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Dear MOFFA Friend,

Kindest regards - a sincere greeting from the MOFFA Board of Directors this wonderful and industrious season. May the labor of love with the soil, of which we all are engaged on varying levels, reap bounty and personal satisfaction in the weeks and months ahead.

Our volunteer board continues, with the aid of a very skilled administrative assistant, to champion organic agriculture. It is a single-minded mission but with many facets.

To be very direct—speaking to the heart of the matter—we need your membership support. MOFFA funds for sponsorship, programs, newsletters, conferences, promotion of organics, policy work, etc. come 100% from our members. Every dime is spent to fulfill our mission.



Often someone will pose the question, “What are the benefits of membership?” For certain there are no umbrellas or ponchos! The response that many have probably heard given in the past is succinct and simple. As stewards of this planet we have a responsibility, and hopefully a strong desire, to sustain and create as healthy an environment as possible for all life. Your membership joins you to a wonderful collective of people whose ultimate work in life follows that path. For me personally this is favour enough!

Earth’s soil, water and air are our legacy of most critical impact. If you are reading this you undoubtedly harbor a similar belief, and possess the knowledge that organic agriculture and the food systems resulting from it offer our optimum opportunity for sane survival.

Caretakers—MOFFA’s role is one of education, information dissemination, outreach, and support—asking and answering the questions. People have a desire to be informed, and there is a need for an organization to assist them, when requested, with their ecological approach to their environs. This is the work we do.

A voice for Organic agriculture—we are humbly no more, but assiduously no less!

We are honored and fortunate to be able to continue the spirit of 40 years of Michigan Organics—we ask for your financial assistance. You can join online at <http://www.moffa.net/membership.html>, or call 248-262-6826 to request a membership form. Thanks!

Enjoy, John H.

MOFFA Carbon Credit

In the shadow of broad political paralysis to do significant work towards mitigating climate change from atmospheric carbon, it's beginning to occur to Michigan farmers that we must use our soils and practices to fight for ourselves. From our lookout we notice the small and big changes. Our craft stands to suffer first and most from extreme weather and new heat and moisture regimes. Still, research has encouraged us to see our soils as potentially huge carbon sinks. With new 'carbon negative' practices like mulch in place organic no till and forest farming permaculture methods, growers are empowered to feed our communities while drawing down atmospheric carbon.

We at MOFFA want to lean on our credibility with organic growers and eaters in Michigan to figure out a) how to find and reward extant carbon negative production; b) how to develop and incentivize new production and new growers that fixes more carbon; and c) how to connect eaters to this process and allow them to fund these growers for their service to all of us.

The seed idea for this is to market a retail carbon credit like a "take your car off the road this year" card that in a meaningful way sells the carbon indulgence afforded by the carbon negative farming practice. The hope being that folks will value the service of having some portion of carbon emissions they feel responsible for taken out of the air by a farming practice that they can learn about and perhaps even see and explore in their home state.

Crimper to crimp annual rye when used as a cover crop. This tool offers a means to use a "no-till" system in organic and other farming systems. Taken at KBS Hickory Corners Cover Crop Field Day. Courtesy Vicki Morrone.



There are plenty of reasons for farmers to use these practices without cash incentives—the longterm fertility and water holding benefits of soil carbon acts to hedge against weather extremes while adding to the banked energy for driving living soil processes. But we bet they'll take the money. At between 1 and 3 tons carbon per acre (sequestered by no-till organic, for example) and 20 euros a ton (on the carbon credits on the European carbon exchange) growers should at least be seeing that \$25 to \$75 an acre somehow.

So what MOFFA would have to figure out: First, is this viable and non-redundant? Second, can we verify practices well enough to put our name on a service that promises a unit of sequestration? Third can we get the optics and education right on the service so that eaters will realize the value and fork us back the cash? Last (and maybe more if you can help us critique this process with questions and advice), can our presence among growers

help accelerate the adoption of these practices in a way that succeeds for everyone at the table?

We want to hear your ideas on this. Is it appropriate work for MOFFA to perform? Is there a need? Are there any of you who can help? Is it too late to care and we should all head for high ground (ha, of course not! just seeing if you were awake!)?

