

## Come to Montana for the 2025 Annual Meeting! *The Future of Organic Inspecting*

IOIA and Regenerative Organic Alliance are pleased to announce collaborative Advanced Inspector Training at Chico Hot Springs, Pray, Montana in March 2025. IOIA will hold a hybrid online/in-person Annual Meeting on March 25, followed by 2 days of advanced inspector training March 26-27. The focus will be on some of the broader issues of the organic movement - Social compliance, auditing and soil health. The training will include an Intro to Social Compliance Auditing. With ROA's focus on Fairness, Soil Health, and Animal Welfare and IOIA's focus on honing auditor competency, ROA and IOIA are ideal partners.

USDA NOP does not address Social Compliance at all, yet around the world, triple bottom line sustainability is becoming increasingly important for commerce, especially to European markets, and to many consumers. Operators are seeking add-on labels to satisfy markets where NOP falls short or silent. The huge growth in the regenerative add-on label for organic producers just 5 years since the standard was published is a testament to the consumer interest. Social Compliance is also a key aspect of the Global Organic Textile Standard. USDA NOP doesn't address objective metrics for soil health or soil testing. Yes, it requires and defines crop rotation and practices that "maintain or improve the natural resources

of the operation, including soil and water quality" and "maintain or improve organic matter". The Natural Resource Conservation Service requires a Soil Tillage Intensity Rating (STIR) to determine eligibility for programs such as organic practices. Want to learn more about how to do this calculation and about other measurements for soil quality?



The Chico Hot Springs venue offers a delightful and affordable winter respite with a stunning view of the mountains and non-chlorinated natural geothermal pools. Closest airport is Bozeman (BZN), the largest and busiest airport in Montana, just under one hour away. Travelers in the area are likely to see elk and other wildlife. Yellowstone National

Park is less than an hour to the south. The northern part of the Park will be open, but the roads that are open depend on winter driving conditions. Don't count on Old Faithful at that time of year. The training team developing this training includes Elizabeth Whitlow, ROA Executive Director, former CCOF Inspection Operations Manager and inspector; Ryan Sitler, former IOIA board member, currently serving as the GOTS representative in North America, and past social compliance auditor; Kathe Purvis, IOIA Board member and social compliance auditor in Australia and the Pacific region; and

See AGM 2025, page 4

## Notes from the Chair by Janine Gibson

Thank you for reading this fine edition and so supporting IOIA and more resilient organic agriculture with your time, in these strangely busy times! I won't have many more opportunities to share Notes from the Chair, so please know the great respect I hold for all of you, as we strive to uphold integrity in all service we do, in our teams, in our communities around the world. Envisioning the impacts of this change work we do together yet apart is profoundly inspiring, and I love to smile! Enthused about the upcoming training in Kentucky funded by the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program! Upcoming trainings possible in Japan, Mexico, Peru - truly international services to strengthen organic integrity, for we all know inspection is an organic critical control point!

Congrats to staff member DrewAnne and family on their new baby boy! Organic is about nurturing life See Notes, page 4

## Welcome New Members

### Upgrading to Inspector

Larissa Lichty, Everett, PA

### Returning inspectors

Rachel Walsh, Fitchburg, WI

### Supporting Individuals

Maria Bartlett, Santa Rosa, CA

Jessi Stewart, Worthville, KY

### Returning Supporting Individuals

Timothy Keneipp, Viroqua, WI

## Accreditation Renewals due by October 1

If your renewal is coming up, don't delay! Send your requests for certifier evaluations out in advance. Being accredited also automatically gives you the opportunity to apply to be a Peer Field Evaluator. To apply or renew, [Click here for info.](#)

### Webinar Discount Reminder

All inspector members are entitled to take 50% off any one webinar during 2024

### Next Scholarship Application

Deadline is October 1  
See our [website](#) for details and to apply.

## 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](#)

## Webinar Training Schedule

for details & to register go to our [website](#)

**September 10 & 13** 100 Level NOP Processing Standards  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific). Two 3 hour sessions.  
Trainer: Garry Lean

[Register and Pay Here](#)

**September 18** 100 Level IOIA/OMRI  
NOP Processing Input Materials

This webinar is a 100-level course designed as a way for new organic professionals to gain an understanding of the compliance requirements of inputs used within the processing/handling production scope through a discussion and learning session.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 a.m. (Pacific). One 3 hour session.

Trainers: Tina Jensen Augustine and Jacky Castañeda, OMRI

[Register and Pay Here](#)

**October 15 & 18** 100 Level NOP Crop Standards  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific). Two 3 hour sessions.  
Trainer: Margaret Scoles.

[Register and Pay Here](#)

**October 16** 100 Level IOIA/OMRI NOP Crop Input Materials  
See listing for September 18 - Crop input materials scope.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 a.m. (Pacific). One 3 hour session.  
Trainers: Peter Bungum and Aura del Angel Larson.

[Register and Pay Here](#)

**October 29 & November 1** 100 Level NOP Processing Standards  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific). Two 3 hour sessions.  
Trainer: Nate Powell-Palm

[Register and Pay Here](#)

### NEW! Member Benefit Webinar - November 8

**Organic Livestock and Poultry Standard** - Key changes to the USDA NOP  
In partnership with Strengthening Organic Systems (SOS)  
12 p.m. (Pacific). One 2 hour session includes 1/2 hour Q&A.

Presented by **Johanna Phillips** and **Kim Dietz** of SOS.  
Johanna (on right, in photo) lives in Eagle, Idaho, and is engaged in a family beef operation. She served as Idaho's Organic Program Manager and more recently in Ecocert USA's certification division. Kim (on left) holds a master's degree in global food law, and worked for 30+ years with J. M. Smucker Co and 3 years with Firmenich.



IOIA's first collaborative webinar with SOS - Organic Fraud Prevention Plans – the SOE Fraud Prevention Tool (Gwendolyn Wyard, Johanna Philipps) held on August 16 was a whopping success with more than 40 registrants.

Check [IOIA's website](#) for most current information on this OLPS webinar.

**November 13** 200 Level IOIA/OMRI NOP Processing Input Materials  
This webinar is a 200-level course to gain understanding how the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) evaluates input materials.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific). One 3 hour session.

Trainers: Tina Jensen Augustine and Jacky Castañeda

[Register and Pay Here](#)

**November 19 & 22** 100 Level NOP Crop Standards  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific). Two 3 hour sessions.  
Trainer: Garry Lean

[Register and Pay Here](#)

## Onsite Basic Courses 2024 - [See the IOIA website for full details](#)

### Basic Organic Farm Training, Tokyo, Japan. September 11 - September 26

IOIA and JOIA will cosponsor a 5-day Basic Organic Farm Inspection Training using JAS Standards as a reference. The course will be held online September 11 & 18 and in-person September 24-26, 2024, at Utsumi, Kandamisakicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo Japan.

