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A Message from the Chair

On behalf of my fellow members of the MOFFA Board of Directors, let me extend a sincere Welcome to our fourth and final 2015 MOFFA Organic Connections Newsletter. We hope it finds you celebrating this season of shortened and now lengthening days, and anticipating the farming year ahead.

At our December Board meeting I was elected by the Board to serve during 2016 in the position of Board Chair along with Dan Rossman as Vice-chair, Dane Terrill as Treasurer and Julia Studier as Secretary. I see my role as continuing the much appreciated efforts of John Hooper as Chair over the past four years. He would be quick to point out that the efforts have been team efforts. My goal here is to express our gratitude and appreciation of John's leadership and enthusiasm as a persistent team captain. He is passing on the Chair position with MOFFA matters in healthy condition. Over the past four years (2012-2015) as Chair John Hooper has:



- Kept our Board meetings regular and productive by balancing face to face meetings with conference calls to limit travel for board members from outside the Lansing area.
- Insured that MOFFA was well represented at Michigan farming related meetings and present as an educator through selling books.
- Hired and mentored Julia Christianson as the MOFFA administrative assistant. Together they have worked to compile the new edition of the Farm Guide and to move our budget and financial statements to a better place.

- Cultivated our quarterly newsletters that have steadily improved in quality. Past issues are conveniently available at our website.
- Initiated a Loan Fund to provide lending opportunities for participants in the MSU Organic Farmer Training Program.
- Invited farmers and consumers alike to be supporting members of MOFFA and to participate as members of the Board of Directors.
- Worked with the Board to organize the 20th MOFFA anniversary celebration in 2012 and to initiate the Organic Intensives in 2015.

John plans to continue with the Board and our efforts to cultivate organic agriculture. When you see John next, please express your gratitude.

I also want to thank Chris Bardenhagen, who has resigned from the Board effective this month, for his participation and his important contribution as Treasurer and member of the policy and loan committees during a time when he was juggling multiple responsibilities with work, school and family.

Some 20 years ago I was given the advice to spend more time cultivating what I cherish and want to see grow and less time fighting against things that were concerning or disturbing to me. That advice has been helpful and will continue to be what guides me as I continue on the MOFFA Board in my new role as Chair. I invite you to join us and share with us how you are spending your time cultivating what you cherish.

Please [renew or initiate your membership](#) for 2016. In 2016, can we grow from the 100+ supporting members to include more of the 1000+ recipients of our MOFFA Organic Connections Newsletter and organic supporters across Michigan?

Please participate in the 2016 Organic Intensives and Organic Reporting Session Scheduled for March 10 and 11. A reasonable goal is to grow from the ~100 participants in 2015 to 150 or more participants in 2016. Details [at the website](#) and coming in a separate announcement.

Over the last four years of newsletters, my perception is that there has not been email back in reply to questions we have asked or to provide support for or questions of the ideas presented. A goal for 2016 is that we will receive 50+ emails from readers of the Organic Connections Newsletter either sharing questions or offering support. Please take a minute and [let us know](#) you care.

We look forward to being an active part of cultivating and promoting organic agriculture and food systems that revitalize and sustain local communities. Please join us!

Dr. John Biernbaum is Professor of Horticulture at MSU, one of the founders of the MSU Student Organic Farm, and recently-elected Chair of MOFFA's Board of Directors.

Organic Field Crop Demand is Strong

by Dan Rossman

Demand for organic food continues to grow in the United States. According to a 2015 Organic Industry Survey by the Organic Trade Association (OTA), U.S. consumer sales of organic food is expected to exceed \$35.9 billion in 2015. That is a 11% increase from 2014. OTA also claims that organic food sales now represent almost 5% of total U.S. food sales. This is exciting news for organic producers. Producing for an increasing market is a favorable place to be.

Michigan ranks 9th overall in the U.S. for organic sales according to the 2014 USDA Census of Agriculture, but not surprisingly Michigan ranks fifth overall in the value of organic field crop production, first in organic black beans, fourth in organic soybeans, and fourth in organic corn for grain. Michigan's prominence is possible because of favorable growing conditions for organic field crops, individuals investment in the infrastructure to

receive and handle organic field crops, buyers sourcing organic crops from Michigan, and farmers willing to raise organic field crops.

