

Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance



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2009 Annual Report to Members

(Submitted on behalf of Board of Directors, Co-Chair, Yvette Berman)

We welcome the opportunity to invite you to the MOFFA Annual meeting on September 12th hosted by one of our long-standing board members Pat Whetham at the Whetham Organic Farm in Flushing. MOFFA has been under a lot of changes in the past 18 months, and so we continue to serve as the only statewide, non-profit with a volunteer board of now 12 members. Our mission and dedication remains strong to promote organic food and farming practices that will revitalize our great state and sustain local communities. We promote the value of local and organically grown food and we seek to increase public awareness about the need for decentralized sources of food that encourages greater access to healthy, organic food by all citizens, and improve the state's role in promoting organic agriculture.

As we review our activities and accomplishments during the calendar year of 2009, we deeply appreciate the dedication of a few MOFFA volunteers and hard-working board members. The past year has revealed the growing change in food culture with epic new films on food security, the increase in national food recalls at the national level, and the shifting mindset of consumers as we transform to valuing community and tightening the link between growing and consuming local organic foods.

Accomplishments and Advocacy

This shift has increased our growing alliances with some local and national organizations, such as the Institute for Responsible Technology and the National Organic Coalition. In 2009, we developed a Policy Committee that is working at the grass-roots level to increase awareness and policy support for the integrity of organic agriculture. This committee, with Board approval, also takes the initiatives to sign-on to various letters that aide in organic support at the national level for smaller farms. We signed letters to the "Rural Micro-entrepreneur Assistance Program" to the USDA Agriculture Secretary Vilsack, the "Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program, submitted by the NSAC committee to the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, and the Anti-NAIS campaign for the Ranch and Freedom Alliance. Our Policy committee has made positive strides with the funding support of Rhonda Flackert, which our organization is extremely grateful, and yet our volunteer work requires more support. Ultimately, we must increase our volunteer base with like-minded folks to work alongside with us, to join our board, or to take a dedicated post as a volunteer. In the midst of organics going main stream, our organization must grow to serve more farms and people.

Organizational Changes

Jim Bingen resigned as Chairman in mid-2009 to take a short-term post as the Professor of Community, Food and Agriculture Fulbright Distinguished Chair, at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (BOKU), Vienna, Austria from October 1, 2009 – January 30, 2010.

The board nominated and elected new Co-Chairs, George Bird and Yvette Berman, and the Treasury post taken up by Matthew Grieshop. As a new board, we created an Office Administrator position to support and assist with the daily operations of the organization and marketing support. Matt Grieshop also volunteered as the MOC 2010 Chair and Webmaster, which required many hours of management. Yvette Berman volunteered to develop a Corporate Sponsorship

campaign for the conference. In our effort to organize a newer board, new chairs and teams were developed for Membership, Policy, Business Development, Marketing and Communications committees. Our volunteer Newsgroup Editor resigned; and we have not had the opportunity to replace his expertise. We are still challenged to accomplish our goals with minimal volunteer support.

We increased our board with one new member Paul Keiser. Paul is a long standing advocate of organic agriculture and brings extensive experience in the areas of policy, education, ecology and farming. His beloved, Nancy, long standing board member of MOFFA of 10 years, passed away the same year.

In the same year, another dedicated board member, Doug Murray past away. The loss of two great visionaries for organic was a difficult year for the Board. The Board of Directors dedicated the 2010 Michigan Organic Conference in memory of their service and dedication to MOFFA and Michigan organics.

Education and Outreach

Various board members continue to collaborate with others in promoting awareness of organic food and farming in a diverse range of venues. The MOFFA exhibit showcases a variety of informational materials, sells organic books and guides and promotes the MOFFA "Eating Organically Guide" to consumers. Jim Bingen displayed at the Country Mill Farm as part of the "Rural Tour of America" when Sec. of Ag. Vilsack was in town to hold a community conference hosted by the FSEP. George Bird took the road to the Northern Michigan Small Farms conference in Grayling, and also exhibited at the MIFFS, Lansing Farmers Market at the Capital. Yvette Berman managed the booth at the Earth Day Festival in Rochester, and John Hooper attended the Glexpo conference in Grand Rapids for three days, to wrap up our exhibit schedule for the year.

Our signature event is the annual Michigan Organic Conference (MOC). Our conference theme title, Local Organic Food: Sustainable Prosperity for Michigan was on March 6-7, 2009 at the Kellogg Conference Center. The MOC featured 29 educational sessions for organic consumers, farmers, gardeners, and producers. We are also grateful to the corporate sponsors and advertisers who help support the program. We were delighted to host 2 great keynotes: Michael Sligh, Founding Chairman of the National Action Organic Plan (NAOP), and Michael Phillips, Organic grower and Author, "Circles of Connection: On the Farm, Embracing Community and Always in the Heart." The conference included other activities such as, the Taste of Michigan; Local Organic Foods reception, a Film Festival and post conference music! Approximately 250 individuals and business exhibitors participated at the conference. Much learning and networking going on!

MOFFA also became a prominent sponsor for the 1st Annual MSU Student Organic Hoophouse Gala on location at the MSU student organic farm under the big tent! We enjoyed local organic fare from the student farm, local farmers with a delectable menu specially prepared by top chefs, and inspired by the talks of John Biernbaum and his colleagues. We were honored to support such a fine program for aspiring young organic farmers.

Major Opportunities

More than ever in our time of food security, growing big-ag, and an evolving culture for organics, we must find a way to have MOFFA succeed in its mission. We strive to have a stronger regional presence around the state that draws upon the energy of volunteerism, including our vision to aide in policy making and advocacy. Our best sentiments extend to all of you who believe in organics, in a myriad of spectrums, whether you're an organic grower, aspiring gardener or farmer, food producer or business, for your involvement with MOFFA as a volunteer, a sponsor, or new board member. Our work continues and we look forward to creating new alliances to strengthen our leadership role for organic in Michigan!

MOFFA Board of Directors,
Yvette Berman and George Bird
Co-Chairs