### Basic Crop Inspection Training, Frankfort, Kentucky, November 4 - 8

Do you know someone who is a minority or socially disadvantaged stakeholder and also has the qualifications to become an organic crop inspector? If so please let them know about this training that IOIA and Kentucky State University are cosponsoring. This can include immigrant farmers and small farmers who can't access the resources to pay for training. Certified organic status is not required of participants.

Funded by the USDA through a Kentucky Specialty Crop Block Grant and administered by the KY Department of Agriculture, "Addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Kentucky Organic Agriculture sector," and will be held at the KSU Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm. Priority will be given to residents of Kentucky. Dr. Marcus Bernard of KSU says, "Organic farming represents an opportunity for minority farmers to participate in a growing market while garnering higher farm profits. Organic inspection is an overlooked career path and bringing diversity into the ranks of inspectors may help bring more diversity into the ranks of organic farmers."

The 4 ½ -day Basic Inspection Training follows IOIA's curriculum requirements.

Deadline to Register and Apply is Monday, September 20, 2024.



### Basic Crop Inspection Training and Basic Processing Inspection Training Farmington, Minnesota, November 18-22

The Minnesota trainings will be held concurrently at Mount Olivet Conference & Retreat Center, IOIA's favorite and most oft-used venue. It is peaceful, rural, hospitable, with walking paths, a lake, and 150 acres of outdoors space. A perfect setting to focus! An on-site garden provides vegetables for the kitchen. There are many bird feeders around the dining room; speakers bring the bird sounds inside. Less than one hour from the MSP airport center, [www.mtolivetretreat.org](http://www.mtolivetretreat.org).

**Plus an added NEW ACA/IOIA Certifier Training - Nov 18 - 20**  
**Interactive training to build knowledge and skills in de-escalation and conducting and reviewing mass balance audits. See page 10 for full details on this new training opportunity!**

*Experience the value of learning in-person in small groups with guidance from experienced inspectors.*

Deadline to apply and Register for all 3 events is September 30.

## Online Basic Courses 2024 - [see the IOIA website for full details](#)

### Online - Basic NOP Processing Inspection Training, September 23 - 27

Deadline to Register and Apply has passed.

### Online - Basic NOP Crop Inspection Training, December 9 - 13

The 4 ½ -day Basic Inspection Training follows IOIA's curriculum requirements. Deadline to Register and Apply is Monday, October 28, 2024.

### Online COR - Basic Crop Inspection Training - postponed until Spring 2025

The Basic Crop Inspection Training to COR Standards provides basic level training to develop skills required for inspecting and reporting on the management of an organic crop operations according to a specified set of standards. For courses conducted in Canada, the standard is CAN/CGSB-32.310-2020 and Permitted Substance Lists CAN/CGSB-32.311-2020.

Not finding a training you are looking for or all trainings full?  
[Please register here](#) to be contacted by IOIA when that training is available.

## Notes from the Chair, from page 1



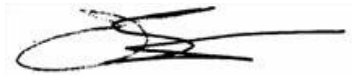
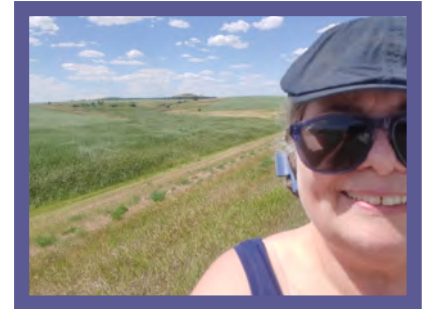
Welcome Baby Felix Wenzel!

respectfully, producing and sustaining life in a more compassionate way, may you all be so nurtured. So proud of our ED Margaret Scoles and our effective staff team she has brought together to deliver our quality services!

I had to read Margaret’s ED Report twice last month to absorb all we are doing so effectively to build for a healthy IOIA future, and health is contagious! The developing possibilities of our Organic Career Networking Tool, our upcoming trainings, our partnerships all are strong and demonstrating our IOIA mission in action!. Thank

you for being a part of our international community of organic integrity carers!

Please donate today to support IOIA in the important services we provide the Organic Sector Internationally! With Respect, Janine



## 2025 AGM, from page 1

Nate Powell-Palm, IOIA lead trainer, NOSB member, and inspector. While this training will not provide a third-party credential for Social Compliance Auditing, it will help inspectors navigate the training that is required and available. We will welcome one of the best ROA social compliance experts as a speaker.

A theme of this training could be *“What will organic inspecting look like in 10 years?”* One of the good things about USDA being a federal standard is the seemingly snail’s pace by which it moves. We all have time to know what is on the horizon, comment on proposals, wait for outcomes that we know won’t have too many surprises. We can also rest easier knowing that supportive training will be provided by NOP, certifiers, and IOIA. However, this comfortable pace might not be fast enough for a world seeking stronger response to climate change and embracing social fairness.

This training will draw from some of the best minds available to address the topics that will matter in 10 years. For more information about the ROA guidelines for Soil Health and Land Management; Animal Welfare; and Farmer and Worker Fairness, as well as Auditor Requirements, see Regenerative Organic Certified® Framework ([regenorganic.org](https://regenorganic.org)).

As details develop, the AGM page at <https://www.ioia.net/annual-general-meeting/> will be updated regularly.

## Richmond, Virginia - IOIA Inspector Social and Networking - January 27 late afternoon, under development



## Notes from the Executive Director by Margaret Scoles

Last week, I was in the midst of one of the many moments that seem to characterize my life – racing west across Montana on I-90, to the Bozeman Airport (6 hours from my home). I was thinking of how to spin the annual meeting coming up next March to entice members to take a break from the endless travel of inspecting to make one more trip – this time for respite and community at Chico Hot Springs. The scenery along the Yellowstone River was stunning, as usual, with the Beartooth Mountains to the left and the Crazy Mountains to the right. Hay bales in the field, cow/calf pairs out grazing, colts in pastures - a pastoral scene. As I drove through Livingston, I looked down the Paradise Valley toward Chico and longed for a good soak in the therapeutic waters. On a whim, I asked Siri to call Nate Powell-Palm.



The Team

There are only 3 IOIA inspector members in Montana. We are two of them. He lives in Bozeman. He answered – a marvel unto itself. As a farmer, rancher, IOIA lead Trainer, NOSB member, and a recipient of some of the recent Organic Market Development grant funding, he has his own incredibly busy life to keep up with. I asked him where he was in the world. He answered “Bozeman”, but said he’d be headed soon for Sheridan, WY. I laughed because that meant we might meet each other, each whizzing in the opposite direction. Then he mentioned that he wouldn’t be leaving until after his farm tour, a small one that he was hosting for the Montana Organic Association. I asked him when it was. He answered 1:30 p.m. I couldn’t believe it. I was a half-hour early to meet my sister at the Bozeman Airport which meant I’d be nearby at the very same time of

his tour. “I’ll drop you a pin”, he said. As I drove through Bozeman to Belgrade where the airport is located, I realized the farm was so close to the airport that I could literally watch the planes landing and taking off. I was not exactly dressed for a farm tour – linen jacket and boots... The Montana Department of Agriculture had a visiting group of about 10 representatives from Latin American countries, on a trade mission for pulse crops. Nate was the organic tour host. Montana is fairly well known for pulse crops such as peas, lentils, and chickpeas. (If you haven’t read [Lentil Underground](#) by Liz Carlisle, you should!) The group started with introductions and I was able to say Hola and Adios before jumping back into my Buick and heading for the airport. There were representatives from Costa Rica, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, and Columbia. I’m probably forgetting some others. I was proud to be able to say that IOIA had been in almost every one of