The outlook for 2016 is bright for Michigan producers despite the potential for some downward pressure on organic prices. Conventional crop prices have softened because of the low oil prices affecting ethanol, the strong dollar affecting export demand, and large carryover supplies. There also are a number of farmers who are transitioning to organic. The U.S. does not have nearly enough production of organic field crops to meet domestic demand and must rely on substantial quantities of imports. We actually need more production of Michigan organic field crops. The prices suggested at an organic market outlook meeting in Michigan earlier in December by buyers and marketers reflected that the need is still strong. Organic yellow corn for 2016 was projected to be in the \$9.50 to \$10.50 range. Organic food grade soybeans might be priced at \$23 to \$24. Organic black, navy, and pinto beans are expected to be in the \$70 to \$85 range. There will likely be some resistance for organic farmers to contract at these levels because they are about a 15% reduction from the contract prices offered last year.

The message is clear in calling for more organic producers. When comparing conventional crop prices and returns with organic crops you easily see a far greater return for organics. Granted you cannot farm as many acres with the same labor force as conventional farmers. Also your risk of not being able to control weeds as you desire is real. Your yield likely will be lower but in the end you might just find a greater reward.

Below is a comparison of the economic returns of conventional field crops vs organic. These are only a projection at this point and an illustration to inspire conversation and to motivate you to calculate your own projections.

Field Crop 2016 Projections

	Corn		Soybeans		Soft Red Winter Wheat		Dry Beans (Black)	
	Conv.	Org.	Conv.	Org.	Conv.	Org.	Conv.	Org.
Yield/Acre	190	100	60	32	100	55	22	12
Price/Bu or Cwt (Black Beans)	\$3.34	\$10	\$8.20	\$24	\$4.38	\$13	\$23	\$80
Gross	\$635	\$1,000	\$492	\$768	\$438	\$715	\$506	\$960
Seed	\$126	\$88	\$77	\$78	\$44	\$50	\$90	\$100
Fertilizer/Manure/Compost	\$133	\$160	\$54	\$75	\$89	\$120	\$74	\$75
Herbicide	\$43		\$30		\$6		\$39	
Insecticide and Fungicide			\$27		\$38		\$27	
Tillage	\$30	\$57		\$57	\$13	\$13	\$43	\$57
Planting	\$19	\$19	\$28	\$19	\$13	\$13	\$19	\$19
Cultivator/ weeder/ rotary hoe		\$60		\$60		\$60		\$60
Sprayer	\$7		\$13		\$13		\$13	
Harvest/Combine	\$35	\$35	\$35	\$35	\$28	\$28	\$52	\$52
Trucking/Freight	\$19	\$40	\$6	\$13	\$10	\$22	\$3	\$4
Drying/discounts	\$48	\$33						
Crop Insurance								
Hand Labor								
Management/Overhead								
Organic certification		\$7		\$6		\$6		\$7
Land	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$150
Total Expenses	\$610	\$649	\$420	\$493	\$404	\$462	\$510	\$524
Net Return per acre	\$25	\$352	\$72	\$275	\$34	\$253	-\$4	\$436

Dan Rossman is an organic farmer, retired extension specialist, and recently-elected Vice-Chair of MOFFA's Board of Directors.

Economic Feasibility for the Organic Farmer

by Jessie Smith

Economics and organic agriculture. Can you make money as an organic farmer? One might as well ask if you can make money as a conventional farmer? Can you make money as a conventional farmer without relying on government subsidies, crop insurance, and existing in a constant state of indebtedness? Based on the conventional farms in our area I think I know what the answer to that one is, but let's stick to organics for the moment. What does it take to earn a living as an organic farmer?

