

NOSB Gives Thumbs Up to hydroponics, aquaponics

By a vote of 8 to 7, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) on Nov. 1 rejected proposals to make hydroponic and aquaponic production methods prohibited under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program (NOP).

The prelude to the Oct 31-Nov 2 NOSB meeting generated intense lobbying efforts by the National Organic Coalition, the Cornucopia Institute and others promoting the necessity of soil-based organic production systems.

However, their efforts to prohibit hydroponic systems for organic production were turned back by the NOSB. The issue has been debated by organic growers and marketers since 1995.

A USDA spokesperson said in a Nov. 2 e-mail said that both hydroponic and aquaponic production systems remain eligible for organic certification. While the NOSB passed a proposal to recommend prohibition of aeroponics systems in organic production, the spokesperson said certification of aeroponic operations also remains allowed while USDA considers the board's work on this topic.

The NOSB also rejected a proposal — by the same 8 to 7 vote — to create prescriptive nitrogen ratio requirements and to limit delivery of nutrients through irrigation systems of hydroponic operations.

Gwen Wyard, from the Organic Trade Association, comments, "The NOSB came out with a recommendation in April of 2010 recommending rulemaking for production standards for terrestrial plants in containers and enclosures. [Final NOSB Recommendation on Terrestrial Plants](#). The NOP responded to the NOSB recommendation by saying they would develop a proposed rule on greenhouse standards (including hydroponics) based on the NOSB final recommendation.



"NOP is considering specific standards for organic hydroponic operations, but there is no proposed rule at this time."

Overall, the decision may signal a new direction for the organic industry, since it will include farmers who don't produce crops in fields.

see **Hydroponics**, page 24

Notes from the Chair by Margaret Weigelt

Dear busy inspectors and colleagues,

In my 'neck of the woods' - the upper Midwest USA - the busy crop inspecting season has ended and we are mentally preparing to be blanketed with winter snows. Now the cycle begins again with plans for the next growing season. Even though the season in the northern hemisphere is done, it's reassuring to think that somewhere around the world another growing season is beginning. Many inspectors in the southern hemisphere are just entering their busy time. Best wishes to you from the cold north!

AGM 2018!
March 3 in
Charleston SC!
Great training
lineup!
See page 7
for all the details!

See **Notes**, page 4

Welcome New Members**Inspector Members:**

Kelly Belina, MO
James Pierce, PA
Demetria Stephens, KS

Supporting Individuals:

Chamila Abernath, BC
Dorothy Aicher, NJ
Pamela Aragon, FL
Ely Battalen, NY
Spencer Bray, CA
Dylan Burge, CA
Lisa Easler, OR
Brenda Gross, PA
Siobhan Hayes, CA
David Harde, CA
Thomas Hershberger, OH
Karen Hess, CA
Todd Hunter, NV
Persis Johnson, CA
Jonathan Kitchens, CA
Ame Longwell, WY
Robertson MacDonald, CO
Dory Mansfield, CA
Anais Mercado, CA
Greg Mund, MI
Rachel Murray, CT
Masaharu Noda, CA
L. Carolina Ramirez, CA
David Scanland, CA
Francisco Valdez, CA
Raoul Wertz, CA

Supporting Business Members:

Dave's Killer Bread, OR
TYR Wood Products, OR

IOIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The Inspectors' Report is the newsletter of International Organic Inspectors Association. IOIA is a 501 (c)(3) educational organization. *Our mission is to address issues and concerns relevant to organic inspectors, to provide quality inspector training and to promote integrity and consistency in the organic certification process.*
Editor: Diane Cooner webgal@ioia.net
Deadlines: Feb 1, May 1, Aug 1 & Nov 1.

WEBINAR Training Schedule

for details & to register go to: www.ioia.net/schedule_list.html

Webinar Discount Note: All IOIA Inspector Members are eligible for 1 half-price webinar in 2018.

300 Level Webinar –January 12 & 19, 2018.

In/Out Balances, Traceability Tests, and Recipe Verification for Processing Inspection under NOP & COR
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time). Two, 2 hour sessions.
Presenter IOIA Trainer: Monique Scholz.

100 Level Webinar - January 23 & 26, 2018.

NOP Crop Standards
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time). Two, 3 hour sessions.
Presenter IOIA Trainer: Garry Lean and/or Margaret Scales.

100 Level Webinar - February 6 & 9, 2018.

NOP Livestock Standards
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time). Two, 3 hour sessions.
Presenter IOIA Trainer: Garry Lean

200 Level Webinar – February 7 & 14, 2018.

In/out balances, Traceability Tests and Recipe Verification for Processing Inspection under NOP & COR
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. (Pacific Standard Time). Two, 2 hour sessions.
Presenter: Kelly Monaghan

100 Level Webinar - March 13 & 16, 2018.

NOP Processing Standards
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time). Two, 3 hour sessions.
Presenter IOIA Trainer: Luis Brenes

Congratulations to the following accredited members!

Renewals -
Silke Fuchshofen (Processing)
Al Johnson (Crop, Livestock, Processing)
Christopher Kidwell (Processing)

*On-Site Training Schedule -
full details and applications at www.ioia.net*

Hong Kong Crop Course, January 8 - 12, 2018

IOIA and Hong Kong Organic Resource Centre (HKORC) will cosponsor a Basic Organic Crop Inspection Course in English using the HKORC-Cert Organic Standards at Hong Kong Baptist University, Kowloon Tong. For application forms and more info about the course, www.hkbu.edu.hk. For enquiries, contact Cecily Wong or William Chu. Email: cecilywong@hkbu.edu.hk / hwchu828@hkbu.edu.hk Phone: (852) 3411 6670 / (852) 3411 2539

Costa Rica, Farm Inspection Course, January 22-26, 2018

IOIA and Eco-LOGICA will cosponsor a Basic Organic Farm Inspection Spanish language training using USDA National Organic Standards as a reference. Contact Sue Wei at ph.: (506) 2297-6676, fax: (506) 2235-1638 or e-mail: swei@eco-logica.com for further info.

continued on next page

On-Site Training Schedule - Continued from page 2

Anyang, Korea, Crop Inspection Course - January 22-26, 2018

IOIA and Isidor Sustainability Research Institute will cosponsor a Basic Organic Crop Inspection Training using the Korea Organic Regulation, in Korean language. For enquiries, please contact Isidor Yu, phone: +82 10 9133 5431 Fax: +82 31 424 9293 Email: Isidor.yu@gmail.com

Charleston, SC, Global Organic Textile Standards (GOTS) & Advanced Trainings - Feb 28 - March 2, 2018

[IOIA 2018 Annual General Meeting - March 3](#)

Field Trips to John's Island - March 4

SAI-GOTS Training on Social Auditing - March 4-5

Advanced Training will begin on February 28, with training on the GOTS standards. Inspectors interested in learning about the standards are welcome to take this as a stand-alone training day. Those who are interested in the full GOTS auditor credential will continue on March 1-2 for a field trip training exercise at a textile facility and further training on GOTS inspections. The GOTS training concludes with an exam on March 2. Badrinath Gulur, SAI's Director of Training and Senior Accreditation Auditor at SAAS, will deliver two additional days of training to cover the Social Aspects of the standard version 5.0. [Global Organic Textile Standard \(GOTS\)](#) is a project of the Global Standard gGmbH on Mar 4-5. Both GOTS and Social Criteria training are required for GOTS auditors.

A full range of non-fiber related advanced training topics will be offered on March 1 and 2. Participants can choose 1 or 2 days of this training. Topics will include opportunities for improvement for inspectors, based on the NOP witness audits, with **NOP Lead Auditor Lars Crail**, and from the Peer Evaluation Program. **Bob Durst**, food technologist, will present **everything inspectors should know about materials on the 205.605**, as well as an update on recent changes to 205.605 and 205.606. He will also speak on Commingling and Contamination Issues in Processing Plants. **Brian Rakita** will present key points of tobacco inspection. Other topics are under development. A draft agenda and speaker bios are posted on the IOIA website.

The host venue will be the Hilton Garden Inn Charleston/Mount Pleasant, three miles from downtown historic Charleston (\$8 cab ride or \$2 straight city bus ride), and 15 minutes from the airport.

IOIA/GCIA Processing Inspection Training, Athens, Georgia, March 5 - 9, 2018

IOIA and Georgia Crop Improvement Association (GCIA) will cosponsor an Organic Processing Inspection Training at Holiday Inn - Downtown Athens, Georgia. The course consists of 4 days of instruction including a field trip to a certified organic operation, plus ½ day for testing. Please see the [Course Information](#) for further details.

IOIA/PCO Crop and Livestock Training, State College, Pennsylvania, April 2018

IOIA and Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) will cosponsor basic Crop and Processing trainings, as well as Advanced training. Application forms and details will be posted soon on the IOIA website.

Crop inspection course - April 9-13

Advanced Inspector Training - April 14

Livestock inspection course - April 16-20

IOIA/UDAF Crop and Processing Training, Salt Lake City, Utah, June 2018

IOIA and Utah Department of Agriculture and Food will cosponsor basic Crop and Processing trainings.

Crop inspection course - June 4-8

Processing inspection course - June 11-15

Application forms and details will be posted soon on the IOIA website.

IOIA Crop and Processing Training, Farmington, Minnesota November 2018

Crop inspection course - October 29-November 2

Processing inspection course - November 5-9

Application forms and details will be posted on the IOIA website.

WANTED:**INSPECTORS FOR TASK FORCE!!**

by Matt Miller

Fraud in organic was a **too prominent** news story this past year. As the eyes and ears of organic consumers, **we need to step up** to help find new ways to make sure organic labeled food really is organic. Therefore the IOIA Board of Directors **is calling for a taskforce** of visionary and experienced inspectors. We believe that technology can be further adopted to help us do a better job and do it easier. The question is, **what is that technology?** Is this an application for Blockchain? How do we implement new technology and find acceptance with certifiers? The taskforce will also look at the basic inspection process to determine if there are ways to make it smarter. **Finally, training is an important component of developing better inspectors who will find the fraud!** IOIA has been doing more in this area, such as webinars, field trainings, and peer evaluations. Can we do better in the area of training? **What about licensing of organic inspectors?** This has been discussed among certifiers and the NOP. We need to bring **our unified voice to the table** to make sure what is best for everyone **happens**. If you would like to help determine the future vision of the role organic inspectors play in keeping fraud out of organic, **please nominate yourself** for the task force **or recommend someone** you think has a lot to contribute in this area **by January 15th**. We plan to start with a teleconference in early February, and then meet in person prior to the AGM in Charleston. There will be time during the AGM to share our initial ideas with other inspectors and gather additional feedback. Please contact Jennie at ioia@rangeweb.net at IOIA to share your ideas about how the inspection process can be made more effective through the use of technology and training.