OARS Team Member  
Andrew Coggins, National Center for  
Appropriate Technology

these countries doing training. We recently received a request from the government of Peru and responded with a proposal. Serendipity – what are the chances? **Please plan to come together at Chico Hot Springs!**

Two major activities of the summer – our IOIA team has been participating in the **Equity Learning Exchange** cohort with 8 other organizations. A benefit is getting to know each other. We’ve had in-depth conversations with Cornucopia Institute, Center for Rural Affairs, and Rodale. We completed the 10th of 10 **Organic Academy Road Show (OARS) workshops** over 3 years, with NCAT leading the project “*Preparing a Resilient Future – Organic Field Crop and Livestock Training for Producers in the Northern Great Plains*”. The final workshop was in Lincoln, Nebraska the first of August. Each workshop drew from local resources, including FSA, NRCS, and local sustainable ag groups like Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society and Montana Organic Association. The best part? Re-connecting with friends, strengthening ties within the team, making new friends, and getting out on the farm tours! The most sobering part? Just how few farmers are interested in transitioning to organic.



OARS Team Member Nate  
reading the Brix on South  
Dakota organic corn



OARS Team Member  
Krysti Mikkonen, Northern  
Plains Sustainable Ag  
Society

## Sector News

### H5N1 Spread Slows for Summer

Outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in poultry and dairy cattle have significantly decreased recently, according to USDA databases. A similar but longer lull occurred last year in bird flu, which has become the largest animal disease event in American agriculture, killing nearly 101 million birds in domestic flocks since February 2022.

No bird flu cases have been found in commercial poultry flocks since July 19. The disease has been confirmed in three dairy herds since August 5. Thirteen farmworkers have contracted mild cases of bird flu from exposure to infected dairy cattle and poultry since April, with ten cases in Colorado. Public health officials say the risk to the general public is low and recommend protective equipment for those dealing with infected animals. The virus's jump to dairy cattle from birds gives it a potential route to threaten humans, though the H5N1 avian flu virus has not shown signs of becoming more communicable.

Last year, HPAI disappeared from commercial flocks for nearly six months, from April 19 to October 4. During this period, the disease was detected in six backyard flocks and four live bird markets. Since the last major HPAI discovery among large flocks this year in Colorado, three outbreaks have been reported in Florida, totaling 6,285 birds.

The most recent bird flu cases in dairy have been in two herds in Colorado and one in Idaho. Colorado accounts for 64 of the 192 dairy herds in 13 states that have tested positive for the avian flu virus. It is the only state requiring weekly tests for bird flu in milk samples from every dairy farm. Animal health officials say HPAI is spread by migratory waterfowl and their droppings, with outbreaks more common during colder months. In cattle, bird flu spreads from cow to cow with high viral loads found in infected cows' milk. In poultry and dairy cattle, the disease can spread from farm to farm by shared equipment and contaminated clothing. The USDA stresses biosecurity on farms to prevent the virus's spread.

Nine of the ten cases of avian flu in livestock workers in Colorado this year involved contract laborers who culled infected flocks on two egg farms. Bird flu has been reported in four dairy workers nationwide: two in Michigan and one each in Texas and Colorado. HPAI has been reported among animals worldwide. "We've never seen anything like this," said Maurice Pitesky, an expert in poultry disease modeling at the University of California-Davis. "It's orders of magnitude larger and more complex than previous outbreaks," he said in the UC-Davis magazine.

*Excerpted from FERN's Ag Insider, by Chuck Abbott, August 25, 2024*

### Smoke from wildfires creating lots of problems for agriculture

Nearly 90 large fires are currently raging across the United States, intensifying this year's fire season. So far this year, over 28,000 wildfires have burned more than 4.5 million acres in the United States, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. In Canada, which experienced a record-breaking season last year, fires have been less extensive. This summer's extreme heat, especially in the western part of the United States, has intensified the 2024 wildfire season. The start of this year's season has been particularly intense, with wildfires quickly spreading throughout parts of Northern California, the Pacific Northwest and western Canada.



Wildfire smoke can block sunlight, reducing the amount of light available for crops to photosynthesize, which [can hinder crop growth and development, particularly for light-sensitive crops like corn and soybeans<sup>1</sup>](#). Smoke contains pollutants such as ozone, which can enter plants through their stomata and damage plant tissues, [leading to reduced photosynthesis, weaker plant structures, and lower crop yields<sup>12</sup>](#).

Farmworkers exposed to wildfire smoke face increased risks of respiratory conditions and heat-related illnesses. [Prolonged exposure to smoke can exacerbate these health issues<sup>3</sup>](#).

Livestock can suffer from respiratory problems just like humans due to smoke inhalation. [The effects on livestock health are still being studied, but it is clear that smoke can cause significant stress and health issues for animals<sup>3</sup>](#).

[The ash and debris from fires can contaminate water sources, affecting irrigation and drinking water for both crops and livestock<sup>4</sup>](#).

Sources: Assisted by ChatGPT: [How Does Wildfire Affect U.S. Agriculture?<sup>1</sup>](#); [Effects of wildfires on commodity crops<sup>2</sup>](#); [Is Smoke from Wildfires Affecting Crop Yields?<sup>4</sup>](#); [Wildfire Solutions for Agriculture<sup>5</sup>](#); [9 ways to improve your farm's wildfire resilience<sup>2</sup>](#); [How to Protect Your Farm or Ranch from Wildfires<sup>6</sup>](#); [Wildfire Preparation and Recovery Resources<sup>3</sup>](#)

## Sector News

### Unofficial SOE Grace Period To End September 19

Although the Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule has been in effect since March 19, 2024, the National Organic Program has allowed an informal grace period to enable entities in the supply chain to obtain certification. However, starting September 19, 2024, any organic shipments to the U.S. without valid NOP Import Certificates will not be allowed to be sold as organic in the U.S. To avoid disruptions, certified organic suppliers can be verified via the Organic Integrity Database (OID). *Source: Wolf & Associates eNews, July 25, 2024*

### US Farm Bill Continues to be Stalled

Progress on the 2024 Farm Bill has been stalled for months due to deep partisan divisions. Republicans in both the House and Senate are pushing for significant increases in crop subsidies, cuts to SNAP funding, and the use of climate funds for projects unrelated to carbon capture or emission reductions. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow has proposed smaller increases in crop subsidies, opposing both SNAP cuts and the relaxation of climate funding regulations.

The House's version of the farm bill, written by Republicans, is \$33 billion over budget, with no clear plan to fund the proposed subsidy increases. House Agriculture Chairman Glenn Thompson dismissed concerns about the overspending, stating that he would seek to overrule the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) if necessary.