Of course, the objective of every farm is to increase outputs for economic gain. Charles Walters, the late editor of *Acres, USA*, and a leading proponent of raw materials economics, said that the only way to create new sources of money starts with the sun. Being a farmer this puts you in the center of it all, but it takes knowhow and an ability to adapt to turn that sunlight into economic gain. You have to be canny, an adventurer, and it would help to be a polymath as well, as diversity is crucial to survival. Annual vegetable crops, perennial fruit crops, annual and perennial flowers, perennial herbs, eggs, meat, and a bit of wildcrafting. Your eyes need to always be open for opportunities. A planting that started out as a crop may become a trap crop midseason, thanks to an overwhelming infestation of flea beetles. It will be better for the farm in the long run. Plants in a fencerow that seem to serve no economic purpose may produce fascinating seed pods in autumn, and be just what they want at the local florist shop. Take in the entire landscape with this in mind. Green beans, black walnut trees, pussy willows, water cress, zinnias. They occupy different areas of the farm and make different demands on your time and money, but they can all be used to your advantage when it comes to making a living.

Another part of your livelihood as a farmer is reducing off-farm inputs as much as possible. This is where being organic is a help as the road to organic often leads to an integrated farm with animals and crops of many sorts. Producing your own fertilizers to build a healthy soil (one of the main tenets of organic agriculture) frees you from a cycle of buying chemical fertilizers to apply to crops that will have no chance of yielding as they stand in a soil with a total lack of health. Your farm is a complete cycle with no "waste." Crops that fail to be up to standards for human use can go to the animals, the animals produce manure, the soil uses the manure and in turn produces another crop that benefits man, animals and the soil.

A lot of the benefits of organic farming do not involve "quick returns." Just as a well balanced meal composed of your produce requires forethought and planning, so does your farm and crops. Food is more than just something to satiate hunger, and organic farming is more than a way to produce crops. It produces healthy crops, healthy soils that will produce more crops in the future, reduces harm to the natural environment (even enhances it with fencerows and flower plantings to foster insect and bird populations), and produces healthy people. People who have crunched the numbers have discovered that the cost of conventionally raised food is greater than the price tag that appears on the superstore shelf. The aforementioned government subsidies, though dealt with at tax time, are still a cost to be paid. As are any environmental issues that may be created by unsustainable farming practices. Not to mention the overtime paid to county employees to clear away snow drifts after it blows across a bare 160 acre field and stops in the road, the first "fence row" it found. And where did all of the honeybees go, anyway? Additional costs are to be paid to the nation's gargantuan health (or called by some "lack of health") care system. No planning ahead, no nutritious food and no health except of a sort sustained by a diet of pills and medicines. And in parallel, no sustainable farming system, no thought of long term effects to the environment and all of its animals (including humans), no hope of producing healthy foods, or any crop at all without the constant utilization of strong chemical fertilizers and renewed debts. These are the "gains" we can expect if organic agriculture is not given a larger place in the economy.

Jessie Smith is a Michigan State alumna (B.S., Crop and Soil Sciences; M.S. Entomology) and a MOFFA member. She works at Nodding Thistle, her family's farm, that has a history of organic gardening and farm marketing since 1984.

Economic Feasibility for the Organic Consumer

by Leah Smith

A discussion of the economics of organics raises at least two questions. One, is it possible to make money farming organically? Two, can you afford to buy organic food? My sister just spoke to the feasibility of making money through organic farming. Depending on how you do it, you can make money, a homestead and a living, a thriving community, and a better planet with organic agriculture. Now for the second question. Is organic eating affordable? For many reasons I would like to say yes to this question. From my position behind the table, selling at farmers' markets, you are at a good vantage point to see what people's attitudes about spending money are and what motivates their buying. As you know, people share their innermost thoughts and beliefs with how they choose to spend their money and I would say that organic food and agriculture incorporates all those things many people find important, though they may not realize it. People give money to organizations that work to achieve goals or protect things that are important to them. Rain forests, wild animals, domestic animals in shelters, relief aid to people all over the world. Spending money on organic food does the same thing. It doesn't just say, "I can afford more expensive food," "I care about my health," "I like the best tasting kale I can find." It says, "I think nutrient dense, great tasting food should be produced with agricultural practices that are sustainable, environmentally sound, and socially fulfilling, and I think this system should be economically viable for the farmer as well." They aren't just making a statement about the kind of food they want, but about the kind of society they want.