Notes, from page 1

Outside the growing season is a good time to catch up on continuing education, attend organic conferences and hone technical skills. I recently took advantage of one of the benefits of IOIA inspector membership - the 50% discount coupon to one of our popular webinars. I took the 300 level webinar 'Client Procedures When Using Uncertified Vendors' taught by experienced process inspector Silke Fuchshofen. For me the greatest benefit received was some great nitty-gritty inspection tips that I immediately integrated into my inspection behavior. There are key risk factors to look for in every type of inspection and Silke nailed them. Thank you Silke! For me the 'return on investment' for an IOIA course benefits two-fold: as practical knowledge received and as an opportunity to associate with other inspectors whose questions and comments always bring me a deeper understanding of the materials presented.

Do you have an idea or topic for a webinar? Please feel free to suggest and point out topics of interest for webinars by posting on the IOIA Forum and sending ideas to the IOIA BOD or IOIA staff. Ideas contributed can make a difference in the integrity of organic because they originate from the grassroots.

Have you ever wondered how many organic inspections are conducted each hour around the world? With more than 2 million organic farmers worldwide, conceivably on average, there could be 5500 inspections taking place every single day - and that doesn't include processor/handler verifications. We are not alone - but sometimes it feels like we are. That's why IOIA exists. Nowhere in the world will you find a membership organization made up of an associ-

ation of collegial organic inspectors and supporters such as this.

This looks to be another successful year financially for IOIA. Over the past few years IOIA membership indicated that the number one way we should strengthen our funding was to increase our membership funding leg. Early in the year, during retreat at Ottawa, the BOD set membership goals to increase the number of inspector and supporting memberships by at least 10%. We are still striving toward those goals. With a larger membership we will be able to increase our capacity to serve a diverse, global membership through offering higher levels of education and greater collaborative associations. Ultimately with greater capacity, IOIA will have even greater impact on worldwide organic integrity.

Help us strengthen the voices of our mission by asking a non-member colleague or certifying agency to join. Let them know we exist to address issues and concerns relevant to organic inspectors, to provide quality inspector training, and to promote integrity and consistency in the organic certification process. The professionals of IOIA make sure organic means organic.

Best wishes,
Margaret Anne



Notes from the ED

by Margaret Scoles

During the last quarter, I was honored to represent inspectors in two initiatives related to inspector qualifications. As reported last issue, I participated in the ACA Working Group on Inspector Qualifications. We completed our work on Dec. 1, largely based on the work IOIA did for NOP in 2011. The working group's draft is now circulating among certifiers for review. The short-term goal is to prepare input for the NOSB spring agenda in April in Tucson, Arizona. The NOSB CAC is preparing a recommendation for Inspector Qualifications; that topic is already on their agenda. I plan to attend. IOIA doesn't always attend NOSB meetings. We use our resources strategically and prioritize meetings when issues directly related to inspectors are on the agenda. This is clearly one of those. When it is possible for BOD members who are already planning to attend to represent us, we are at additional meetings. The longer term goal is to continue to press forward in increasing the professionalism of our work.

I was also invited to a special 20th anniversary seminar of the International Organic Accreditation Services (IOAS) entitled, "Organic Inspection & Certification 2025" in Delhi, India on Nov. 8. This was hands-down the most exciting speaking opportunity of the year and possibly my life-time. Other speakers were Dr. Jochen Neuendorff, Germany, on "Fraud cases and their detection"; David Crucefix, UK on "Defects in inspection"; Boudewijn van Elzaker, Netherlands, on "Adding value for operators"; Ken Commins, US, on "Preventing and tackling fraud"; and Miles McEvoy (newly retired as head of NOP and now working in training and consulting), with the Sound and Sensible topic of "Reducing burden for all". My title was "How can we ensure harmonised competence?" A very tall order, for sure. Best laid plans – my plane was grounded and no flight available for 24 hours! I considered all options including driving to other airports, but it was impossible. I reluctantly and sadly notified IOAS that I would not arrive in Delhi until their seminar was over. They were most gracious. But – To the Rescue!! Thanks to a time zone difference of 12.5 hours, while I flew and the IOAS group slept in India, I prepared an addendum to my abstract and modified my presentation, knowing that I would not be delivering it. Joyce Ford, Inspector Member, was new to the IOAS but quite familiar with our work on Inspector Qualifications, as she was one of our project managers in 2011. With scarce time to prepare, she awoke to find my presentation. A few hours later, she presented on behalf of IOIA. Other participants said she did great. So all was not lost...a huge thank-you from IOIA to Joyce Ford.

I arrived to dense Delhi smog (the worst in 18 years) and attended the IFOAM Organic World Congress Nov 9-11 and the General Assembly Nov 12-13. Following the meetings, I took two vacation days for one of the bio-tours to visit an organic farm. I wanted to stay with a Hindu family with a cow and to see the Himalayas. **Check!** ☑

Mr. and Mrs. Santa (aka Jennie Olson), photographed in the IOIA office during the Annual Broadus Christmas Stroll

Many of you only know Jennie as the 'Friday Voice' of IOIA. She has been with us for almost 2 years, but recently moved up to nearly full-time. Members are now even more likely to find her at the other end of the phone. Her educational background is a B.S. in Rangeland Ecology from MT State U, and an A.S. in Rangeland Management from Northwest College in WY. After moving to the Broadus area, she worked 5 years in the County's Noxious Weed Management Program, including writing grants. Jennie and her husband have beef cows, sheep, pigs, milk cows, chickens, rabbits, and guineas. This year, they raised 3 turkeys, named Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. She says once was enough for raising turkeys.



Celebrating with Peggy Miars, newly elected president of IFOAM - Organics International. BOD members were honored with piles of marigold leis. She shared this one with me. For photos and more details about the events in India, please see pages 12-13.



Peer Field Evaluation Program – Home run for IOIA

This is the third year that IOIA has offered certifiers the option of purchasing peer field evaluation reports for their inspectors. Goals of the program are to insure qualified evaluators (significant inspection experience and IOIA accreditation are required criteria); to reduce the number of evaluations an inspector must have when working for multiple certifiers; and to help certifiers meet the requirements of NOP Instruction 2027 regarding personnel performance. A challenging twist to the fledgling program was that the NOP changed Instruction 2027 in late winter both in 2016 and 2017. As IOIA fine-tuned the program, added and trained evaluators, and incorporated certifier feedback, the goal-posts kept moving. IOIA responded nimbly, and the program has not only survived, it thrived. At the end of the first year, IOIA had evaluated 50 inspectors, missed a few, and made a surprising financial profit. At the end of the second year, IOIA had evaluated almost twice as many and made a modest profit. Still, we missed some inspectors, and had less than 100% success in completing the evaluations.

In 2018, IOIA evaluated every contracted US inspector on the list (68 total). Almost all were completed before the end of October. This is a significant improvement in timeliness over previous years. Also in 2017, the number of evaluators was increased so that IOIA could readily absorb continued growth. As in previous years, it remains challenging to schedule peer field evaluations outside of the US, because they must be performed during an NOP inspection.

Argencert Founder Laura Montenegro

Some thoughts on the recent passing of Laura Montenegro, from IOIA inspector member and IFOAM past world president Gabriela Soto.

Dear Colleagues; I do not know how many of you knew her directly or knew about her because of her multiple achievements, but our friend Laura Montenegro died 26 October in Argentina, after a short battle with cancer.

Laura is the person who started organic certification in Argentina, the creator and owner of Argencert, the first Latin American agency accredited to the European Union. She was part of the drafting and implementation team of the Certification and Regulation Norms of Argentina -1991, and part of the construction of the Argentine Organic Movement (MAPO)



Gabi Soto, left, with Laura Montenegro, founder of Argencert.

She was an entrepreneur, hard-working, committed, recognized at the IFOAM Assembly in Korea 6 years ago for her constant work for the growth of the organic movement.

Last year Laura sold Argencert to Ecocert, and had “retired” in Australia with her husband, where they had an organic production farm, and Laura sold avocados at the local Fair. A new life that was just beginning ... in June she sent us a note requesting support from ANAO because the IFOAM Board of Directors was going to be nominating her. But in July she had to take care of her health and returned to Argentina.

Laura was a pillar in the construction of the Organic Movement of Argentina, and she worked hard with responsibility and conviction in the national and international scope.

Her perseverance, her tenacity, her smile, will always accompany us.

IOIA AGM and Training Events in Charleston - Right Around the Corner!

Hilton Garden Inn, Charleston/Mount Pleasant Charleston, South Carolina

YOU WILL FIND ALL THE DETAILS ON OUR WEBSITE, WWW.IOIA.NET/AGM.HTML

ALSO SEE PAGE 3 OF THIS ISSUE FOR DETAILS ON ADVANCED, GOTS, AND SAI TRAINING EVENTS

- February 28** – GOTS Fiber Standards – open to all applicants
- February 28 - March 2** – GOTS Auditor Training
- March 1-2** – Advanced Inspector Training (for those not taking GOTS)
- March 3** – IOIA Annual Meeting

Double keynote:

The story of Asya's Farm and Mobile Farmers Market

Shaheed Harris, SCF-Organic Farms, SC

and

Whose Voice is Missing?

The Need for a Cultural Shift to Achieve Justice in the Food System

Leah Cohen, Coordinator, Agricultural Justice Project, FL

- Meeting starts at 11:30 a.m. with Shaheed Harris
- Lunch at 12 noon (free to IOIA inspector members)
- Keynote by Leah Cohen - 1:00 to 1:45 p.m.
- Annual meeting – 2-6 p.m.
- Party, hearty snacks, music, and dancing – 7-10 p.m.



Shaheed Harris and Fathiyah Mustafa



Leah Cohen,
Agricultural Justice Project



Badrinath Gulur

March 4-5 SAI Training on Social Auditing

Shaheed Harris and Fathiyah Mustafa. Shaheed and his mother Fathiyah hosted IOIA's making of Sound and Sensible video "What to Expect at an Organic Vegetable Farm Inspection", a 2015 IOIA project produced for the NOP. For an intro to the farm and to see the video - https://www.scfororganicfarms.com/Farm_Tour.html

Leah Cohen has a M.S. in Human Geography from the U of FL and graduated from Linfield College with a bachelor's degree in Anthropology and a minor in Spanish. She has been active on farmworker issues in the international arena. Her experience with the AJP began in 2004 with development of the verification system for certification as a consultant and continued with development of the certifier training module and workshop. From 2009 to 2013 she served as the lead on the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SSARE) grant entitled "Improving the Lives of Southern Organic Farmers and Farmworkers." <https://www.agriculturaljusticeproject.org/en/about/>



Lori Wyman



Karlin Warner



Angela Wartes-Kahl

GOTS training team – Lori Wyman (GOTS North American representative), Angela Wartes-Kahl (Oregon Tilth Fiber and Textiles Coordinator), Karlin Warner, (OneCert Certification Manager).