With the 2018 Farm Bill set to expire on September 30, and little progress made on its successor, lawmakers are expected to decide in the fall whether to extend the current law. Farm policy expert Jonathan Coppess suggests that the likelihood of passing a new farm bill this year is slim, with only a small chance for a post-election compromise during the "lame duck" session. The focus in Congress has shifted to passing annual government funding bills, leaving the farm bill on the back burner. *Source: FERN's Ag Insider, multiple articles summarized with assistance by AI, July/August 2024*

### Bill Wolf joins Rodale's Board of Directors

Wolf & Associates is honored to announce that their President, CEO, and Founder, Bill Wolf, has joined the Rodale Institute's Board of Directors as of July 1, 2024. This partnership underscores the shared commitment to organic and regenerative agriculture, values held deeply at Wolf & Associates. *Source: [Rodale Institute blog](#)*

### Monsanto Withdraws Legal Challenge to Mexican GMO Ban

After numerous court rulings unfavorable to Monsanto and Bayer (which purchased Monsanto) and related appeals, Monsanto has withdrawn its legal challenge to Mexico's 2020 presidential decree banning glyphosate and genetically modified corn for human consumption. In the wake of decision, the Mexican government's National Council of Humanities, Sciences and Technologies highlighted alternative agricultural practices and vowed to continue efforts to ensure GM corn and glyphosate are removed from the Mexican food supply. *Source: Wolf & Associates eNews, July 25, 2024*

### Democrat VP Pick Hails from Agriculture State

The organic agriculture community has shown a mixed but generally positive reaction to Governor Tim Walz's selection as candidate for Vice President. Many appreciate his extensive background in agriculture and his efforts to support sustainable farming practices. Walz's history on the House Agriculture Committee and his advocacy for renewable fuels resonate well with organic farmers<sup>4</sup>. However, some express concerns about his past votes on environmental regulations, fearing they may not align with the community's stringent standards<sup>2</sup>. Overall, the community is hopeful that his experience and willingness to listen will benefit organic agriculture on a national scale<sup>5</sup>.

*Source: Conversation with Copilot, 8/8/2024 (2) [Tim Walz's balancing act on agriculture](#) - E&E News by POLITICO. (4) [Maryland reaction to selection of Tim Walz as Democratic nominee for vice president](#). (5) [Here's what Tim Walz did on climate change as Minnesota governor](#).*

### IFOAM North America - 3 new board members elected at July 23 AGM

Congratulations to new board members Anne Ross, Agricultural Lawyer; Kia Ruiz, Consultant, Environmental and Economic Resiliency, NonGMO Project; and Elizabeth Whitlow, CEO of Regenerative Organic Alliance. The meeting set a new record for attendance - 38 people.



## Canada News

### CHFA NOW Coming in September

The 2024 CHFA 'NOW' event takes place at Toronto's waterfront Exhibition Place district, September 19th to 22nd. The event is part of The Canadian Health Food Association's (CHFA's) annual conference and trade show series, which brings together leaders and professionals in the natural, organic, and wellness industries. The event is a major platform for discovering emerging trends, innovations, and new products that will shape the organic market in the upcoming year.

CHFA NOW is expected to attract thousands of attendees, including retailers, manufacturers, and industry experts from across Canada and beyond. This year's focus includes the celebration of CHFA's 60th anniversary, emphasizing its role in representing and driving innovation in the natural health and organic sectors for several decades.

More information on the CHFA 'NOW' event can be found [HERE](#).



### Cluō: New Software App to Demystify Food Packaging Labels

**The Problem:** Today in North America, there are an estimated 200 to 300 different certification logos that can be found on food packaging labels. These logos represent a wide range of certifications including those for organic standards, non-GMO or gluten-free ingredients, fair trade, animal welfare, and other claims related to health, safety, environmental sustainability, and ethical practices.

The large number of certification logos reflects the growing consumer demand for transparency and the desire to make informed choices about food products. However, the proliferation of these logos has also created confusion among consumers, making it important for brands to ensure clarity and trust in the certification process.

**The Solution:** The Cluō app is designed to demystify labels and enable informed decisions for a healthier and more conscientious lifestyle. Using a smartphone camera, product labels can be easily scanned and interpreted by accessing an extensive database of known certification logos. The database can also be searched manually to learn more about certifications and the regulatory requirements behind them.



The USDA Organic seal is one of the most identifiable food packaging logos in the world. Many others are similarly recognizable and known to be highly regulated. However, others are actually created by brands themselves and hold no true meaning, nor carry any oversight. Such dubious claims only serve to baffle consumers and reduce overall trust in all logos in general.

Many food brands invest heavily in regulated standards such as USDA or Canada organic. When consumers lose trust in the regulatory environment and well-known certification logos, it undermines these strategic investments. All companies who use certification logos on their product labels should learn more about this new app. It's in their interest to support a platform such as Cluō, who have the sole focus of bringing transparency to label design.

More information about this innovative new product, including links to download the app, can be found [HERE](#).

### Organic Summit and Organic Parliament Day - November 18 - 19

Being held this year at Delta Hotels Ottawa City Centre, don't miss [these days filled with inspiring talks](#), workshops, and networking opportunities focused on all things organic. Whether you're a seasoned organic enthusiast or just starting your journey, this event is perfect for anyone passionate about sustainability and healthy living. Connect with like-minded individuals, learn from industry experts, and discover the latest trends in the organic world.



## Canada News

### September is Organic Month in Canada!

Organized by the [Canada Organic Trade Association](#) (COTA), **National Organic Month** is the country's largest celebration of organic food, farming and products. A myriad of events showcase the benefits of organic agriculture and its beneficial impact on the environment. As consumers continue to learn, organics represent a vibrant alternative food system and a positive option for clothing, personal care products and cleaning solutions.

In past years, events saw everything from pickling workshops to recipe contests, farm tours, and organic food & drink tastings across the country. This year's events include panel discussions, expert presentations, film screenings, and will be highlighted by COTA's annual Organic Social on September 19th, in conjunction with CHFA's 'NOW' trade show and conference in Toronto, as below.

Further information on these events can be found at the links below.

[National Organic Month](#) [Organic Month Digital Toolkit](#) [Organic Month Events](#)

### 2025 Review of the Canadian Organic Standards

The [Canada Organic Regime](#) (COR) sets policies and procedures that govern organic certification in Canada. The [Canadian General Standards Board](#) (CGSB) oversees the Canadian organic standards. CGSB's Committee on Organic Agriculture is responsible for drafting, reviewing, and revising the organic standards on an on-going basis. The Committee conducts technical reviews of the standards to ensure they are up-to-date with current practices, scientific knowledge, and industry needs – which includes assessing technological advances and staying abreast of emerging issues in organic agriculture. One such issue is the growing debate over whether or not requirements about social justice ought to be introduced to the Canadian organic standards.