I can't tell you how many times I have heard a customer remark that they are starting to eat healthy, organic food because their doctor told them to. Then ask how to prepare kale. All I know of modern medical treatments is hearsay, but repeatedly I hear of their expense. Individuals, as well as the nation as a whole, seem willing to pay any price for the drugs and medications they need for health. This makes me think that for years a lot of people have not been aware of the impact the food they were eating was going to have on their health. I think it is a shame money couldn't have been invested in people's health when they still had health, when they still had choices. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I guess this shouldn't just be a say for school children. And I don't think cures are being bought with this health care system, only a suspension of symptoms.

So people will spend more to try to retrieve health that is lost. What about spending money before it goes? Yes, there are young couples at the farmers' market doing that very thing. There are also those who complain that organic food is just too expensive. I once read about a study conducted after World War II on the health of people in Europe. It found that populations that had had access to less food, but of higher quality, were physically healthier than those who had consumed larger quantities of lesser quality food. Perhaps when people think they can't afford to buy organic food, they are thinking of buying piles of food, whether processed or conventionally produced or both, that is devoid on nutrition. It could be true that it would be difficult to buy organic food of a similar quantity. That is why you have upped the quality. True, this may require a recalibrating of what your weekly shopping is supposed to look like. But it could also lead to a different way of feeling, a new attitude toward eating.

When you buy food, you are hoping to please your palate. You are interested in good taste. Many sources say that people find organic food tastes better, though it is not known why. And I have personally heard this stated by many people, too. It could be that the superior nutrition in the food, chiefly in the form of phytonutrients and antioxidants, contributes to better taste. I suppose it could be that people believe it tastes better because they know they are doing themselves good by eating something healthy. Like a placebo effect when you believe you are taking a medication that will make you feel better. Or perhaps it is like the boost in mood you get when you give to a cause you believe in. When you buy food that is better for you, your family, the environment, and hard working members of society like the conscientious farmer, you feel good. And I think that economically you have made a killing as well. After all, the cost of cheap food turns out to be very high in the end.

Leah Smith is a Michigan State alumna (B.S., Crop and Soil Sciences) and a MOFFA member. She works at Nodding Thistle, her family's farm, which has a history of organic gardening and farm marketing since 1984.

Growing the "MOFFA Farm"

by Dane Terrill

As the newly elected MOFFA Treasurer, I find it appropriate to cover the topic of "Economics of Organics" the theme for our final newsletter of 2015.

Most members reading this far would expect an article focusing on some form of economics related to organic farming. However, I am going to focus on the economics of organics relative to MOFFA and specifically "you" the members. Think of MOFFA as an organic farm. This farm was organized as a nonprofit in 1992 to promote your organic farm and your harvest. The board or "farmers" on the MOFFA farm are specialists in their respective fields (just like you) who continually plant seeds hoping for a bountiful harvest. The fertilizer or "energy" required to grow this farm is not unlike your farm as it grows with additional plants, or "members"! Unlike your farm (hopefully), the MOFFA farm is comprised mostly of volunteers. These volunteers are advocates of organic production and promotion whose responsibility is summed up in the MOFFA Mission statement:

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

Member and non-member organic farms have most likely benefitted in some way from the fruits of labor by the MOFFA farmers, hopefully economically! In the past, the MOFFA farm organized and hosted the annual MOFFA Conference utilizing speakers, farmers and educators to impart concepts, processes and/or marketing tools to improve the economics on your farm. Most recently, MOFFA has instituted the Organic Intensives, a 1-day educational opportunity for new and experienced organic growers to continue learning, to network, and to replenish the energy necessary to grow your operation. (See article elsewhere in this newsletter). Recently the Farm Guide was updated and published online, and now is available in print format. The new Farm Guide lists over 130 farmers across the state of Michigan and the products they sell. (This is free advertising for your farm; if you are not listed in the guide, contact us.) Throughout the year, the MOFFA farm also publishes quarterly newsletters with articles centered on a specific theme. Articles are submitted by members of the board as well as local and regional growers. Please feel free to contribute an article; it will benefit someone's economics.