SAI Training on Social Auditing - Badrinath Gulur, Director – Training & Capacity Building / Senior Accreditation Auditor, Social Accountability International (SAI).

SECTOR NEWS

OLPP headed for withdrawal

Despite the strong efforts that Accredited Certifiers have made in preparing to implement the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP), the USDA intends to withdraw the OLPP Final Rule. The link below is to the federal register publication with reasoning for proposing withdrawal of OLPP:

<https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=AMS-NOP-15-0012-6686>

According to the notice, there will be a 30-day comment period for this proposal.

This latest delay has prompted an amended complaint from the Organic Trade Association, which filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture on September 13, 2017, in response to the agency's delay in implementing the OLPP regulation, more commonly known as the organic animal welfare regulation.

The OTA filed an amended complaint in Federal Court on December 15, 2017, challenging USDA's latest delay to implement the organic livestock standards. USDA's most recent instance of kicking the can further down the road is now the third delay of the final Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices rule. In its most recent action, USDA claims the need for more rulemaking based on a "mathematically flawed assessment of benefits" and questions on interpretations of the "care of livestock." The Organic Trade Association responded by amending its complaint and strengthening the call for the final animal welfare rule to move forward without further delay. OTA pointed to the over 47,000 comments received during the most recent thirty day comment window that overwhelmingly support the rule, and calls into question USDA's

intent for further delay only being supported by one lone commenter. What's up next in the legal battle? On or before January 15, USDA is expected to file a motion to dismiss and OTA will answer the call, requesting the court to look at the merits of the case and rule to allow the final animal welfare rule to move forward without any further delay.

OTA NewsFlash

Former NOP Deputy Administrator Miles McEvoy resigned effective Sept. 30.

McEvoy announced his decision in a letter to the organic community. He said he looked forward to returning to the state of Washington and listed a number of accomplishments for the organic industry, including implementing National Organic Standards Board recommendations, improving the NOP's quality system, enforcing regulations, and improving communication.

McEvoy joined USDA's organic program in the fall of 2009, after leading the Washington State Department of Agriculture Organic Food Program.

Peggy Miars to Head IFOAM - Organics Intl World Board

IFOAM-Organics International recently held the Organic World Congress and General Assembly in Delhi, India, where OMRI Executive Director/CEO Peggy Miars was elected president of the World Board. Here she is joined by the two Vice Presidents, Frank Eyhorn and Jennifer Chang.



Meet Acting Deputy Administrator Ruihong Guo

Ruihong Guo, Ph.D., was named Acting Deputy Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) National Organic Program on October 19, 2017. Previously, Dr. Guo served as the Deputy Administrator of the AMS Science & Technology Program, which provides scientific and analytical support services to the agricultural community, including the Plant Variety Protection Office, the Laboratory Approval & Testing Division and the Pesticide Data Program.



Previously, Dr. Guo served as the AMS Associate Administrator, Associate Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program (NOP), the director of the NOP Accreditation and International Activities Division, and the director of the NOP Compliance and Enforcement Division. Before joining the NOP, she served as Director of Civil Rights Program for the Agricultural Marketing Service, and Director of Program Complaint in the Office of the USDA Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

Save the Dates:
February 6 – 8, 2018
USDA NOP Certifier Training
and the Accredited Certifiers
Association Professional
Development Training,
San Antonio, TX
[Click here for info and application](#)

SECTOR NEWS

NOSB Fall Meeting

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) met in Jacksonville, FL, for its fall 2017 meeting from October 31 - November 2.

NOSB received 2,318 written comments prior to the meeting, and listened to over 13 hours of oral comments on a wide range of issues. Over the course of the three-day meeting, NOSB, under the leadership of NOSB Chair Tom Chapman, voted on 16 proposals and 43 Sunset 2019 inputs. Of the 16 proposals, six passed, six failed and four were tabled. Under the Sunset 2018 National List review, NOSB recommended removal of four production inputs from the National List (oxytocin, procaine, vitamin B1 and konjac flour), deeming them no longer necessary or essential in organic production and handling.

The hot topic of the meeting included whether hydroponically grown crops align with organic production principles and should continue being allowed under organic production standards. Despite efforts to reach consensus, the balance of interest remained divided and the organic community and NOSB were not able to find a workable solution.

Other significant topics included proposals to address the issue of organic fraud, how to best strengthen the requirement for using organic seed, to eliminate incentives to convert native ecosystems to organic production, and to classify three new genetic technologies as “excluded methods” and therefore prohibited in organic production and handling.

OTA NewsFlash



IFOAM North America - Year 1

IFOAM NA has just celebrated its first year of operation. Most of the first year was spent reaching out to the membership and building a solid foundation for future work. The IFOAM NA Board presented their strategic plan at the Member Meeting and General Assembly in Baltimore, and is still looking for comments, feedback, and suggestions.

The activities for the coming year will focus on establishing IFOAM NA as an organization that its members can support and that supports its members. The plan is to incorporate as an independent non-profit organization separate from IFOAM-Organics International, but will remain true to IFOAM's principles and landmarks.

Brian Baker, President, IFOAM North America

Comment on organic import integrity guide

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has published [an interim instruction guide](#) for organic certifying agents entitled “Maintaining the Integrity of Organic Imports (NOP 4013).” This outlines USDA organic regulations' current requirements for certifiers engaged in the oversight of organic products imported into the United States and recommends best practices that certifiers may use to comply with existing regulations. AMS invites organic handlers, certifying agents, importers, consumers, and other interested parties to submit comments on the interim instruction. Specifically, comments should address the parts of the instruction that recommend best practices that certifiers may use to ensure compliance with the USDA organic regulations. The 60-day comment period closes on December 26.

IFOAM Pre-Conference: Accelerating Innovation

The Technology and Innovation Platform of IFOAM (TIPI) held a pre-conference to the Organic World Congress with the theme of [Accelerating Innovation: The Role of Science, Policy and Practice](#).

Attendees came from all over the world to New Delhi this past November 8 to discuss how to create a culture of innovation in organic food and farming systems. While technical innovations tend to be the focus of research and development, ecological, institutional, and social innovations were recognized as equally important.

TIPI also helped organize the Scientific Track of the Organic World Congress. The track included a plenary discussion that summarized the results of the pre-conference. [The Proceedings are available on-line.](#)

Brian Baker, vice-president, TIPI

A Canadian Perspective on Aquaponics

reprinted from the IOIA Canada Forum, with permission by author Stuart McMillan

I realize this is an issue with various opinions, but I want to offer my reasoning why I support the inclusion of terrestrial crops grown in aquaponics. First off having spoken with Kelly today she confirmed my understanding that by allowing aquaponics, it does not allow hydroponics and that is an important distinction. Terrestrial crops grown in an aquaponic operation differ from hydroponics in various ways.

I've inspected farms that have an aquaponic component which was uncertified and it was discussed that once ratified the aquaculture would allow them to make a COR claim for their fish, but not their produce. But understanding the fluid nature of the US interpretation they could certify their terrestrial aquaponics under the NOP. Then we end up with the silly situation where one operation has half their operation COR certified and the other NOP certified. Both independent of each other.

Moreover as an inspector who has inspected organic blue green algae, organic kelp and other organic crops that have 0% soil I disagree that organics is all about soil. It is mostly about soil, but there are times and places when we inspect and products are certified that have no soil component at all. If we reject aquaponics then we should similarly reject all plants which have no soil component.

In my opinion aquaponic operations fully meet the principles.

Late-Breaking News!
page 26!

The general principles of organic production include the following:

1. Protect the environment, minimize soil degradation and erosion, decrease pollution, optimize biological productivity and promote a sound state of health.
2. Maintain biological diversity within the system.
3. Recycle materials and resources to the greatest extent possible within the enterprise.
4. Rely on renewable resources in locally organized agriculture systems.

If we maintain a prohibition on organic hydroponics the rationale is clear because that system relies not on recycling of nutrients and resources, building local systems, but imported organically approved nutrients with extra energy embedded in the system.

Consumers are savvy and aware enough to make informed choices. If it is the dead of a Canadian winter if they want to buy certified organic soil grown lettuce from Sinaloa Mexico and shipped all the way to Canada, buy aquaponic organic lettuce grown around the corner from them or to buy organic cabbage and not eat lettuce that is their choice. I support terrestrial crops included under aquaculture regulations.

Calling all inspectors – you are invited!

What: Inspector Social – beverages and light fare provided

Where: Brass Taps Campus Pub, University Centre, University of Guelph

When: Jan. 27, 4:30 -6:30 p.m.

Why? Your Canadian BOD members **and** the IOIA BOD Chair will be there, and networking opportunities for inspectors are few and far between!

Hope to see you there!

Canada Organic News

IOIA Submits Comments on Aquaponic Production to Technical Committee

Kelly Monaghan recently reached out to Canadian IOIA members for feedback on aquaculture production.

Kelly reports: "I received twenty responses, evenly split between those who were fine with what was presented and those who were against aquaponic production of products that are traditionally grown in soil. As a result the following was my response to the Committee:

I solicited the feedback of the IOIA members in Canada, as I usually do with Technical Committee decisions, and the responding members were evenly divided between two camps -- one supporting the Secretariat's decision and another gravely concerned about the confusion that will arise from having traditionally-terrestrially-grown crops available to Canadian consumers as "certified organic" from an aquaponics system. Accordingly I feel that I must abstain on this vote.

Both groups had very strong opinions about their vote and I think that indicates a need for more discussion and the opportunity to promote a clearer and shared understanding of the facts. I obviously don't know what your responses will have been from this solicitation, but I understand that there are other voices who were intending to reject the proposed response because of concerns about contradictions between this and the agriculture standard in terms of soil-based production and increased concern in this time of public trust about consumer perceptions of organics.

I think it would be very helpful if the Secretariat was able to reach out to the Committee to promote more clarity of understanding on this one issue – as the first negative vote was primarily based upon the fact that the intentions of the standard are not clear.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

I look forward to hearing what the next steps will be.

"The standard as presented is going forward – below I have copied the response that was sent to all Committee members from the CGSB. Julie Belzile then reached out to me directly because of my email and asked if, in the event they would be forwarding comments to all Committee members, if I would like my comments included and I was clear that I wanted that to happen in order to encourage further discussion and a shared understanding.