Canadian organic standards emphasize environmental impact and animal welfare, but pay less attention to the Principle of Fairness, as defined by IFOAM (the other principles being [Health, Ecology, and Care](#)). These principles advocate for equitable relationships in organic agriculture. In 2020, the social fairness task force introduced a detailed description of social fairness to the standards, and discussions are ongoing about potentially incorporating social justice requirements for organic certification. Social justice, distinguished from fair trade, focuses broadly on the treatment of workers, emphasizing fair practices at all levels of the organic supply chain.

Globally, some certifications, such as the [Regenerative Organic standard](#), (led by the Regenerative Organic Alliance, which includes organizations and brands like the Rodale Institute, Dr. Bronner's, and Patagonia) already include rigorous social justice requirements. These cover issues like living wages, collective bargaining rights, and non-discriminatory practices. However, incorporating similar requirements into Canadian standards raises questions, particularly given Canada's existing labor laws, which vary significantly by province and often exclude farm workers.

Temporary foreign workers, who are crucial to Canadian agriculture, may face heightened risks of rights violations, especially on isolated farms. Despite provincial laws, enforcement is inconsistent, and foreign workers may be vulnerable to exploitation. There's debate over whether organic inspectors should evaluate working conditions as part of certification.

The task force is exploring solutions, including voluntary additional standards, requiring operators to inform workers of their rights, and implementing grievance mechanisms. Any changes would need to clarify which workers are covered and address the complexities of split operations. A "soft approach" is being considered to avoid overwhelming operators with new requirements, with a focus on raising awareness and communication about labor rights. The task force currently seeks feedback from organic farmers and processors on whether social justice should be integrated into Canadian organic standards.

An excellent overview of the review process is available [HERE](#).



## IOIA and ACA Launch New Training Opportunity in Minnesota

ACA and IOIA are pleased to announce a 3-day Training for certifiers in Farmington, MN (about 1 hr. from the MSP Airport). Through an ACA-IOIA partnership, certifier staff can attend the first two days of the IOIA Basic Processing course and a third day featuring two new ACA workshops for certifiers. The training is also open to IOIA members on a space-available basis.

**Dates:** November 18-20. Options to attend all three days, two days, or one day are available.



Both new workshops (Day 3) are hands-on interactive training to build knowledge and skills in de-escalation and conducting and reviewing mass balance audits. See below for more description of each day's content. Participants attending the two days led by IOIA are expected to participate fully in all assignments and exercises but are not expected to take an exam. Participants who attend all sessions and fully participate all three days will receive an ACA/IOIA Certificate of Completion for Organic Processing Certification Workshop.

Offered in conjunction with the IOIA Basic Processing Inspection Training in rural Farmington, Minnesota, this new training opportunity continues the ongoing partnership of ACA and IOIA. Working inspectors might consider taking the short training as a refresher, but if you wish to conduct processing inspections, this is **not** a replacement for basic processing inspection training. Looking for the full 5-day basic processing training? – if so, please see the IOIA Training Schedule to register. <https://www.ioia.net/onsite/>

**Day 1** – Certification process and applying the NOP processing standards; identifying Organic Control Points; assessing input materials and ingredients; digging into product composition, ingredients, labeling, and recipe calculations; risk assessment; and how to review an Organic Handling System Plan.

**Day 2** – Conducting the processing inspection and exit interview; the role of the inspector; drafting an inspection plan; audit trail; sanitation and pest control; and lots of exercises and practice!

**Day 3** – Led by ACA.

- Workshop 1 - Mass Balance Audits: This workshop is an exploration of mass balance audits, intended to give certifiers a better understanding of how they are carried out on inspections. Presenter: PJ Wiebusch.
- Workshop 2 - De-Escalation for Organic Certifiers: This workshop is designed to equip organic certifiers with the necessary skills to handle conflicts effectively through lecture, group conversation, and role play. Presenter: Laila Ghambari.
- Pre-work may be required for some attendees.
- IOIA's 100-level NOP Processing Standards webinar training (6 hours), is offered October 29 & Nov. 1, 2024, and is required pre-work for the Processing Certification class. If you have already completed this webinar, you are not required to retake it to attend this course.

ACA and IOIA Member Pricing:

- Three days (M-W, November 18-20) \$1200
- Two Days (Monday and Tuesday, November 18-19)  
IOIA training for certifiers and inspectors: \$800
- One Day (Wednesday, November 20) ACA Workshops: \$400

[Register here](#)

Registration closes September 30

**Housing/Meals:** Housing is available on-site for \$200/night (private room) or \$100/night (dormitory-style lodging). IOIA will make your reservation on your behalf and you will be invoiced by IOIA for lodging only. Meals are included for those lodging on-site. Breakfast and dinner are not included unless lodging on-site.

**Don't wait! Space is limited! Register now! - an invoice will be emailed to you by ACA.**



## IOIA and Kentucky State University - addressing lack of diversity in the organic sector

IOIA and Kentucky State University will cosponsor Basic Crop Inspection Training at the KSU Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm, Frankfort, Kentucky, November 4 – 8. The Organic Association of Kentucky is assisting with outreach.

This training is part of a project funded by a Kentucky Specialty Crop Block Grant “Addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Kentucky Organic Agriculture sector”. IOIA looks forward to the opportunity to work again with KSU to bring awareness of organic agriculture to a broader group of producers, professionals and consumers.

The 4 ½ -day Basic Crop Inspection Training follows IOIA’s curriculum requirements which include: classroom instruction on the USDA organic standards; working with organic system plans; how to inspect organic farms; audit trail requirements; risk assessment; investigative skills; report writing; approved input materials; assessing natural resource management; inspector conduct, confidentiality, and ethics; understanding the difference between inspecting and consulting; and effective communication. The course includes 2.5 days of classroom instruction, a half-day field trip to a certified organic farm for a practice inspection, 1 day of guided inspection report writing, and half-day for testing. Participants who attend all sessions, write a Satisfactory sample inspection report, and earn at least 75% on the exam receive Certificates of Completion.

**Note: Pre-Requisite, 6-hour Online NOP Crop Standards Webinar must be completed in advance and is included in the registration fee for participants attending through the scholarship application.**

Space is limited. Funding through the grant is available to support participation by minority and socially disadvantaged stakeholders. Kentucky participants who are qualified and fit those groups will be prioritized. A scholarship application will be sent to each applicant and a committee will select the final cohort. Space will be made available to applications from nearby states if possible, and finally open to others in the US .

### Registration Link:

<https://www.ioia.net/onsite/onsite-details/?trainingid=69042>

Scholarship Applications will be sent to applicants after registration.



**IOIA Cultivating Partners!**  
Photo taken in Kentucky in 2022 during an inspector apprenticeship course, part of a project also funded by the USDA with the same partners.