Well this concern for me as a MOFFA board member will be my hairshirt, picket pole and boring conversational cudgel...be sure to dodge me at any gatherings. Still, let us know what you think.

— *Lee Arboreal*

March Against Monsanto – Michigan!

On May 25, 2013, activists around the world will unite to March Against Monsanto. Marches will take place in eleven cities across Michigan.

The events are intended to raise awareness about the dangers of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and to draw attention to the actions of Monsanto worldwide,

including the recently passed “Monsanto Protection Act” which, among other things, bans courts from halting the sale of Monsanto’s genetically-modified seeds.

From the website: “For too long, Monsanto has been the benefactor of corporate subsidies and political favoritism. Organic and small farmers suffer losses while Monsanto continues to forge its monopoly over the world’s food supply, including exclusive patenting rights over seeds and genetic makeup.”

Marches are scheduled in these cities:

Detroit	10:00 am	Eastern Market, 2910 Russell St	http://on.fb.me/10VXhnQ
Flint	2:00 pm	600 Church St	http://on.fb.me/YUGKkh
Grand Rapids	2:00 pm	Ah-Nab-Awen Park, 303 Pearl St	http://on.fb.me/Z3JXgL
Jackson	11:00 am	Two locations — the corner of Louis Glick and Mechanic, and the corner of Michigan Ave. and Brown St.	http://on.fb.me/10DBC3R
Kalamazoo	2:00 pm	Start at the People’s Food Co-Op at 1pm with the march beginning at 2pm	http://on.fb.me/12hubm0
Lansing	2:00 pm	State Capitol, Lansing	http://on.fb.me/1052A5A
Marquette	2:00 pm	Marquette Commons	http://on.fb.me/Xrslvn
Mt. Pleasant	2:00 pm	Island Park	http://on.fb.me/11gdYNI
Sault Ste. Marie	2:00 pm	City Hall, Water St.	http://on.fb.me/16BrA9g
Sterling Heights	2:00 pm	City Hall, 40555 Utica Rd	http://on.fb.me/14DEZjD
Traverse City	2:00 pm	The Open Space (Grandview Parkway & Union Street)	http://on.fb.me/10yYOmY

Farm Guide Update

June 1st is the deadline for inclusion in the first edition of MOFFA’s Guide to Michigan’s Organic and Ecologically Sustainable Growers and Farms. If you’d like to be included in the publication but haven’t signed up yet, please visit <http://www.moffa.net/grower-information-2013.html> or request a form by mail to P.O. Box 26102, Lansing, MI 48909 or by calling 248-262-6826. We hope to have the guide available online by mid-June.

Policy Work

In a recent press release, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition acknowledged MOFFA’s involvement in helping to draft and promote the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act of 2013.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has been closely involved in the development of this bill, and has worked in close partnership with both Congressional offices along with several farmer advocacy organizations across the country, including NSAC members Land Stewardship Project, Center for Rural Affairs, National Young Farmers’ Coalition, California FarmLink, and Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance, among others.

Taylor Reid worked closely with NSAC on MOFFA's behalf. Taylor is our representative to NSAC and has put many hours of time and travel into this and other MOFFA/NSAC priority issues. Taylor is currently finishing his PhD at MSU; he has been a long time member of MOFFA, sitting on the board for several years, and has continued to serve MOFFA through his policy work with NSAC.

Thanks for your efforts Taylor!

Organizational Issues

As the MOFFA board continues its efforts to improve MOFFA's capacity to work towards its mission, we are considering several mechanisms that can help us to become a more functional organization. One of these is changing our by-laws to become a 'directorship' organization versus a membership organization. The main reason is that in a membership organization, the membership is required to meet annually to elect the governing board. It can be very difficult to organize an annual meeting where a sufficient number of members will actually attend and vote.

Functionally there would be no changes to the way in which MOFFA operates, but becoming a directorship organization would allow us to avoid a significant amount of effort which would otherwise be spent on administrative tasks. Members will still be the backbone of the organization. The main difference is that current board members could nominate and elect new board members without seeking ratification from the membership.