"Thanks again for your attention and responses, and please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions."

Members of the CGSB Committee on Organic Aquaculture:

November 21, 2017 was the closing date of a one week review period for members to review the updated draft standard CAN/CGSB-32.312-201X and the responses to comments provided by members during the ballot. Based on the responses received, the negative vote has not been supported by any voting member. CGSB recognizes that the negative vote has been deemed non-persuasive and final Committee approval of the updated ballot draft standard.

CGSB will submit the new edition of the standard to CGSB second-level review to ensure compliance with the standards development process requirements, will perform a final edit, and proceed with the publishing of the new edition of the standard. The standard should see publication in December 2017.

IOIA in India

by Margaret Scoles

I arrived to dense Delhi smog (the worst in 17 years) to attend the IFOAM Organic World Congress Nov 9-11 and the General Assembly Nov 12-13. I didn't wear a mask; in retrospect that was probably a mistake. The air was similar to smoking 5 packs of cigarettes a day, a sobering setting for an organic conference.

Nov 9-11 Organic World Congress – 3 days of workshops, plenary speakers, and break-outs. There were 12 simultaneous tracks (3 science tracks, 3 farmer tracks, 1 marketing track, and 2 main tracks). A total of 2,479 delegates from 121 countries joined, plus over 7,000+ day visitors. The majority came from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Over 1,000 farmers attended. The event was inaugurated on 9 November by Shri Radha Mohan Singh, Honourable Minister for



Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India. In a message to the Organic Farming Association of India -- the principal host of the OWC from India -- Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, said the meeting "will enable global organic farming movement leaders and all its stakeholders to deliberate on key issues of the sector." Meals were very interesting, all organic, mostly vegetarian, and included mysterious and heirloom ingredients. Traditional dance performances occurred twice during the event. BioFach India and a Seed Festival were co-located. About 60 seed saver groups from 15 states of India participated in the Seed Festival. Over 4,000 different varieties of seeds were on display, along with posters and information. Vandana Shiva was a plenary speaker.



I learned about the "Fish Bowl" conversation concept which was new to me, but very effective. Coming soon – adoption at the IOIA Annual Meeting! The event accomplished some amazing things – such as a carbon budget for the entire event and translating all of the farmer presentations into multiple languages for uploading to a website. On Day 1, I spent time at BioFach India with Sandeep Bhargava, Inspector member. He introduced me to the certifiers in India and we promoted the Asia Pacific Committee's training plans together. Few Americans and Canadians were in attendance, as usual. The conference concluded with a Motions Bazaar, which allows people to offer amendments, argue, promote, specific GA motions.

Nov 12-13 – General Assembly – different venue – across town. IFOAM North America is a new face since the last GA, which happens every 3 years. IOIA assisted in launching this regional body a year ago. How did this change IOIA's participation in India? I could consult with Brian Baker, President of IFOAM NA, on voting strategy. I also carried IOIA's full complement of proxies, thanks to his organizational work. Day 1 was at the Constitution Club of India, where government meetings occur. It was my first day to eat meat. One of my most memorable experiences was when an eagle swooped down and hit the side of my face as it grabbed one of the bones off my plate.

There were a record number of motions and a record number of proposals for the 2020 Venue selection – 11! Leslie Zuck of PCO was one of the Co-chairs of the meetings. A challenge in voting proxies was that motions were often amended dramatically. In general, the voting was rather purist. They categorically killed the idea of any

IOIA in India

organic aquaculture systems that were not land-based. No recirculating water systems. The GA passed Organic 3.0 as a landmark. One of the more interesting motions was to change the membership structure so that the member no longer has to derive more than 50% of income from organic. The motion passed.

There was an element of sadness to the meeting in that it was the last one for Executive Director Markus Arbenz. But the BOD election was exciting – highly competitive. The new members are (in alphabetical order): [David Amudavi, Kenya](#); [Jennifer Chang, South Korea](#); [Frank Eyhorn, Switzerland](#); [Choitresh Kumar Ganguly, India](#); [Hans Herren, Switzerland](#); [Julia Lernoud, Argentina](#); [Karen Mapusua, Fiji](#); [Peggy Miars, USA](#); [Gerold Rahmann, Germany](#); [Edith Van Walsum, Netherlands](#). Of these, only three of those running were incumbents and all were re-elected - Eyhorn, Miars, and Rahmann. Andre Leu, outgoing IFOAM president, was so ill from the air that he missed much of the General Assembly.

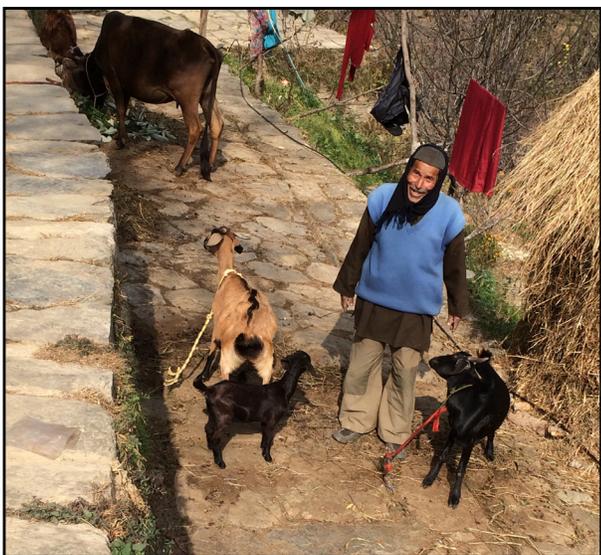
The OWC 2020 will be hosted by France in Rennes. Competition was tough with Sydney, Australia; Saskatoon, Canada; Prague, Czech Republic; Moscow, Russia; Valencia, Spain; Lithuania; Mexico; Morocco; and Dubai also in the running.

Nov 13 PM through Nov 16 3 days of vacation on a bio-tour to visit SARG India (<http://sargindia.org>). The trip both ways was grueling, but the view of the Himalayas was worth any discomfort. Two New Zealand roommates and I stayed with an organic farm couple, along with their son and daughter-in-law. The farm was in the mountains with narrow terraces, hundreds of years old, with stonework to hold the terraces up. They kept one cow (20 years old) and her calf. The farm was located in the habitat of the Bengal tiger, which made night trips to the outhouse more interesting. Communication was challenging. The farmers' English was very little and we had 2 volunteers with us for 37 people split up among a dozen small farm households.



Nov. 17 – My flight out was cancelled, and I was rebooked via Germany. I arrived home into Billings, MT at night, after a marathon 40 hours from the time I headed for the Delhi airport.

For a re-cap, <https://www.ifoam.bio/en/news/2017/12/07/organic-world-congress-recap>



Basic Crop Inspection Course - Fresno, California - September 25 - 29

by Heather Hawthorne

Every spring I plant a small garden, and by mid-July, it has withered and died from neglect. I have no intention of changing careers and traveling to inspect organic farms for certification bodies. And yet, when given the opportunity to attend an IOIA Organic Crop Inspection Course, I enthusiastically accepted. As the Inspections Supervisor at OMRI, I hoped this training would help me to better understand the experience and training of the contracted inspectors I work with, and of ways I can support them better. I also hoped to learn more about the regulations that OMRI supports.



Having worked to oversee organic food processing requirements and processing facility inspections for over 10 years, I thought the crops inspection course would provide me with a steeper, more satisfying learning curve. I thought the amount of material in the training would be similar to food safety trainings and certifications I had taken over the years. I was not prepared for the amount and variety of information IOIA provided.

Attendee MerryEllen Ackema brought squash and melons from her dry organic farm to share with the group, pictured above. (L to R) Alec Loranca, Alex Ferguson, Masaharu Noda, Greg Mund, Pamela Aragon, Brenda Gross, Persis Johnson, Heather Hawthorne, Siobhan Hayes, Nancy Chin, MerryEllen Ackema, Karen Hess, Carolina Ramirez, Todd Hunter, Dylan Burge, Raoul Wertz, Hunter Nadler (Field Trip Leader), and Spencer Bray. Missing from photograph, Trainers Garry Lean and Jonda Crosby. (Photo credit Heather Hawthorne).

The training was co-sponsored by California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), who made the experience as realistic as possible by identifying farms to inspect and providing the inspection packets. I was surprised that the seventeen attendees were so diverse, including organic farmers, food safety inspectors, researchers and consultants. One participant had come to the training from Panama so she could learn to support the growth of organic farming there.

The course and pre-course webinars were led by Garry Lean and assisted by Jonda Crosby. Hunter Nadler co-assisted the second half of this onsite training. The trainers were able to make difficult concepts easier to understand by sharing their experiences inspecting and farming with the group. The course was intense, with long days learning and late nights studying. Passing the course isn't guaranteed, and neither is completing it. The trainers and participants supported each other by offering their experiences and strengths with farming techniques, organic standards, inspection processes, traceability and mass balance. We shared tips on organization and how to becoming more familiar with the resources. Bring highlighters, small post-its and colored pens!

Tuesday evening, I carpoled with several students to River Park in search of the farmers market and local cuisine. Fair warning: the locals say, 'there is no river and no parking at River Park' (we found the statement accurate on both accounts). My favorite part of the training was the field trip. Our group went to an orchard that primarily grew stone fruits, persimmons and pomegranates. Our gracious hosts allowed us to conduct the mock training inspection and were very kind and patient with our inquisitive group. One of the most valuable aspects was getting to know the people. I hope to stay connected to them, and I hope I have an opportunity to attend another course. I returned home with sun-kissed shoulders, feeling that I had met my goals for the course, but also wondering when we find out if we passed! (Editor's note - 30 days)

Crop & Processing Inspection Courses - Fresno, California - October 2 - 6



California Basic Crop Course II. Not pictured, Nathaniel Powell-Palm and Hunter Nadler, Assistant Trainers. Photo credit: Hunter Nadler

The Peterson Family Farms helped out by hosting two field trips the same day when some unexpected cancellations occurred. Here, Margaret’s crop course group listen as Vernon Peterson explains his marketing strategy. Being organic and having an amazingly diverse perennial crop mix help the farm thrive in a highly competitive market.



Processing Course - Corinne Kolm (assistant trainer) far right. Garry Lean (lead trainer) back and center. Photo Credit – Hunter Nadler

Seventeen participants took the Crop course, and 18 took the Processing course that ran concurrently. All three courses in Fresno were cosponsored by CCOF. Nate Powell-Palm of Montana joined Margaret Scoles as assistant trainer. Corinne Kolm of Nebraska joined Garry Lean as assistant trainer for Processing. Long-time IOIA Inspector member Hunter Nadler served as Group Leader for one of the crop field trips each week.