**Scholarships available! If you know someone who you think has the qualifications to become an inspector and falls into the description of minority or socially disadvantaged stakeholders, please encourage them to look into this training opportunity. Priority goes to Kentucky applicants who meet all qualifications.**

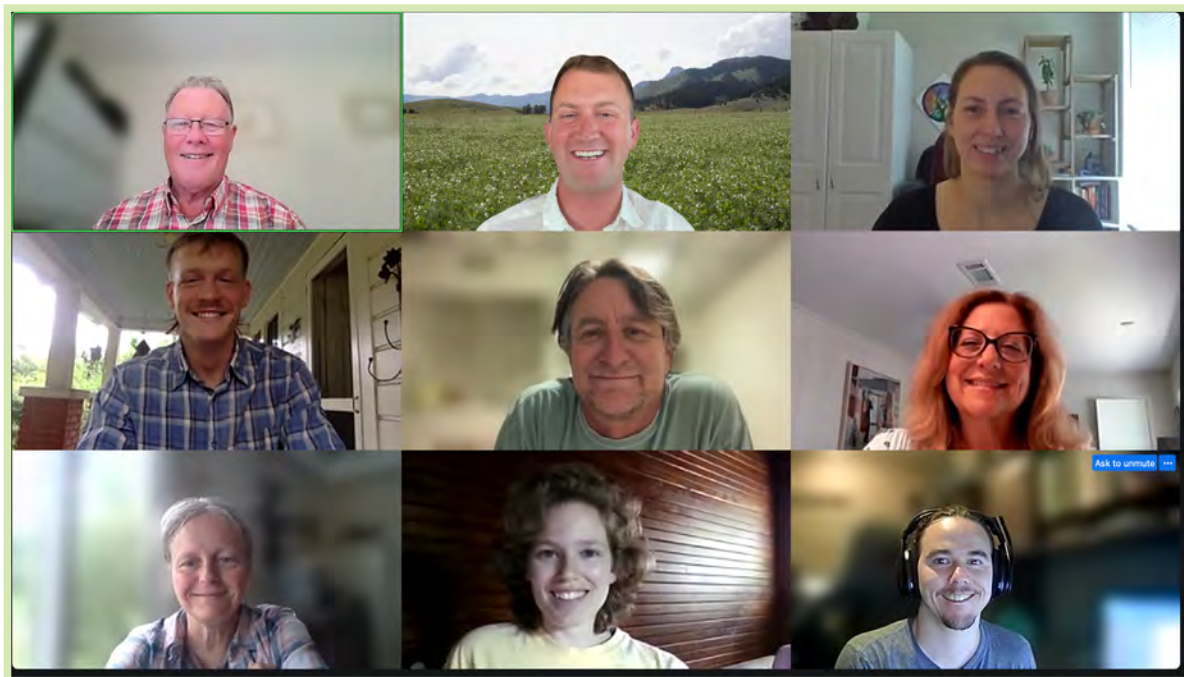


**Meet the farmers and inspectors of Kentucky:** Kenya Abraham, now Organic Transition Program Manager at the Organic Association of KY, is assisting with outreach. She took the same training course in 2022, when IOIA and KY partners received funding through the USDA NOP’s Human Capital initiative. She was among the inspectors featured in a video, also funded by the NOP. **(Click on the photo to the left to see her interviewed at her micro-dairy farm).** Two of the host farms featured in the video are in Kentucky.

# Basic Live Online Inspection Training



Basic Crop Inspection Training | June 10- 14, 2024  
Trainers Garry Lean and Luis Brenes, top left.



Basic Online Processing Inspection Training  
June 24-27, 2024 | Garry Lean, Nate Powell-Palm, Trainers, top left.

## JOIA Tokyo Japan Basic Processing Training - July 19 - August 7

Basic Organic Processing Inspection training was held in Tokyo by JOIA, that is, Japan Organic Inspectors Association. Starting last year, JOIA has held these trainings by mixed types (online and onsite). The first day for learning about certification system and standards was on July 19<sup>th</sup>. The nine hour online sessions were very tough both for trainees and trainers. Then trainees must answer to the exam online. Participants need to attain 75% to pass them. We also gave a chance to try it again to those who would like to get a “completion certificate” by using different questions. The second day for learning, about the eyes of inspector, was on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 9:00-17:00. We have delivered this way of training for the farm course, but this was the first time for the processing course. The time schedule is a little hard to finish, but the trainees seemed to enjoy this section more than learning about the standards! And then they need to take another exam.

From August 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>, we got together and reviewed the points of inspection, with several exercises. When we meet in person, the conversations are very frequent between trainees and with trainers. Trainees offer many questions easily and help each other when they have a group work session. As is customary at JOIA, on the first day we decided to have dinner together with those who wished to join us, further deepening our exchange. Then, the 3<sup>rd</sup> exam were the hardest sessions, because they need to write answers to essay questions on their own and not select the correct answer from within the questions. Online exams are almost all the type of “multiple-choice”. But we need to review their understanding of the material by having them “writing the answer”.

On August 7<sup>th</sup>, we had a mock inspection at an organic coffee re-packer/roaster. There were 14 people in the group, so we separated into 2 groups to see around the site and verify documents, etc. After the mock inspection, we moved to the lunch room for exchange of the information within the group. On the way to lunch, the participants became friends with each other and naturally formed a group online afterwards to exchange group photos and network.

*Submitted by Mutsumi Sakuyoshi, JOIA Trainer*



Not shown: Online Basic Livestock Training  
with Nate Powell-Palm July 8 - 12, 2024



Basic Online Crop Inspection Training  
August 19-23, 2024 | Trainers Garry Lean and PJ Wiebusch, top left.

## IOIA's Policy Comment Committee

### Working for inspectors, bringing the inspector's voice!

In lieu of a technical article this issue, we are providing notes from some of the recent and highly technical work of the IOIA Policy Comment Committee. The committee, with facilitation by Rachel Cherry Myers, prepared written comments for the NOP Pet Food & Mushroom Proposed Rule and for the spring NOSB session. Full written comments are available to the public on the IOIA website, <https://www.ioia.net/organic-policy/>. Please check them out if you are interested in IOIA's positions at the spring NOSB meeting on **Residue Sampling** and **Inert Ingredients in Organic Pesticide Products**. This article focuses on Residue Sampling. Watch coming issues for more on Pet Food & Mushrooms. Given that many inspectors have been inspecting organic pet food (to human food specifications) and/or mushrooms, IOIA is watching with great interest to see the outcome of the comments to NOP on their proposed rule. Some have expressed concern that the codification of mushrooms as a "crop" will open the way to more USDA NOP hydroponic production, as they can be cultivated in a variety of non-soil media.

**Kate Newkirk**, Policy Committee Chair, presented a stellar oral comment via webinar to the NOSB on behalf of IOIA regarding the Recommendation. "**Over-sight to Deter Fraud: Residue Testing for a "Global Supply Chain"**". Her many years of laboratory work were a great asset in the formulation and presentation of IOIA's position.

### Excerpts from IOIA's Residue Testing comment:

IOIA agreed that the industry has the need for broader sampling and testing guidance. IOIA sees great value in the NOP providing a decision tree based on **when** and **why** to test. We recommended that certifiers be required to create compliant policies and/or a best practice in collaboration with inspectors, laboratory personnel and other specialists for **what**, **where**, and **how** to sample. This will allow the flexibility to focus on fraud as a moving target and provide guidance to inspectors when onsite observations suggest the need for sampling. It is virtually impossible to create a guidance document for every potential situation. It is much more realistic to create a guidance document that requires certifiers to test based on risk and for a broader set of prohibited materials.

