adjective!) friends alike.

## Michigan Organic Connections

### MICHIGAN ORGANIC REPORTING SESSION & GRAD STUDENT POSTER CONTEST

March 2, 2012-Lincoln Room-Kellogg Conference Center- East Lansing, MI

Please join us for the annual Michigan Organic Reporting Session and Graduate Student Poster Contest that will be held Friday, March 2, 2012 at Michigan State University (MSU) in the Lincoln Room at the Kellogg Conference Center in East Lansing, Michigan. This program is part of MSU's Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Week. The Research Reporting session and Graduate Student Poster contest provides farmers, researchers, extension educators and graduate students with an opportunity to share research and practical ideas for and about organic production, management and marketing.

**Would you like to share?** We will have researchers presenting findings of their research-on organic agriculture crop production, marketing, educational programs or outreach. **Farmers** are invited to send of ideas to discuss at a Round Table Discussion. During lunch we will have tables set up with topics for you to join. If you would like to help lead a discussion send your idea to Vicki Morrone ([Sorrone@msu.edu](mailto:Sorrone@msu.edu)). Please send your topic ideas by February 17, 2012.

**Who should come to the program?** The information that will be presented will be of interest to organic and transitioning farmers and for farmers who may be considering the organic option-from beginners to very experienced. It will be useful to assist Extension educators, USDA and MDA staff members, and non-profit workers who work to support and assist organic farmers. Researchers can gain a perspective of relevant organic research in Michigan and the N.C. Region.

**What will be offered?** The program, scheduled from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm at the Lincoln Room in MSU's Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center, will include 20-minute research presentations, lunch-time Round Table Discussions led by farmers, a farmer panel to discuss findings from farmer-initiated research, and a reception to visit with the Graduate Students and their posters. The posters will be judged for best-delivered message. Prizes will be awarded during the reception. Judges will determine the winning posters, with monetary prizes provided by **MOFFA**. Look for the program details after February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

### WHAT'S NEW AT MSU

Ongoing organic research projects at MSU funded by the USDA Organic Research & Education Initiative, The Organic Farming Research Foundation, or the CERES Trust for Organic Research in the Midwest include: Greenhouse Biological Pest Management, Organic Dry Beans, Organic Raspberries and Cherries in High tunnels, Compost Tea, Cover Crop Management Strategies and Biofumigation, Perennial Wheat, Integrated Apple and Pork Production, Organic Hops, and others.

The MSU C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems ([www.mottgroup.msu.edu](http://www.mottgroup.msu.edu)) and the MSU Student Organic Farm ([www.msuorganicfarm.org](http://www.msuorganicfarm.org)) have worked over the past year to build the foundation for the formation of the soon to be announced MSU Center for Regional Food Systems. At least 40 MSU faculty and MSUE personnel have affiliated with the Center to date.

The MSU Student Organic Farm is in the 9th season of the year-round CSA serving 70 year round shares and 70 summer only shares. The Organic Farmer Training Program at the SOF recognized the 15 participants of the 5th co-hort for their successful completion of the program at a celebration dinner on November 19<sup>th</sup>. A new co-hort of 16 participants is nearly complete and ready to start on March 1. The Sustainable and Organic Horticulture degree concentration has been in place for over a year now and is the focus of many new horticulture students. MSU continues to support vermicomposting of food residue research at the SOF and the Bailey Hall Organic Culinary Herb Hoophouse to be built on campus this summer. The composting and herb projects are integrated to demonstrate the importance of cycling nutrients from field to fork and back to the field via compost.

Nancy Creamer, Director of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems at North Carolina State University will be the

[Con't on Pg 4](#)

## Michigan Organic Connections

### WHAT'S NEW AT MSU (CON'T)

guest of the Horticulture Organization of Graduate Students and will present a seminar on Thursday, February 23 at 4:00 in room A149 Plant and Soil Sciences Building.

The MSU Organic Farming Principles and Practices class of 26 students would like to invite Michigan organic farmers to participate in a panel to address student's questions and to assist with preparation for the oral final exam. Potential dates are Monday April 9 or Wednesday April 11. Class time is 10:15 to 11:45. If you are interested in participating on the panel and sharing your experience and perspectives with the students, please contact John Biernbaum at [biernbau@msu.edu](mailto:biernbau@msu.edu) or (517)355-5191 xt.1419.