A huge thank-you to CCOF for making Jamie Carr available to IOIA for the courses. She coordinated and helped confirm availability of nine field trip hosts. CCOF recommended Fresno as the location based on the high concentration of certified operations in the area. As the person in charge of CCOF inspections for the Fresno area, Jamie was the perfect person to identify potential hosts. Even though there were dozens of farms in the region, it is always challenging to find host operations willing to take the time to host a group of novice inspectors. IOIA appreciates our field trip hosts! Jamie also served as Group Leader for one of the three Processing groups.

IOIA Training Events - Fall 2017

New Jersey Department of Agriculture cosponsored basic processing inspection training with IOIA in Vineland, New Jersey on Nov 13-17. Lead Trainer Garry Lean of Ontario was assisted by Al Johnson, New Jersey, during the week. They were joined by third group leader Amanda Birk of Pennsylvania and supported by IOIA BOD member Heather Donald, also of Pennsylvania. Field trips all focused on produce handling, which was appropriate for the “Garden State”.



Client Procedures When Using Uncertified Vendors –

This member-initiated webinar, was delivered by Silke Fuchshofen on Nov. 28 and Dec. 14. What did participants have to say afterwards? *“The drawings of the different departments and how they communicate or don’t communicate with each other were excellent!”*; *“The examples of different systems to verify the last certified entity that could all result in compliance were also really helpful.”*; and *“The example interview questions to uncover what procedures exist / truth whether they are actually followed are great.”* IOIA will continue to offer this webinar as open-enrollment and will offer it to certifiers as an in-house option.

Republic of Korea December 4 - 8 Processing Inspection Course

iCOOP Certification Center and IOIA co-sponsored processing training at Gurye Naturaldream Park, in Gurye-gun, Jeollanam-do, Republic of Korea.

There were 15 people taking the class. IOIA member Kim Yeonhwa assisted trainer Isidor Yu during this training.



In/Out & Traceability Training Demand Growing

Since IOIA developed a format for providing webinars in-house, demand has grown steadily. The 200 In/Out and Traceability webinars are especially popular. In November, IOIA partnered with Vermont Organic Farmers to provide the 200-level In/Out and Traceability – Crop webinar to about a dozen staff and independent contract inspectors. Monique Scholz of Quebec was presenter. Plans are underway to provide similar webinars for NOFA-NY. In Australia, Kathe Purvis is adapting IOIA materials for in-house training. And in Latin America, IOIA is partnering with AgriVita to make Mass Balance training available in Spanish language. Luis Brenes delivered this training in-person for CERTIMEX and for CIAO-IICA.



Structured Apprenticeship for Organic Inspectors: IOIA Inspection Field Training in Montana

A Success and Opportunity to fine-tune our new Training Option – by Jonda Crosby



Crop Participants: John Rea, Andrew Everett and Alex Restaino with Organic Farmer Dylan Strike.

IOIA and the Montana Department of Agriculture (MTDA) teamed up to provide crop, livestock and processing apprentice inspection training for nine participants in September in Bozeman. The field inspection training included practice inspecting on vegetable crop operations, livestock (goat dairy and sheep) and processing (coffee roasting and flour/flakes). Lead Trainers were Margaret Scoles (Processing) and Jonda Crosby (Crop and Livestock). Georgana Webster of MTDA served as a Field Trainer for Livestock and provided the critical interface with the field trip hosts.

We designed the training as a structured apprentice inspection so that trainees would work in a group of three apprentices and a Lead Trainer during a real inspection to maximize learning. On Day 1 trainees shadowed the lead trainers as they completed an inspection. Day 2 the trainees led the inspection as a team, with the Lead Trainer providing feedback throughout the process. Both days of the inspections included extensive post inspection group debriefing and clarifications. Participants wrote inspection reports using the MTDA forms while Lead Inspector Trainers provided extensive feedback and report edits. Final submissions of the reports for Day 2 were also scored.

IOIA trainers developed this new training to address feedback from our inspector members and recently trained inspectors who had completed 100-Level Basic courses. This feedback is supported by what IOIA hears during the Certifier-Inspector Dialogue conference calls. That important feedback identified that though the basic courses IOIA is providing are critical as a first step toward becoming an inspector, field inspection training and a structured apprenticeship are also critical steps. Further training is needed before a new inspector can confidently and thoroughly complete acceptable 100 Level inspections in the scope for which they have been trained. The feedback also specifically identified that audit and traceability capacities were lacking.

IOIA partially addressed the need for Field Training by revamping our basic course in 2016 when we pulled the Standards out of the in-person training and provided that piece as a pre-requisite webinar to the Basic Course. Pulling the standards out of the in-person training freed up an additional day. This allows the trainers to spend more time on prepping participants before they go on the Field Trip Inspection, and it added more time for thorough debriefing and inspection report writing. The trainers provide feedback on the inspection reports so that participants have a better sense of the expectations for what it takes to complete an acceptable inspection report.

We know this new training works from recent feedback from both certifiers and participants who have shared the following: *"I am far more confident of my abilities now and looking forward to learning more."* *"The part of the inspection I wanted more experience with was the audits. I feel very good about what I learned here."* *"Invaluable hands-on experience."* *"Very Demanding 48 hours but that's what I expected and it forces me to think continually and enhanced my writing abilities."*

In 2018 IOIA will be providing two more structured apprentice Field Trainings. We have not nailed down the sites yet but expect to be offering one in the western states and one in the mid-west as well. We are hoping to work with more member inspectors who have an interest in becoming Lead Apprentice Field trainers. If you have an interest in becoming a field trainer please contact Jonda Crosby directly at jcrosby@mt.net.



Livestock Participants: Stephen Nix, Alice Tuson and Ariel Russell with MT Dept of Ag Organic Program Leader Georgana Webster at 13 Mile Farm owned by Becky Weed and Dave Tyler.

Where Have All The Insects Gone?

Book Review by Tony Fleming

How well are organic farms supporting insect populations? As an inspector, do you have the tools to assess this question? Its time to step up your game. The world may depend on you.

Farming with Native Beneficial Insects

by The Xerces Society

Storey Press, 2014, 257 p.

<http://xerces.org/farming-with-native-beneficial-insects/>

Much More than Pollination

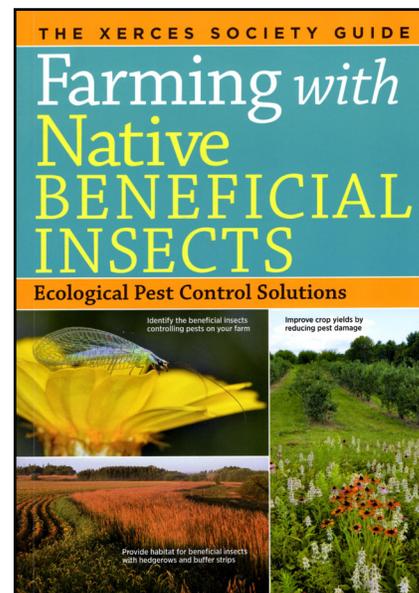
Serious practitioners and students of sustainable farming and gardening have long understood that the key to long-term success lies in properly recognizing, nurturing, and harnessing the ecological relationships between the smallest life forms in the farm ecosystem, whether they be the billions of micro organisms that comprise the soilfoodweb or the myriad invertebrates that inhabit the cropped and non-cropped parts of the farm. Insects, in particular, play many vital roles in the ecosystem, without which, we, as a species cannot exist. Pollination is probably the best known of these services, as the precarious state of pollinators has begun receiving a significant amount of press of late, both in the mainstream media and among the research community.

But pollination is only one of many indispensable functions of insects, without which ecosystems would basically collapse, or at least become uninhabitable by higher life forms. Insects form the base of the terrestrial food web in temperate and tropical ecosystems, in other words, in the places where nearly 100% of the world's agriculture takes place¹. In just the United States alone, predatory and parasitic

insects are estimated to provide some 57 billion dollars of pest control services to agriculture². To put this number in perspective, the EPA estimates that total US pesticide expenditures for all applications in 2012 were about \$8.9 billion, of which about \$2.2 billion was spent on insecticides³. Of even greater importance, however, is the largely unappreciated role of insects in the cycling of nutrients and soil organic matter: research indicates that insect detritivory (the process of burying plant parts) is responsible for the incorporation of more organic matter into soils than all other processes combined^{4,5} – by a factor of 10 or more! – a fact whose relevance to organic farming is self evident.

It's Worse Than You Think

Unfortunately, both modern agriculture and society at large have been – to put it as kindly as possible – rather reticent to recognize, much less accept, the fact that healthy and diverse insect populations are essential to our very existence. Instead, market capitalism typically presents insects in unpleasant and often scary terms, as something to be avoided, if not indiscriminately exterminated, as in the case of modern agriculture, not to mention the ubiquitous pest control products marketed for the home and lawn. This bias is even true in many catalogs and publications geared towards organic farmers and gardeners: take a look at any randomly selected catalog of products marketed to organic growers and you typically will see myriad “organic” pest control substances (and sometimes, references to “studies” purportedly demonstrating their effectiveness), but often nothing about enhancing insect habitat on the farm. The



reason is not hard to understand: there is no money to be made selling a nebulous concept like “beneficial insect habitat”, which to many people seems counterintuitive to the prevailing narrative. Beyond that, its a lot easier to scare people into buying something than it is to convince them that the negative insect narrative they’ve been hearing their entire lives is just flat wrong. To most people, a lacewing might as well be another flying stinging insect, and who wants those creepy spiders hanging around anyway?

Much to our own detriment, we appear to be succeeding all too well in our mission to eradicate insects from our landscape. For years, anecdotal observations by both specialists and lay people alike have strongly suggested a real, ongoing decline in insect populations, though empirical data to support such gut feelings were scarce. You may have even noticed this yourself via the “windshield effect” – are you spending less time and effort now cleaning smashed insects off your car than you did a decade ago? I certainly am. As a rural resident,

Continued on next page

Book Review, continued

I remember as recently as a few years ago having to put serious elbow grease into my windshield after driving any distance on a midsummer evening – like returning from a day of farm inspections. Today...not so much. Hell, we aren't even seeing June bugs anymore, which used to reliably cover the porch for a solid month of summer evenings. Even the spiders seem leaner and malnourished.

Now, newly published research is starting to quantify the “windshield effect” on large landscape scales, and the results are disturbing. For example, a 27-year study of nature preserves located in largely agricultural regions scattered around Germany shows a staggering 75% decline in total flying insect biomass⁶. Likewise, a recent article in *Science*⁷, entitled “Where Have All the Insects Gone?”, summarizes other long-term observational studies that show similarly drastic declines in other locations. To put this in perspective, imagine yourself as an insectivorous bird, a carbon-metabolizing soil microbe, or a predatory insect that suddenly finds 75% of your primary food source gone. And this is just a sampling of recently published literature on the subject. The implications for all of agriculture, and particularly organic agriculture, are dire.