While members of MOFFA would not directly vote for board nominees, recommendations for nominees from membership, and individual members expressing a desire to serve, would still be the prime manner in which board membership would be assembled.

Please send us any comments or thoughts you have, including thoughts and ideas regarding the by-laws. We want to get feedback from the membership as we consider whether or not to pursue this action. If, after gathering member feedback, it seems that it would be a positive thing for MOFFA, all dues-paying members will have an opportunity to vote on all aspects of the matter. We will send notice of a meeting for purposes of voting on these and potentially other items.

Finally, there is plenty of room on the board for interested and engaged members—please let us know if you are interested in serving on the board!

— *Chris Bardenhagen, MOFFA Treasurer*

Membership Versus Directorship

	Membership	Directorship
Membership elects board members	YES	NO
Members vote on most board decisions	NO	NO
Members get benefits such as newsletters, etc.*	YES	YES
Members can become board members or sit on an advisory committee **	YES	YES
<p>* Current member benefits include representation to state and federal government through policy work; newsletters; guides to sourcing Michigan Organic products; support of organic research and educational events; invitations to organic programs and events; and eligibility for membership with the Michigan State University Federal Credit Union. (While many of these benefits are made available to the public as part of MOFFA's mission, some of them are available only as a dues paying member.) Membership benefits will not change as a result of a change to a directorship. A change to a directorship will only affect the right to elect board members and to vote directly on changes to MOFFA's by-laws and Articles of Incorporation.</p>		
<p>** This is true if there is a provision in the bylaws creating advisory committees. There is in the current bylaws, and additionally there is a mandate that board members be dues paying members of MOFFA. There is no proposal to eliminate these provisions.</p>		

Deciding on MOFFA's Organizational Status

One of MOFFA's primary goals is to maintain transparency with its members. We realize that the decision on whether we remain a membership organization or transition to a directorship is extremely important, and we wanted our members to know that it is essential to us that all of your voices be heard. Therefore, we wanted to outline the process over the next few months by which this decision will be made, so our members understand the opportunities through which to provide feedback.

Within this newsletter we have spelled out the pros and cons to being either a membership or directorship organization. We hope the information that we have provided has helped you form an opinion either one way or the other.

By the beginning of June, we will post a survey on our website attempting to gain some preliminary feedback from our members about their opinions on whether MOFFA should be a membership versus directorship organization.

In July, the MOFFA board will compile the comments and suggestions of its members, and send out this feedback for all MOFFA members to read. At the same time we will give notice of a meeting of the full membership for the purposes of 1) voting on the

motion to change from a membership to a directorship and 2) voting on all proposed changes to the by-laws. Along with the notice of the meeting, we will provide a copy of all of the proposed amendments to the bylaws. Before the meeting, MOFFA board members will make every effort to personally contact every dues-paying member to obtain their voting proxy in the event they are unable to attend the meeting.

To improve our capacity to serve our constituents, MOFFA needs the support of its members... both financially and intellectually. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to pay your dues for 2013, and over the next few months provide your feedback to MOFFA so that your voice and opinions can be heard.

The MSU Student Organic Farm and Year-round Community Supported Agriculture Program Celebrating an Important 10 Year Anniversary

In April of 1999, 14 years ago, students, staff and faculty as members of a registered student organization called the Michigan Sustainable Agriculture Network (MSAN), came together on campus to discuss how to start a student based organic farm at MSU. Starting in 2001 through 2004, \$320,000 in research and education grants from six sources was invested in the start-up of the MSU Student Organic Farm (SOF). During spring semester 2003 a special topics class in the Horticulture Department finalized a plan for launching a year round community supported agriculture (CSA) program based on selling memberships to faculty, staff, students and community members who would receive weekly distributions of vegetables from the farm. Vegetables are available year round through the use of passive solar greenhouses and cold storage of summer harvested crops. The first distribution to the original 25 memberships was made in May of 2003.