Since 1992, the economics of the MOFFA farm has been funded primarily by memberships, along with a few much needed grants over the years. These funds are best used as determined by the MOFFA board to provide: consumer and farmer education, a legislative voice, and to assist in creating markets for organic products. The economics of organics has demand for your products outpacing supply. In order to increase economic opportunities for our membership and the offerings of the MOFFA farm, we will be searching out additional funding sources including grants, strategic partnerships, and corporate sponsorships. Our MOFFA farm will continue to plant new seeds, cultivate relationships, and harvest members in order to promote the economics on our farm...and yours! We appreciate your membership and support!

Please pass this along to another farmer!

Dane Terrill is Director of Sales and Marketing at Crop Services International and Flowerfield Enterprises. He has served on the MOFFA Board of Directors since 2012 and has recently been elected Treasurer.

The USDA website offers numerous resources relating to the economics of farming in general and organic farming in particular. Two recent publications of note:

www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2015-november/despite-profit-potential,-organic-field-crop-acreage-remains-low.aspx

www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Organic_Survey/index.php

Reflection on the Economics of Organic Farming

by John Biernbaum, Pear Tree Farm

Experience has taught me that at times it is more effective to help students identify what questions need to be considered rather than trying to provide answers for certain topics. In the Organic Farming Principles and Practices course we spend time considering multiple perspectives and policies that influence what questions are asked.

Some frequent questions about the economics of organic farming we consider are:

- Is organic food more expensive?
- What is the cost of low quality food? Or the value of high quality food?
- Do organic production methods cost more?
- What is the cost of detrimental environmental impacts of farming practices and who pays those costs?
- Are there fewer added / off farm resources needed with organic production?
- Are the resources more or less expensive compared to other farm inputs?
- If there are fewer inputs, should that lower production costs?
- Is organic more expensive because more labor is required?
- Is the price of organic influenced by the added cost of record keeping or certification?
- Are organic farmers attempting to recover a fair price that allows them to earn an income that provides for health care and retirement?
- Are some producers or marketers simply looking for an organic price premium and more profit?
- Is organic meat more expensive due to the limited availability of organic livestock feed?
- Is organic farming simply input substitution with more expensive and less effective materials?
- Is organic farming more expensive and labor intensive because more knowledge and planning are necessary to execute an ecological compared to an industrial farm plan?

When I first starting learning about organic farming in 1995, I learned that if organic food did cost more, one reason was an attempt by farmers to recover the true cost of farming without subsidies. These costs included the value of protecting the soil and environment, and the farmer's ability to have health care and retirement savings. Over the past 20 years I have visited many organic farms and have seen farmers working hard to earn a living more than making a profit. I also have seen that organic farming does not have to cost more or require more labor, but it might, depending on the skill level of the farmer and resources available.

More recently, it appears that a commonly shared public news media impression of organic farming and higher prices is that the organic process is a scam to get people to spend more money on something that is not really any different. The "no chemicals and pesticides" perspective still is presented more often than the "ecological farming and soil is alive" perspective. These are perceptions that all of us need to be able to vocally address.

One important lesson I learned about the cost of organic food came from working on the 2003 Michigan Organic Conference that was held at the MSU Student Union. The Student Union had to prepare the food on site. We were told that a lunch of soup, salad, sandwich and a cookie normally cost about \$7. Since we would be doing "organic", it would cost more, probably \$10, even though we had already committed to providing several food inputs. As time went on, word came back that the price had gone up to \$12, and then \$14. When I called the Union to find out what was going on, the contact person shared that she was afraid to tell us that the price might end up at \$16, more than twice the normal price.

So we scheduled a meeting to find out what was going on. The cooks showed us their spreadsheet to calculate costs. One of the calculations was that the cookie for the meal would cost \$6. I asked if that seemed reasonable that someone would pay \$6 for a cookie? It appeared they had not considered that \$6 was questionable. So the next question was how did they come up with a \$6 cost? They shared their standard formula of "final cost = input

materials cost x 3". The materials cost was considered one third, the labor cost one-third, and the overhead cost one-third. I have seen many times since that this is the standard formula for restaurants.