Little Things That Run the World (and Organic Farms)

Upon the opening of the National Zoological Park's invertebrate exhibit in 1987, renown entomologist/ecologist E.O. Wilson dubbed insects “The Little Things That Run the World”, a term that accurately describes the importance of insects to organic farms. From pollination to nutrient cycling to pest control, the symbiosis

between insects and agriculture is so fundamental and multifaceted that it has barely begun to be articulated in observational studies in the scientific literature. In fact, for many years the lifecycles of even the most common species of beneficial insects and the details of their relationships within the farm ecosystem were poorly documented by science, and what little solid information existed was often found in obscure academic journals or in anecdotal observations by individual farmers, making its dissemination and application to the broader farmscape extremely limited.

The picture today remains far from complete – how could it be anything else, considering there are more than one million known terrestrial invertebrate species on the planet, as compared to just 43,000 vertebrate species¹? – but enough empirical evidence has emerged to begin to assemble a systematic understanding of agroecological principles: Who eats who? What habitats support specific classes of predatory and parasitic insects? Which native plants support which insects? How does the composition of field borders affect the populations of pest insects vs. beneficials? This is exactly the kind of broad-based, readily understandable information that organic producers need to support healthy, diverse insect populations and harness their power for the benefit of their operations. It also is the kind of practical resource inspectors need to evaluate whether producers understand how these principles apply to their own farms and are meeting the letter of the biodiversity requirements in the NOP.

Into The Breach: A Splendid New Resource for Producers and Inspectors

Happily, we don't have to spend weeks rummaging through old journal articles in the basements of university libraries anymore. Thanks to this relatively new book from the Xerces Society, the essential information is summarized in clear, concise, well-illustrated prose. This volume is seldom redundant with other resources on biological diversity and farm ecology; instead, it contains an immense amount of practical, hands-on information that explains how to maintain and improve beneficial insect habitat and populations, even down to specific insects for solving specific problems on the farm.

The title, *Farming With Native Beneficial Insects*, should be a tip off that this book is not about releasing captive-reared insects to control pests. Instead, it is all about practices that enhance beneficial insect habitats while often providing multiple other benefits to the farm. The presentation is lavishly illustrated with pictures of farms and farm practices that ought to look very familiar to organic inspectors: buffer strips, fencerows, field borders, cover crops, and many other familiar scenes feature prominently in the images and discussion. Although the discussion is not aimed specifically at organic farms, its value to organic producers and inspectors alike is nevertheless apparent in the frequent references to the NOP rule and how each practice can help meet its different requirements.

Case studies sprinkled throughout the chapters provide credible, real-world examples of farms

see *Insects*, page 20

Insects, from page 19

that are successfully integrating conservation values and profitability. In many of these cases, the featured conservation practices have actually provided long-term solutions to nagging pest problems, and at a fraction of the cost of relying on the input treadmill.

Which leads to an important aspect of the book. While the several co-authors are clearly leading lights in the field of insect ecology, they are not simply academics who never get their hands dirty. It is quite apparent that they collectively have an immense amount of practical experience “down on the farm” and are certainly not naïve about the realities farmers face. Consequently, the writing has a certain real-world edge that is sometimes lacking in books of this type. Farm economics are never far from the front, and the authors take pains to explain both the costs and the benefits of the various practices. The writing is supremely cognizant both of the bottom line of the farm and of the effort and patience that can be required to successfully establish some of the practices. Fortunately, the practical “how-to” information that makes up much of the volume, and which has been honed by decades of on farm research, means that farmers who follow this advice are, in fact, likely to succeed, both ecologically and economically.

The book is divided into several sections that lead the reader through a logical progression of topics. Part 1 provides an enlightening overview of the lifecycles, population ecology, and diets of the major classes of predatory and parasitic insects that operate, often unseen, in and around the farm environment. Perhaps more importantly, it provides a

compelling and multifaceted answer to the basic question: Why farm with beneficial insects? Chapter 3: Evaluating Beneficial Insect Habitat, will be of particular interest to inspectors, because it provides the basic visual cues one should look for in assessing whether and how an operation is “maintaining or improving the natural resources of the operation”, accompanied by a very handy (but brief and to the point) checklist developed for this purpose⁸.

Parts 2 and 3 are the heart of the book. The chapters in Part 2 are practice- or place-centric, delving into what is needed to effectively implement beneficial insect habitat in different parts of the farmscape. Indeed, some of the chapter titles in this section will sound very familiar to inspectors: Hedgerows (Chapter 7) and Conservation Buffers (Chapter 9), for example, show how buffer strips can be managed to provide multiple benefits. How should a buffer strip be structured to most effectively capture spray drift (or contaminated runoff) from an adjacent field, while also harboring the beneficial insects that control the pests specific to the crop, and providing effective bird and wildlife corridors? Which common hedgerow plants are more likely to harbor crop pests (hint: non-native invasives) vs. the insects that prey on them (many native plants)? You will find the answers to these and other questions here. Likewise, Chapter 8 is devoted entirely to cover crops and how to manage them to improve both soil fertility and beneficial insect populations. As someone who has researched and used cover crops for decades in my garden and landscape, I still learned a lot from the discussion here. Other chapters on insectary strips, native

plant field borders, insect shelters and shelterbelts are similarly enlightening.

If Part 2 might be thought of as the “improving” side of the natural resources equation, then Part 3 is the “maintaining” side. Chapters about reducing pesticide impacts (including from so-called “organic” ones) and how to maintain habitat (once established) again provide not only the “how-to” but also the science behind it.

Reading these two parts of the book again reminds me that the NOP rule seems to have the two sides of the natural resources equation exactly backwards: you can’t “maintain” something that doesn’t exist, yet the rule mentions “maintaining” first in its language. Not many farms in my part of the world have much left of what could be described as high quality beneficial insect (or any other) habitat. Ergo, in most cases, “improving” needs to come first, which is exactly how the book goes about thinking about restoration and management. Along the same lines, substituting “and” for “or” in §205.200 could make a world of difference in how this section of the rule is perceived: “and” makes the second term of the clause (“improving”) an action item; “or” makes it conditional. As I alluded to in the Fumbling Towards Complexity series a few years ago, this apparent verbiage disorder may at least partly explain why biodiversity has historically received so little attention in the NOP certification process. Words matter.

The other three parts of the book basically constitute an illustrated mini encyclopedia of beneficial insects and the plants they need to thrive, along with an abbreviated

Insects, from page 20

list of related print and online resources. Since the book aims to present broad principles and practices applicable to farms throughout the coterminous US, the entries in these sections are not meant to be comprehensive and just represent some of the most effective and prominent beneficials and native host plants.

Despite the geographic and topical scope of the book, it is imminently readable. No chapter is longer than about 15 pages, and most devote a lot of space to illustrations. Moreover, it cannot be remotely mistaken for an academic treatise; its intended audience is clearly people of diverse backgrounds and experience – like inspectors and farmers. I read the entire book in less than 3 hours. Its organization and accessibility is one reason it makes such a useful reference for inspectors.

But beyond this functional utility lies a fundamental ecological truth: insects make up the lower strata of the terrestrial ecosystem (as well as many non-marine aquatic ones). Which means that the status of insect populations at any given farm is likely to reflect the health of other denizens of the farm environment, like birds, mammals, and probably the soil biota as well. And good management of beneficial insect habitat clearly has positive repercussions for all of the “big 5” specifically mentioned in the NOP definition of the natural resources of the operation: soil, water, wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife (the latter, of course, encompasses insects). Thus, the ability to inspect efficiently and effectively for beneficial insect habitat may considerably simplify your task of evaluating how an operation is managing its natural

resources: if it is doing the right thing by beneficial insects, then chances are it is also meeting both the letter and spirit of the rule for all of the operation’s natural resources. In short, inspectors are standing on very solid ground, both ecologically and with respect to the NOP rule⁹, when evaluations of beneficial insect habitat form the backbone of their larger assessments of farm biodiversity.

Insects are in trouble, which means that everything above them is too, and habitat loss and pesticide use are the prime suspects implicated in their decline. The latest science clearly shows that reversing these ominous trends requires more than postage-stamp-size nature preserves scattered randomly through the landscape. Like other wildlife, insects need corridors to avoid fragmentation into genetically isolated, unsustainable populations that ultimately disappear. Agricultural lands make up a large percentage of non-urban land cover in an increasingly populated, nature-depleted world, and a small but growing part of that cultivated landscape consists of organic farms. Thus, the question is: if not on farms, and especially organic farms, then where will these corridors and refuges be?

Notes

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v. 56, no. 4, p. 311 – 323. <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/56/4/311-323/229003>

3 Atwood, D., and Paisley-Jones, C., 2017, Pesticide Industry Sales and Usage, 2008-2012 Market Estimates: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C., 24 p. https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2017-01/documents/pesticides-industry-sales-usage-2016_0.pdf

4 Mattson WJ, and Addy ND., 1975, Phytophagous insects as regulators of forest primary production: *Science*, v. 190, issue 4214, p. 515–522. <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/190/4214/515>

5 Yang LH, and Gratton C., 2014, Insects as drivers of ecosystem processes: *Current Opinion in Insect Science*, v. 2, p. 26–32. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214574514000339?via%3Dihub>

6 Hallman, C., et al., 2017, More than 75 percent decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas: *PLoS ONE* 12(10): e0185809. Published Oct. 18, 2017 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0185809>

7 Vogel, G., 2017, Where have all the insects gone? *Science*, v. 356, issue 6338, p. 576 – 579. <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/05/where-have-all-insects-gone>

8 The Xerces Society has many publications that organic inspectors will find useful, including a comprehensive Beneficial Insect Habitat Assessment Form and Guide for Farms and Agricultural Landscapes, available for free download at http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/HAG_BeneficialInsects_June2015_web.pdf. This level of assessment is ideal for NRCS technical service providers and farms implementing conservation practices, but also provides excellent background for inspectors wishing to step up their games

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Board of Directors Minutes Highlights

(full minutes available to inspector members on the IOIA website.)

Conference Call – June 28, 2017

Members Present: Margaret Anne Weigelt (MAW), Mutsumi Sakuyoshi, Pam Sullivan, Matt Miller, Chuck Mitchell, Heather Donald and IOIA ED Margaret Scoles (MS) **Absent:** Stuart McMillan

Fee Structure for Advanced In/Out Training in Latin America (Spanish): Flexible fee structure is proposed/requested for this audit trail training by Luis Brenes. **Pam: Give MS and Sacha the authority to negotiate lower fee schedule with Luis for this audit trail training. Heather seconds. Approved.**

Survey Monkey – OLPP: Comments Policy Update. MS pointed out some well-thought out minority comments by inspector members.