IOIA recommended updating *NOP 2610: Instruction Sampling Procedures for Residue Testing*, *NOP 2611: Instruction Laboratory Selection Criteria for Pesticide Residue Testing*, and *NOP 2611-1: Prohibited Pesticides for NOP Residue Testing* to be used for guidance on pesticide residue screening. In addition to periodic pesticide residue screening or in instances where an unknown prohibited pesticide appears to have been applied, IOIA sees value in collecting statistically valid samples, which would require pulling samples from more than one location. We also noted that instructions do not currently address other testing methodologies, such as for glyphosate, solvents, antibiotics, etc.

IOIA suggested that the NOP create guidance documents that instruct certifiers, reviewers, and inspectors when and why to sample. Based on that, certifiers can collaborate with inspectors, lab personnel and specialists to create best practices that reflect how, where, and what will be sampled and tested. Currently inspectors are not required to be provided with specific instructions and/or training to be able to collect samples for the wide range of test methodologies or matrices available to identify prohibited substances along the organic supply chain. Guidance will vary based on the prohibited substance in question. Certifiers should be encouraged to create relationships with accredited labs. Best practices for a broader set of test methods, matrices, and sample methodologies are needed. IOIA sees value in a working group and/or certifier policy as the way to cover testing of prohibited inputs outside of periodic pesticide residue screening. Certifiers

**Continued on page 16**



Kate Newkirk, left, with past board chair Beth Dominick, New Orleans 2023.

## Self-Paced Learning Courses

**Canadian Organic Regime - COR Series** Courses 1 & 2 each take approximately 3 hours to complete.

Inspector members price: US\$150 each.

**#1 Our Organic Certification System - The Regulation**

**#2 COR Crop Production Standards**

**#3 COR Livestock Production Standards** Note: This is a 10-12 hour course, Member Price US\$275

**Remote Inspection Training** Free to inspector members; All others \$200.

[Available in English](#) [Tambien disponible en español.](#)

**200 level IOIA/American Grassfed Association Grassfed Dairy**

Member cost \$325 - \$375 all others.

## IOIA Scholarships - Applications now being accepted

IOIA is accepting applications for the three scholarships we offer through October 1. Winners will be notified by December 15. Please feel free to share this information to others in your network who may be interested.

### Andrew Rutherford Scholarship

IOIA accepts applications for the annual Andrew Rutherford Scholarship Award, which provides full tuition for an IOIA-sponsored organic inspector training course during the following year. Both prospective and experienced inspectors are eligible to apply for the Rutherford Scholarship. It is awarded to an individual based on need and potential as judged by the IOIA Scholarship Committee. Applicants can choose to attend any IOIA-sponsored training. The Scholarship pays for tuition, room and board but does not cover transportation or other expenses.



### Organic Community Initiative Scholarship

The Organic Community Initiative Scholarship (OCIS) provides full tuition for an IOIA-sponsored basic organic inspector training during the following year. It is awarded to an individual based on need and their potential to have a positive impact on their regional organic community. The Organic Community Initiative Scholarship is only open to applicants from outside of the US or Canada. Applicants can choose to attend any basic IOIA-sponsored training. The Scholarship pays for tuition, room and board but does not cover transportation or other expenses.

[Scholarship Info - English](#)



## Se están aceptando solicitudes

IOIA está aceptando solicitudes para estas becas desde ahora hasta el 1 de octubre. Los ganadores serán notificados antes del 15 de diciembre.

Por favor, siéntase libre de reenviar esta información a otras personas de su red que puedan estar interesadas.

### Beca Conmemorativa Reynaldo De la Rosa

Reynaldo De la Rosa era un inspector que trabajaba en México y falleció de Covid en 2020. Esta beca es para personas que trabajan en inspección orgánica en México y es para un curso de español. El curso cubre la formación y también el transporte y el alojamiento. Para esta ronda de becas, el curso será virtual: en el futuro planeamos ofrecer un curso en vivo en América Latina.

### Beca Andrew Rutherford

IOIA acepta solicitudes para la beca anual Andrew Rutherford Scholarship Award, que proporciona la matrícula completa para un curso de capacitación de inspectores orgánicos patrocinado por IOIA durante el año siguiente. Tanto los inspectores potenciales como los experimentados son elegibles para solicitar la Beca Rutherford. Se otorga a una persona sobre la base de la necesidad y el potencial, según lo juzgado por el Comité de Becas de IOIA. Los solicitantes pueden optar por asistir a cualquier capacitación patrocinada por IOIA. La beca paga la matrícula, el alojamiento y la comida, pero no cubre el transporte ni otros gastos.



Reynaldo De la Rosa

### Beca de Iniciativa Comunitaria Orgánica

La Beca de Iniciativa Comunitaria Orgánica (OCIS), proporciona la matrícula completa para una capacitación básica de inspectores orgánicos patrocinada por IOIA durante el año siguiente. Se otorga a una persona en función de sus necesidades y su potencial para tener un impacto positivo en su comunidad orgánica regional. La Beca de Iniciativa Comunitaria Orgánica solo está abierta a solicitantes de fuera de los EE. UU. o Canadá. Los solicitantes pueden optar por asistir a cualquier capacitación básica patrocinada por IOIA. La beca paga la matrícula, el alojamiento y la comida, pero no cubre el transporte ni otros gastos.

[Información de Becas – Español](#)

## Policy Committee Comments, from page 14

should have a Standard Operating Procedure for laboratory selection and sampling and testing methods that span the breadth of organic scopes; crop, livestock, wildcraft, and handling.

The prescriptive nature of [NOP 2611-1: Prohibited Pesticides for NOP Residue Testing](#) creates an overtly focused emphasis on screening for pesticides instead of testing for any or all likely present prohibited substances. By listing specific prohibited materials, other contaminants, including prohibited substances such as glyphosate, solvents, metabolites, co-formulants, and adjuvants, are often ignored. IOIA strongly encouraged the NOSB to direct the NOP to require more diverse testing policies based on risk and informed by observed industry specific fraud.

In answer to the question from NOSB, *“Would certifiers find value in developing a decision tree to determine which tests should be conducted depending on the commodity, geographical location, and position within the supply chain?”*, we responded with an emphatic ‘yes!’ IOIA sees great value in certifiers developing operational decision trees based on a guidance document that requires testing informed by risk assessment, observation, and considering a broader range of contaminants and prohibited inputs, etc.

In answer to a question from NOSB regarding [NOP 2613: Instruction Responding to Results from Pesticide Residue Testing regarding how to respond to positive results when there are no EPA tolerances or FDA action levels \(e.g., synthetic solvents\)](#), IOIA recommended that the NOSB create limits for prohibited inputs not defined by the EPA or FDA. IOIA also urged the addition of a **stop sale action trigger sequence** to this guidance document.