So for the cookie, if the sugar, flour, butter and other ingredients cost \$1, you would charge \$3. The chefs had gone to East Lansing Food Coop and priced organic ingredients and the prices were higher than the normal prices. So let's say the ingredients cost \$2, the new price was now \$6. Rather than \$2 for ingredients and \$1 for labor and \$1 for overhead totaling \$4, the price was \$6. The cost of labor and overhead had not changed, but the income from labor and overhead were also now doubled. For these cooks doing organic food for the first time, organic was looking like a really good deal.

So one perspective is that a reason that some restaurants and retailers are happy to sell organic is that they make more money with no more work. Rather than the farmer being the intended beneficiary of the additional income, it is the restaurant or the retailer. The higher prices due to mark-up support the perception that organic is food for the elite and wealthy. Avoiding mark-up and middle men are common reasons we frequently recommend that farmers use direct marketing through farmer's markets, farm stands and CSA programs.

How do we address this situation? *We need more confident, calm, committed voices prepared to explain and defend organic farming growing, pricing and marketing practices.* The goal of affordable access to high quality food produced locally with certified organic and ecological methods needs to be balanced with the goal of adequate farm income to keep farmers at all scales as food producers and stewards of our land. Are you prepared to be one of those confident calm committed voices? Are you prepared to purchase and wear a t-shirt with the message "Ask me about Organic Farming"? If not, what do you need to get prepared? Let us know.

Dr. John Biernbaum is Professor of Horticulture at MSU, one of the founders of the MSU Student Organic Farm, and recently-elected Chair of MOFFA's Board of Directors.

One Way Forward - Cooperative Ventures

by John Hooper

Access to productive crop-worthy land throughout humankind's steady progress toward more structured societies has proven to be difficult for many. This is especially true in the last 200 years as we have failed in the effort to feed our burgeoning world population. As a commodity like no other, there is a finite amount of arable carbon-rich topsoil on a planet overwhelmingly covered with water, tropical rainforest, desert and rock. Ingenious methodologies are constantly being introduced to remake the once barren fertile. Yet our farming/growing practices in the last dozen decades have further eroded the "good" lands' carrying capacity, especially in the industrial north—practices now evident world-wide.

All of this history coupled with an exorbitant monetary value placed on a limited resource is a huge impediment to beginning farmers of all ages. Land is available but at a price which is unattainable to all but a small percent. Without substantial assets, family ties, or an amazing stroke of good fortune, options are few. We are surrounded by many success stories in our heritage-rich Michigan agriculture culture, but the numbers are dwarfed by the need and demand. And would we not be overjoyed to see this demand increase as the profession of being a farmer and steward of the land continued to be elevated in the eyes of this and future generations!

As we strive to rebuild community and reimagine the commons in 2016 the question is – Is there a paradigm to which we can aspire? If not – what in the realm of practical idealism will lift and move us forward? By not the furthest stretch of credence do I, after almost seven decades on the planet, possess more than an inkling of the intricacies of human nature. Yet longevity does bestow glimpses of truth even to the romantic.

This I do know – Corporate capitalism is a dismal failed system that could very well spell our demise (Naomi Kline – *This Changes Everything*). The ideals of communism seem worthy but are totally impractical when applied to humans. We are still an evolving ego driven species that promotes individualism over socialism, which may be a model of living that holds promise but lacks refinement and acceptance. The isms hold no sway! The word is cooperation.

The success of cooperatives is enviable, the impact on our present world undeniable. Granted there have been many failures. Personal experience with a four-year effort crafting a well-structured produce cooperative withered on the vine; reinforcing that the twin concepts of good management and all participants possessing a real vested interest are mandatory. Volunteerism has many limitations.

Cooperative land acquisition is not a new concept. History is rife with numerous examples including many present communities, most of which are focused on a common thread: religion, family, village, commodity, etc. (In our current day survival most assuredly could be added to the mix.)

Volumes of material are available on the requirements and necessary infrastructure to build a cooperative organization. Success is directly dependent on a unified motive and clear vision of the path. Cooperative land purchasing offers a real opportunity to grow food, fauna and fiber. The pact between people working adjacent and/or common land needs to take into consideration all possible contingencies. We humans are volatile complex creatures and countless failed relationships checker our past. Eyes wide open! The key – trust and simplicity.