Since that date 10 years ago, students, staff, faculty and community members have consistently and passionately provided fresh vegetables to the members for 48 weeks of the year. The farm continues to grow and



John Biemesium offering an educational program on compost at Morgan Composting. Image courtesy Vicki Morrone.

now provides vegetables for 70 memberships (designed for a family of four) year-round, 70 memberships during the summer season (20 weeks), for a campus farm stand for 30 weeks, and on a year-round basis to certain dining facilities on campus.

The farm was certified organic for the first time in 2004 by OGM and continues to be inspected and certified each year. We have data to demonstrate that both the quality of the soil at the SOF as measured by soil organic matter and available minerals and the yields obtained from the land have continued to improve. In response to the request of students, the farming program also includes pastured poultry and swine husbandry that help diversify and improve the ecology of the farm. Other projects include honey bees, an edible forest garden and worm composting of campus food scraps to demonstrate the food cycle loop.

Perhaps most importantly, the SOF is a living laboratory and a home away from home for hundreds of students seeking a vision consistent with their values and goals for the future. Many of these students have gone on to start or work at similar farms around the country that value the sacredness of food, the land used to grow it and the people who grow it. Thousands of additional students from MSU, LCC and other schools have come to the SOF to learn from their colleagues how the farm succeeds. Some small fraction of these visitors came back many more times as volunteers or members of the farm crew. In addition we are now entering the fourth year of a unique integrated full time 9-month intensive Organic Farmer Training Program that prepares 16 participants to manage successful year-round diversified organic farms like the SOF. In 2012 we partnered with campus operations and academics to launch the Bailey GREENhouse in the Brody Neighborhood. The Bailey Urban Farm will unfold in the coming year to enhance the experience of passionate freshman students.

Through farming and education programs, the original \$320,000 investment over 4 years is now generating approximately \$320,000 annually that supports seven staff positions and six to ten student employees. The activities are located on a 10 acre parcel at the Horticulture Teaching and Research Center with about 5 acres intensively farmed. In addition the annual Hoophouse Gala Local Food Celebration and Farm Dinner hosted by MSU Residential and Hospitality Services featuring SOF and local food prepared by MSU chefs generates \$15 to \$20,000 annual for scholarships for the next generation of organic farmers.

Please help us celebrate with an attitude of gratitude and consider how you can continue to be or begin to be a part of the SOF community and our food future on campus as well as in communities across Michigan, the US and the world. Help us also to consider why there are not more year-round local organic farms supporting rural and urban economies. Know that the answer in part is because the work requires the intellectual sophistication of ecological/holistic farming practices and the integrity and investment of many people to physically, emotionally and financially support the farmers and the farming activities. Hard work yields big dividends. Our health is worth the effort. Go Green! For the health of it!

— John Biernbaum

This is the lighter side of someone's first experience on the farm at 10 years old, which happened to me. Please feel free to have a good laugh or small reflection on how we take our food for granted.

Earliest Farming Experience

My Mom grew up farming in Canada as a young child. Moving to the United States meant electricity, running water and grocery stores. It was the family reunion in Millbrook, Ontario, Canada. All of us suburbanite kids from Michigan got into the station wagon for the 5 hour drive to meet our Canadian relatives.

When we got to my Aunt Tish's and Uncle Dick's Farm we saw farmland for miles. Their house had a wood burning stove, ice box, no electricity, no bathroom no TV, a wire connected to a telephone where you had to hop onto a chair to put your mouth into a box in the wall to talk. Aunt Tish and Uncle Dick gave Mom a beautiful porcelain bowl, to go the bathroom in. There was an out house if we wanted to use it. We had to pump water from the well outside to wash.

In the morning, Aunt Tish handed me a bucket and told me to get some butter. Asked my Mom where is the butter? She told me to follow Uncle Dick cause you are going to have to make it! Uncle Dick led me to the barn and there was one dairy cow. He gave me a stool to sit on, put the bucket under the cow's udder and showed me how to milk the cow. About a half hour later I maybe had enough milk to make one pound of butter. Then he took me outside with an old wooden butter churn and said to pour the milk in and push the handle up and down until the milk got thick. I thought my right arm was going to fall off. I asked my Mom where was the grocery store? "There isn't any! just keep churning." If life is hard now, all I have to do is reflect back to an earlier time of making butter.

— Linda Torony

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