### ORGANIZING AROUND THE FARM BILL

It is always important to keep our members of Congress aware of the policies we support, but it is critical that we do so as the Farm Bill is being debated. The policy decisions made usually have a five-year impact, but decisions to not fund a program can effectively be the end of that program. MOFFA has been successful in helping the Michigan Department of Agriculture to keep the Organic Cost Share program in force in Michigan over the last two years, and as a result of MOFFA's and MDA's work the program is likely to continue without lapse as long as Congress continues to fund it.

However, as always, the Organic Cost Share program, as well as other programs beneficial to organic farmers and the sustainable agriculture community, is being targeted by members of Congress who are looking for places to tighten up the budget. Without a consistent strong voice for these programs, they will get lost and the funds will be funneled to other programs. Programs such as the Organic Research and Extension Initiative, Beginning Farmer programs, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension, and initiatives to support local food systems and value added enterprises are the type of programs that help to stimulate healthy economic activity in the agricultural sector.

MOFFA needs to take a leadership position to join Michigan sustainable agriculture organizations around support of these programs. As the next Farm Bill is being formulated, we and the people and organizations that we share common policy ideas with will be most effective if we present a unified voice to Congress. That is not to say that we need to agree with all of the positions of other statewide organizations and their somewhat differing views of what 'sustainable' means... it is to say that we need to work with them to share support for those programs and initiatives that we already commonly agree are valuable and good.

Working with Congress can be frustrating and can sometimes make a person wonder, "Is it worth the time and energy?" However, we need to consider what things might be like if MOFFA and other organizations did not bother to engage in political action because of the frustrations involved. One recent example is the keeping of the Organic Certification Cost Share program for Michigan organic farmers. Another example is the progress being made in Michigan's Farm to School programming, which is a result of the effort put in to the Michigan Good Food Charter, and serves as a testament to what can happen as a result of the Michigan sustainable agriculture community's effort to organize around a common policy platform.

As the Farm Bill talks ensue, let's engage our fellow Michigan organizations and their members in a spirit of cooperation to try and achieve the best Farm Bill results we can!

Chris Bardenhagen  
MOFFA Policy Committee Chair



## Michigan Organic Connections

### A VISION FOR A STATEWIDE COLLATION AROUND POLICY WORK

Hey there MOFFA members. My name is Melissa Hornaday and I am a beginning farmer and one of the founders and board members of Four Seasons Produce Cooperative. I am also hoping to become an active board member of MOFFA and here's why.

Since mid July of last year, I have been working with a national organization called Organic Farming Research Foundation. OFRF is based in California, but is guided by a board of organic farmers from across the country and we are a member of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. We are trying to build support on the grassroots level, and in Congress, for the few organic programs and provisions in the upcoming Farm Bill.

As an organizer working statewide, I have noticed a huge need for someone within an existing state organization to step up and reach out to the many diverse food and farming groups. I would like to be one of the people to step up to this challenge because there is so much potential power in the many active food and farming organizations, both rural and urban here in Michigan.

I would like help facilitate the process of coalition building by utilizing MOFFA's organizational framework as a stepping-stone. I would love to see MOFFA's policy committee work as a catalyst for this process not just because it's a Farm Bill year, but because there will always be a need to work quickly to respond to challenges and road blocks in policy on local, state, and federal levels. A show of solidarity between farmers and food and farming organizations will always be needed in critical times.

As a young farmer just rooting, I know that there have been many amazing people involved with building MOFFA and other organizations that have come and gone over the years. These folks have laid the foundation for work towards sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty here in Michigan. I realize there are many different organizations because there are differences in approach, methodology, mission, and scope but I believe that we can respect our differences and come together when necessary to move ourselves forward. I hope you share my vision of MOFFA becoming an organization that can highlight commonalities and encourage acts of solidarity, statewide, in these times. I look forward to meeting MOFFA members and getting guidance and feedback. I write this vision in the spirit of dialogue with membership. I can be reached anytime at [Melissa@ofrf.org](mailto:Melissa@ofrf.org).

Thanks,

Melissa Hornaday  
Great Lakes Organizer  
Organic Farming Research Foundation