So how to begin? Most cooperatives involve membership in an organization – e.g. credit unions, electric utility companies, food co-ops, farmer's co-ops marketing a particular commodity. A co-operative focused on communal land acquisition would be a unique venture and in need of very specific language. Fortunately there are others currently involved in this concept with a strong directional antenna tuned to twenty-first century realism (see below). Discovering and acquiring suitable land and searching out organizational info will not loom as challenging as finding the like-minded souls to begin this journey with. Obviously there is no substitute for years of friendship and comradery but introductions are the beginning of every relationship regardless of the length.

Our world has become one network, an interconnected planet, where the power of technology channeled can bring us the most fascinating relationships. In the days ahead I hope to explore with MOFFA how we as an organization can further this concept of cooperative land acquisition. We currently offer tabs on our website for land, employment and opportunities—we should be able to fine tune these. The career/life choice to earn a just livelihood from the land should be an unquestionable right for everyone.

Sites: www.thegreenhorns.net
www.groundswellcenter.org

www.beginningfarmers.org
www.youngfarmers.org

For 40 years John Hooper has been an advocate and practitioner of the organic method of food production. He joined MOFFA's Board of Directors in 2009.

More on Carbon Sequestration

Carbon Sequestration was a theme of our July 2015 issue. Additional information on this topic is available in a recently released document from the National Sustainable Agriculture Movement titled: Carbon Sequestration Potential on Agricultural Lands: A Review of Current Science and Available Practices. The 36 page pdf document can be downloaded at <http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications>.

Executive Summary

Carbon sequestration on agricultural lands is possible through a range of soil management strategies and could be substantial with widespread implementation. Sequestration of historic carbon emissions is now essential as mitigation alone is unlikely to stabilize our atmosphere. There are numerous management strategies for drawing carbon out of the atmosphere and holding it in the soil. These strategies vary in effectiveness across different climates, soil types, and geographies. There are still debates about the durability of sequestration in soil and about the precise conditions that maximize drawdown of carbon emissions. This paper explores how soil carbon is sequestered, the state of soil carbon research, and the debate on the extent of its potential. It offers a set of recommendations for ongoing research and highlights the many co-benefits to increasing soil carbon.

MOFFA's 'Meet-and-Greet' at GLEXPO

by Julie Studier

This year's MOFFA reception at GLEXPO was well attended, with more than double the attendees as last year. As a new attraction, we invited guest organic farmers and businesses to display their farm's products/accomplishments. Of those guest farms included were past organic food donors, along with new food donors, as listed below. We are very grateful for all those who gave of their time and product to make this event the success that it was! We also thank the many GLEXPO's lecturers and extension service personnel who attended. Lively conversations and good networking accompanied the wonderful food so generously donated. Guests included the following:

- BioSystems, Marlette MI, Joe Scrimger , soil expert and lecturer.
- Birdsong Farm (formerly Eaters Guild), certified organic vegetables, Bangor, Michigan – Laurie Arboreal. Donated root vegetables for fresh vegetable vinaigrette at the reception.
- Food For Thought, Gourmet, organic, wild and Fair Trade items, Honor, MI, Timothy and Kathy Young. Again this year, donated selection of certified organic salsas for the reception.
- Grassfields Cheese, Coopersville, MI, Luke Meerman. Again this year, donated selection of certified organic cheeses for the reception.
- Growers Fare, CSA promotion project, and West Michigan Growers Group, Grand Rapids MI: supervising both groups: Rachele Bostwick, Earthkeepers Farm, Kent City.
- Joe's Blues, naturally grown blueberries, Bangor, Michigan, Frank and son Joe Corrado – guest farm displaying SARE grant information on transitioning blueberries to organic production.
- Kent Karnematt, Vegetables, transitioning to organic, Freemont, MI.
- Maynard Kaufman, Soil and Carbon Sequestration Guru, Bangor, MI.
- Monroe Family Organics, certified organic vegetables, Alma, MI, Fred and Michele Monroe
- MSU Extension Reps – Berrien County, MI, Van Buren County, Lansing MI.
- North Michigan Small Farm Conference, Traverse City, Michigan, Bernie Ware as representative, including display of unusual American Indian squash crop examples.
- Justin Ooman, Vegetables transitioning to organic, Hart, Michigan.
- Pleasant Hill Blueberry Farm, certified organic blueberries since 1976, Fennville, MI – John VanVoorhees.
- Dan Rossman, Perrinton MI (Gratiot County), retired extension educator and organic grower.
- Shady Side Farm, certified organic dry beans; also, wool, beef, Holland, MI, Mike Bronkema. Donated beans for MOFFA reception dishes: Maple baked beans, yellow bean dip and black bean brownies.
- Earth First Farms, certified organic apples, Berrien Center, Michigan, Tom Rosenfeld. Donated organic apple cider.
- Purple Porch Co-op, South Bend IN: Donated in-house made hummus and Michigan- Made non-GMO chips, breads.
- Dyer Family Organic Farm, Ann Arbor, MI, Diana and Dick Dyer - donated organic garlic.