Membership Committee: Heather - Staff Inspector Proposal. Scheme and logistics for categories discussed. Staff must be employees. No need to cap the number of inspectors a certifier brings. There would be no change in the \$500 rate for supporting certification agency members, but rates would increase for those bringing staff inspectors. MS will talk to the Certifiers at ACA call July 17 with draft proposal to be brought to BOD in August.

Field Training: BOD discussed the issue of most of the Field Training applicants not have not taken basic training in the scope of the field training. While certifiers are concerned about inspector quality, they are not insisting on a basic training before inspecting. BOD suggests that we need to change the emphasis in the field training application. It should be clear that the different options are not equally weighted. BOD consensus is that we need to keep a way to allow flexibility. If an experienced inspector is adding a scope and have good related experience, maybe they don't need a full basic training. MS asks if the BOD will support continuing with very small trainings in Montana if we only get small number of applicants. BOD is not opposed to having a small training, but can't lose \$\$\$. Discussion of having individual mentors will continue. General support.

ED Report: Asked whether the BOD wants her to continue to keep a detailed time spreadsheet as she has had for the last 3 months. It gave us good information as to how she spends her time. MAW says the idea was to use it to create the ED Job Description.

Conference Call – August 9, 2017

Members Present: Margaret Anne Weigelt (MAW), Mutsumi Sakuyoshi, Pam Sullivan, Stuart McMillan, Heather Donald. **Others:** Margaret Scoles (MS). **Absent -** Chuck Mitchell, Matt Miller

Google Drive Document Retention & Permissions: Since various IOIA BOD documents are created and maintained in Google Drive it has required changes to the document procedure. The BOD Confidentiality/COI Agreement could be amended to include a document retention statement for when the person is no longer a Director.

Treasurer's report – 2nd Quarter Financials: Pam presented Balance Sheet, and proposed a recommendation to move some of our funds from checking into a longer term savings account. **Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report, 2nd Quarter Balance Sheet and 2nd Quarter Budget vs Actual – Stuart moves to approve, Seconded by Heather. Approved.**

Membership Committee – Staff Inspector Proposal: Discussion on MS presentation to the Certifier-Inspector Dialogue call. Several certifiers responded favorably to the concept; no certifiers spoke against it. **Motion to accept the proposed fee structure for the supporting certification agency at \$500 for no staff, \$750 for 2 staff inspectors, \$1000 for 3 - 5 staff inspectors and \$1250 for 6 - 10 – Heather moves to approve, Seconded by Pam. Approved.**

Comments Policy Update: Heather presented the results of the initial work on the IOIA BOD comments policy. It was decided that this would be an excellent discussion point at the AGM. Also it would not preclude IOIA continuing to comment in the same ad hoc basis that it has done in the recent past.

Trainer/Evaluator Compensation Rates: MS described that the rates for trainers has lagged in comparison to inspection rates. The discussion covered both peer evaluators and trainers. Peer evaluation rates will remain at the current levels for the time being. Trainer rates have not increased since 2013. The BOD supported increasing training rates, but wanted to ensure that the 2017 budget stayed on track.

Continued on next page

Board of Directors Minutes Highlights

(full minutes available to inspector members on the IOIA website.)

Bylaws Committee, Review of the Bylaws: Al Johnson (Committee Chair), Matt Miller (BOD Liaison) and Margaret Scoles met to thoroughly review the Bylaws to look for inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and potential items requiring change. MS will take Board comments to the Bylaws Committee.

IOIA at IOIA/CIAO Training in Costa Rica: The board discussed the concept of Chuck attending a week long Spanish language training in Costa Rica. He is the sole Spanish fluent BOD member. He has expressed willingness to attend if the training develops and his schedule allows. MS promoted his participation as this could be the first of a series of trainings in Latin America with CIAO. Sending a BOD member indicates the importance we place on the alliance. **Motion to approve Chuck attending the CIAO training in Costa Rica, if his schedule allows. If Chuck is not available, an alternate IOIA representative would be considered as a possibility. Pam moves to approve, seconded by Heather. Approved.**

Conference Call – September 21, 2017

Members Present: Margaret Anne Weigelt (MAW), Mutsumi Sakuyoshi, Stuart McMillan, Heather Donald, Matt Miller. **Others:** Margaret Scoles (MS) Absent - Chuck Mitchell, Pam Sullivan

Report from the chair: MAW described her experience at Expo East and role with IOIA. She described how she worked as hard as she does when performing an inspection. It was an important networking experience for her, allowing an opportunity to meet various people in the organic sector.

Financials: Discussion on the 2018 membership dues of all membership categories. The Membership Committee has unanimously opposed any dues increase regardless of membership category. The board reviewed financial position of IOIA and all agreed to maintain dues levels at the current rate. **Motion to maintain the current dues rates across all categories by Matt, Second by Heather. Approved.**

990 IRS form: Discussion on the minor accounting discrepancy arising from the Korea training occurred. **Motion to accept the IRS 990 once the \$150 discrepancy is corrected by Gardner and Billing CPAs. Matt moves to approve, Second by Heather. Approved.**

Newsletter Issues: MS presented information on the members newsletter receipt via Constant Contact. MS had emailed IOIA members and polled those receiving the email version. She had concerns with the number of members who did not receive the newsletter. There was discussion on the option of resuming mailing out of hard copy newsletters to all members who request it. **MOTION – To continue with the current practice that inspectors, members and supporting businesses can receive hard copy newsletters at the cost of \$25 per year. Heather moves to approve, Second by Mutsumi. Approved.**

Comments Policy Update: Discussion occurred on the Decision Tree document (draft two) that Heather circulated. It was confirmed that the draft would be circulated to the membership at the next AGM. The BOD members felt it was a suitable draft which would be used in the interim until presented to the IOIA members.

Bylaws Revision Proposal: Bylaws committee meeting occurred on Sept 17. Matt reviewed the proposed revisions. It was determined that IOIA should seek outside advice on the wording of 3.5.c which relates to the role of the Executive Director and the BOD. Committee members differed in opinion on Section 3.0 with the wording of the IOIA BOD must be made of members who are actively inspecting. Actively inspecting is not a clearly defined category as compared to inspector members which is defined. IOIA has had a number of past BOD members who were not actively inspecting, but highly engaged in the organic community.

2018 AGM Update: GOTS training attendance may be limited as it will require Social Criteria training via SAI Global. The BOD discussed Retreat timing – budget, length, dates. Many felt that while there is benefit from having a three day retreat to allow new BOD members to properly meet and work on projects, the majority favored two days. It was suggested that the BOD members could meet for a part day on Sunday.

Asia Pacific Committee: Mutsumi described how APEDA has rejected the initial proposal to have a training in conjunction with IFOAM India. Asia Pacific could become a co-sponsor to set up a similar

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Hydroponics, from page 1

Two distinct camps with equally passionate views

In recent years, hydroponic, aquaponic, and aeroponic farms — which grow produce in nutrient-rich solution without soil, often indoors — have boomed. Some of these businesses have been granted the organic label for their products.

But that trend has dismayed some traditional farmers, who argue that allowing non-soil producers to label their food organic weakens the integrity of the program. True organic farming, they say, requires nurturing, natural soil.

Dave Chapman, a longtime organic tomato farmer in Vermont, is not happy with the decision, which he calls a “tragic failure.”

“The National Organic Program has failed at the very thing it was created to do: creating trust and transparency between organic farmers and eaters,” he told Business Insider in a statement. “After a publicized series of failures in defending organic integrity, the Organic Program’s Advisory Board decision to embrace hydroponic production as the ‘new organic’ is the final straw.”

Chapman said he is considering leaving the program. He and other critics of the board’s decision say that hydroponic farming does not meet [the USDA’s definition of organic](#) due to its lack of soil.

Some pioneers of the sustainable farming movement believe the vote could splinter the organics industry.

A different perspective is offered by Recirculating Farms Coalition Executive Director Marianne Cufone, who made the following statement in response to the NOSB decision:

“We’re very pleased that the NOSB made the right decision by voting not to prohibit hydroponic and aquaponic farms from USDA Organic certification. Many products from these farms already carry a USDA Organic label and to now withdraw that would be irresponsible and confusing for consumers and farmers.”

“By siding with current science and recognizing that existing law purposely leaves the door open for various farming methods, the NOSB is sending a critical message that sustainability and innovation are valuable in U.S. agriculture. These goals are at the center of the nationwide local food movement and spur growth of urban and rural farms alike, by a wide range of people.”

Still left unresolved are the lack of organic standards to guide organic inspectors of production facilities of growers that incorporate hydroponics and container growing methods in their systems and lack of consistency in how accredited certifiers review them.

In the meantime, hydroponic operations certified under the NOP must comply with the [organic crop regulations](#) as they are written.

Sources:

[Tom Karst](#)

November 3, 2017, *The Packer Online*

OTA Newsflash, Oct 8, 2017

recirculatingfarms.org website

November 1, 2017 / by [mcufone](#) /

[Recirculating Farms Coalition](#) / [CSO](#) / [CNN](#)

<http://www.businessinsider.com/hydroponic-grown-food-organic-labels-2017-11>

[Leanna Garfield](#)

Nov. 3, 2017, 11:39 AM

<https://organicmattersblog.com/2017/11/02/nosb-fails-to-prohibit-hydroponic-and-container-growing-in-organic-standards/>

Board of Directors Minutes Highlights

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training in autumn of next year. It was proposed that Vitoon could attempt to set up a crop, grower group, livestock or processing training in Thailand. The committee planned to contact CVBs to determine which training would be most needed in the Asia Pacific region. Peer evaluation is another topic of discussion for this committee. Ongoing work will include how IOIA can provide certain services to CVB requirements to meet USDA NOP peer evaluation requirements in the region.

Conference Call – November 2, 2017

Members Present: Margaret Anne Weigelt (MAW), Stuart McMillan, Heather Donald, Chuck Mitchell, Pam Sullivan, Matt Miller. Others: Margaret Scoles (MS) Absent - Mutsumi Sakuyoshi

Financials – Treasurer’s Report: Pam presented the highlights of the financial reports. Current Cash Balances and Accounts Receivable are both positive. A few categories of income will not meet our proposed targets, but at the same time others have outperformed earlier projections. Webinars in particular have had very positive financials both due to higher enrolment and lower expenses. Heather, MS and Pam have met to work on a proposed 2018 budget that will be then sent to the Finance Committee for a meeting on Nov 21, 2017. A final decision was not made regarding health benefits for staff. **Heather moves to approve the third quarter financial reports,** Second by Matt. **Approved.** The idea to take additional cash reserves out of IOIA saving account and place them into CDs was raised. Most board members felt that maintaining funds in low interest bearing CDs where there was no risk was the correct choice for IOIA. It was suggested that if we had too much money in reserves then it would be the correct time to move forward with some of the longstanding projects that would require significant cash outlay, such as the new inspector accreditation/certification program.