Julie Studier grows organic apples and vegetables at Tower Hill Farm in Sodus, and was recently elected Secretary of MOFFA's Board.

MOFFA Organic Intensives

On March 10, 2016, MOFFA will hold its second Organic Intensives day-long concentrated learning experience for farmers and serious gardeners.

For 2016, MOFFA has extended an invitation to individuals who are recognized experts and educators in one of three topic areas:

- Foraging for Local Food and Health
- Field Crops: Transition to Organic
- Saving and Producing Organic Seed

More information about the event and the presenters and content of the three sessions is available at the [Organic Intensives](#) page on our website (which will continue to be updated over the next two months). We encourage you to seriously consider attending this year. Those who did so last year overwhelmingly indicated that the experience exceeded their expectations, and we are working to ensure that this year will be even better.

High Tunnel Grant Report

MOFFA partnered with several MSU Researchers during 2014 and 2015 to secure funding from the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program managed by MDARD. The focus of the work was organic raspberry and sweet cherry production and pest management in a one-acre three-season high tunnel facility located at the Horticulture Teaching and Research Center. Funds supported both project personnel and infrastructure maintenance. A report of the project methods and outcomes is available as a PDF download [here](#).

MOFFA News

Membership – Tomorrow marks the beginning of a new year, which means it's time to renew your membership in MOFFA—or join for the first time—if you share our goal of promoting sustainable agriculture in Michigan. Your membership dollars are by far the largest source of support for what we do, and the more support we have, the more we can do toward that goal. One can join online at moffa.net/membership.html, or if you prefer, [email](#) or call us (248-262-6826) to request a membership packet.

Farm Guide – We were encouraged by the number of people who purchased a printed copy of MOFFA's 2015 Guide to Michigan's Organic and Ecologically Sustainable Growers and Farms at GLEXPO, even though the 2015 season has passed. Between now and April we will be asking farms who are listed in the guide to review and update their listings, and those who are not listed to take a few moments to add their farms. The Guide serves not only as a source for those seeking local and sustainably raised food, but also a resource for farmers to contact others who are engaged in similar pursuits, to compare notes and collaborate in other ways. More information and an opportunity to sign up online are available at moffa.net/farm-guide.html.

Newsletter – In the coming weeks we will be discussing topics for the newsletters of 2016. If you have ideas to contribute, or if you'd like to be alerted of future opportunities to contribute to the newsletter, please [let us know](#).

We know we have a lot of readers who could make a significant contribution to the publication's usefulness, and we encourage you to consider adding your voice.

Volunteers – The next few months are the heart of the conference season for farmers in Michigan—if you'd enjoy spending a few hours at the MOFFA booth at upcoming events talking to people about organic agriculture, please [let us know](#). We plan to be at the [Michigan Family Farms Conference](#) in Marshall and the [Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference](#) in Traverse City in January, and of course [Organic Intensives](#) and the Organic Reporting Session in East Lansing in March. We are also always looking for people who are interested in making the commitment to support our efforts through participating on MOFFA's Board of Directors.

Keep up with MOFFA on our website: www.moffa.net, or email us at moffaorganic@gmail.com.

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