Membership Goals: There has been a modest increase in membership, but short of the targeted 10% increase. MS had created a list of inspectors who may be potential members. The membership committee suggested a survey of non-members on their reasons for not joining IOIA. Stuart raised the point that additional information on the benefits of membership is required. MAW offered to work on the Elevator Speech that describes the benefits of IOIA membership. It was also suggested that any of the new inspectors the BOD members mentored this year should be contacted by their mentors to try to encourage membership. It was determined that existing BOD members will call some of the people on the list and see if we can encourage them to become members. MS will assist by sending out membership recruitment aids to the BOD.

Policy Handbook Update: Heather provided an update. The policy handbook update included a policy on document retention. Document retention would include both IOIA staff and BOD members.

ED Job Description: The job description was circulated by MAW prior to the meeting. This is part of IOIA’s emergency preparedness process, where an ED Job Description is in place prior to any sudden changes in ED availability. BOD members will be required to provide feedback and assistance as it works towards finalization.

Report from Chuck: Chuck led with a description of his current activities in Costa Rica. Chuck gave a presentation, highlighting IOIA’s role. He felt that the training led by Luis Brenes, combined with his presence, allowed the profile of IOIA to be raised with the competent authorities (CIAO) bodies across North, Central and South America.

Regarding the “Ask the Inspector” project – He has found that it was easier to work with smaller independent stores rather than the large retail stores with organic content. He has spoken with COTA, COG, and OCO and they all feel that consumer confidence tends to be a high priority issue, so the buy-in has been high. The concept has been received well. He found that those organizations see this as a way for inspectors to be “Organic Ambassadors”. He plans to meet with Kelly Monaghan to develop materials and a strategy.

2018 AGM: The ED report covered the AGM planning meeting on Nov 1. Discussions were held on the keynote. The planning committee liked the idea of incorporating a keynote that had something to do with social justice. It was felt to be a good fit with other materials and training occurring at this specific AGM.

Fraud in Organics – IOIA’s role: The BOD discussed IOIA’s role in responding to media coverage about fraud as it relates to inspectors and IOIA’s training program. Discussions occurred on how IOIA can be proactive in terms of ensuring that trainings and education of organic inspectors address this issue.

Late Breaking News! 'Ask The Inspector' Outreach!

IOIA is in the process of developing a consumer-outreach and education program called *'Ask the organic inspector'* in which inspectors would go to retail stores in their community and answer questions about what we do. The overall goal is to boost consumer confidence in the organic label.

Trifold brochures which explain the program with answers to commonly-asked questions will be provided. We are also hoping to partner with Canadian organic producers to provide food samples at the table in order to attract interest.

We are reaching out to Canadian organic inspectors to ask if they would be willing to volunteer a few times per year in their local community by spending a few hours at one of these retail tables. This is not a commitment, we are just getting a sense of interest within the Canadian IOIA community for this pilot program.

The "Ask the Organic Inspector" development team is hoping to meet with potential supporters such as COTA and COG at the Guelph Organic Conference and would like to have a more confident assessment of whether or not IOIA members would be willing to do this on a volunteer basis.

Contact for this project is Chuck Mitchell, mitchellchuck060@gmail.com

Puerto Rican farmers struggle to regain footing

Before hurricanes Maria and Irma hit, young farmers and restaurateurs in Puerto Rico were leading a nascent movement of sustainable, cooperative farming and eating. "While the ... government gave generous subsidies and some of its top agricultural land to biotechnological companies such as Monsanto," writes Hermes Ayala, "a new generation of farmers fought for space on their island. Despite droughts, floods, and competition from the mainland — 85 percent of Puerto Rico's food is imported from the U.S. because of the [Jones Act](#) — local farmers were making headway in the markets, and selling locally grown produce to restaurants. Then the hurricanes arrived."

<https://www.eater.com/2017/12/8/16739310/puerto-rico-restaurant-industry-farmers-hurricane-maria>

Comment deadline extended for Rodale's Regenerative

The deadline for commenting on Rodale Institute's Regenerative Organic Certification program is now December 31. NSF International is facilitating the public comment period for this certification owned by Rodale Institute. The standard's organizers have indicated that the certification program and label do not aim to supplant current organic standards, but instead intend to build upon the USDA organic standards, particularly in the areas of labor, animal welfare and soil health.



Regenerative
Organic
Certified

A sobering read.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/06/why-are-americas-farmers-killing-themselves-in-record-numbers>

Book Review, from page 21

9 As I've noted previously in this column, it can be problematic to inspect something that doesn't actually appear in the organic system plan. As it turns out, however, the biodiversity questions in the OSP's of 10 out of 42 U.S. based certifiers recently surveyed by The Wild Farm Alliance do, in fact, include direct questions about insects and insect habitat (Jo Ann Baumgartner, personal communication; to see the entire WFA survey, go to:

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/wildfarmalliance/pages/290/attachments/original/1508809152/WFA_Making_Biodiversity_a_Priority_Updating_OSPs_Oct_2017_%281%29.pdf?1508809152).

Moreover, from a purely ecological perspective, it is entirely logical to use the status of insect habitat as a proxy for the larger biodiversity resources on the farm.

Organic Farmers Association

In 2016 farmers from across the country came together to launch the Organic Farmers Association (OFA) to unite organic farmers for a better future together. Rodale Institute supports this initiative as fiscal sponsor and partner with OFA's farmer leadership.

The mission of the Organic Farmers Association is to provide a strong and unified national voice for domestic certified organic producers. Right now, a lot of people say they speak for organic farmers. Giving organic farmers true representation in policy and Washington, D.C. on the issues important to us is OFA's number one goal.

<http://organicfarmersassociation.org/policy/>



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GMO News

Monsanto, U.S. farm groups sue California over glyphosate warnings

CHICAGO (Reuters) - Monsanto Co and U.S. farm groups filed suit on November 15, 2017, against California to stop the state from requiring cancer warnings on products containing the widely used weed killer glyphosate, which the company sells to farmers to apply to its genetically engineered crops.

The government of the most populous U.S. state added glyphosate, the main ingredient in Monsanto's herbicide Roundup, to its list of cancer-causing chemicals in July and will require that products containing glyphosate carry warnings by July 2018. California acted after the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) concluded in 2015 that glyphosate was "probably carcinogenic".

For more than 40 years, farmers have applied glyphosate to crops, most recently as they have cultivated genetically modified corn and soybeans. Roundup and Monsanto's glyphosate-resistant seeds would be less attractive to customers if California requires warnings on products containing the chemical.

California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), which is named in the federal lawsuit, said it stands by the decision to include glyphosate on the state's list of products known to cause cancer and believes it followed proper legal procedures.

Monsanto and groups representing corn, soy and wheat farmers reject that glyphosate causes cancer. They say in the lawsuit that California's requirement for warnings would force sellers of products containing the chemical to spread false information.

"Such warnings would equate to compelled false speech, directly violate the First Amendment, and generate unwarranted public concern and confusion," Scott Partridge, Monsanto's vice president of global strategy, said in a statement.

The controversy is an additional headache for Monsanto as it faces a crisis around another herbicide based on a chemical known as dicamba that was linked to widespread U.S. crop damage this summer. The company, which is being acquired by Bayer AG for \$63.5 billion, developed the product as a replacement for glyphosate following an increase of weeds resistant to the chemical.

A large, long-term study on glyphosate use by U.S. agricultural workers, published in November 2017 as part of a project known as the Agricultural Health Study (AHS), found no firm link between exposure to the chemical and cancer.

Reuters reported in June that an influential scientist was aware of new AHS research data while he was chairing a panel of experts reviewing evidence on glyphosate for IARC in 2015. He did not tell the panel about it because the data had not been published, and IARC's review did not take it into account.

A 2007 study by OEHHA also concluded the chemical was unlikely to cause cancer.

Still, flour mills have started asking farmers to test wheat for glyphosate in anticipation of California's requirement, said Gordon Stoner, president of the National Association of Wheat Growers, another plaintiff.

The case is National Association of Wheat Growers et al v. Lauren Zeise, director of OEHHA, et al, U.S. District Court, Eastern District of California, No. 17-at-01224.

Reporting by Tom Polansek for Reuters; Editing by Tom Brown



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Keep IOIA Strong - Lend Your Strength And Get Involved!

2018 Calendar

January 22-26 Anyang, Korea, Crop Inspection Course

January 24 - 27 [EcoFarm Conference](#), Pacific Grove, CA

January 26 NOFA-NJ & OFRF's 2018 Organic Farming Research Conference Rutgers University, New Jersey

February 6 – 8 USDA NOP Certifier Training and the Accredited Certifiers Association Professional Development Training, San Antonio, TX

February 14-17 9th Organic Seed Growers Conference, Corvallis, Oregon.

February 15 – 17 [OEFFA 39th Annual](#) Farming Conference, Dayton, Ohio

February 22-24 MOSES Organic Farming Conference, La Crosse Center, La Crosse, Wis.

February 23 - 25 COABC 2018 Conference – Quality Hotel & Conference Centre, Abbotsford BC

Feb 28 - March 2 IOIA Advanced Trainings, Charleston, South Carolina. Global Organic Textile Standards (GOTS) Training & Advanced Trainings

March 3 IOIA 2018 Annual General Meeting

March 4-5 SAI-GOTS Training on Social Auditing

March 5 – 9 IOIA/GCIA Basic Processing Inspection Training, Athens, Georgia

March 8 Annual OFRF Benefit Luncheon, Expo West, Anaheim. www.ofrf.org

March 9-11 Expo West – Anaheim Convention Center Main Halls.

April 9- 13 IOIA/PCO Crop Training, State College, PA.

April 16 - 20 IOIA/PCO Livestock training, State College, PA.

April 25 - 27 [NOSB Meeting](#) - Tucson, AZ

May 21 – 24 Organic Week, Washington DC. An OTA event.

June 2018 IOIA/UDAF Crop and Processing Training, Salt Lake City, Utah,

June 13 - 15 [1st International Conference of Wheat Landraces for Healthy Food Systems](#), Bologna, Italy. foam.org

Please see pages 2 & 3 for the current list of IOIA on-site trainings and webinars