### We presented this flowchart as an agile and effective way to improve testing.

#### Step 1 - NOP Guidance Document(s)

NOP should create a guidance document that requires certifiers to conduct risk-based sampling and testing targeted specifically to the prohibited substances/contaminants most likely in play. Instead of requiring detailed instruction for sampling, the NOP should require sampling methodologies and matrices to align with the currently accepted ‘industry standard’ within the specific agricultural sector accredited labs or other respected institutions and ISO alignment. There is no reason to reinvent the wheel pertaining to sampling and testing in the food and agricultural industry within this guidance document. **Risk based** IOIA believes that any NOP decision tree should focus on **risk** and **supply chain**, while using **language** that improves the use of testing. **Risk** - In our previous comment, IOIA suggested that risk be a critical aspect of selecting the product to sample. Analyses are more effective when tailored to the risk profile of the operation. We noted high value crops, large shipments, country of origin, market footprint, and split or parallel production as target areas for testing. One example is parallel production. Instead of using a screening that does not contain the pesticides used on that operation, it may be a better approach to focus on the chemicals that are present on-farm for conventional production. Another example is testing grain and meal, especially that which is imported, for solvents, genetically modified organisms, and glyphosate. **Supply chain** - Currently, most testing is conducted on raw commodities and ingredients. IOIA suggested that the decision tree requires testing to be done on a variety of goods at a variety of points along the supply chain. **Language** - IOIA strongly believes that “must” or “shall” be used instead of “should” and that if testing is not conducted, an explanation as to why not be provided (testing for the compound is unavailable, the contaminated product is no longer on site, etc.).

#### Step 2 - Best Practice Documents

IOIA urged that a working group including inspectors, certifiers, laboratory personnel and specialists in the field identify and outline industry best practices and/or certifier policy for sampling and testing specific to the matrix sample and the test required. Together, the guidance document and best practice/certifier policy would inform a decision tree that outlines when and why to test, the type of test to use for the product and situation, type of sample to collect and how to collect the sample. This approach would better allow for both flexibility and continual improvement as industry experience and technology continue to evolve. IOIA envisions Best Practices that cover the following areas.



## Policy Committee Comments, from page 16

### Tests, Matrices, and Instructions

- **Type of test** - Screen or specific methodology per AOAC/EPA
- **Material/Matrix** - Soil, plant specific part, finished product, etc
- **Type of sample** - Single, composite, along a transect, core, catch, patterned, etc
- **Quantity** - a single sample, multiple samples, composite samples, % of production
- **Sample Instruction**

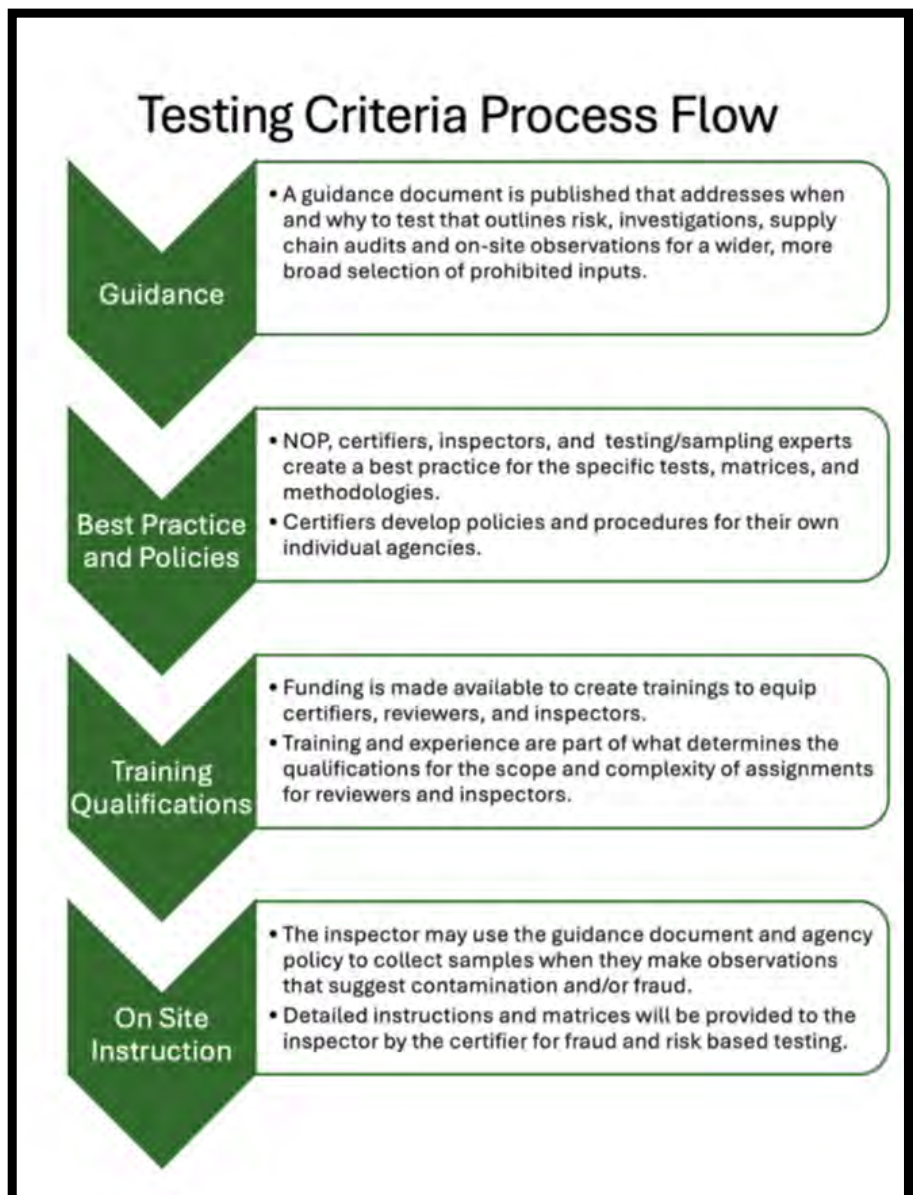
### Step 3 - Qualifications and Training

We cannot require more complex sampling and testing without acknowledging the need for additional training. Good reference materials would reduce the likelihood of unnecessary sampling. All inspectors need to know how to collect a single point sample effectively. This level of training is typically adequate for when an inspector observes potential contamination of a product or location or is collecting a sample for a random, low risk operation in order to meet the 5% testing requirement. Higher levels of training and more specific qualifications should be developed for more complicated sampling demands on higher risk operations. Imports, investigations, and high-risk operations are the most likely operations to trigger additional types of testing and sampling and the need for inspectors trained for those occasions. IOIA strongly believes that testing of grain should be a priority and a simple sample from a single location is not adequate.

### Step 4 - On Site Instructions

Currently, certifiers do a good job of providing instruction and chain of custody documentation to inspectors. The limited nature of sampling allows for relatively easy spur of the moment sample collection should the need arise at an on-site inspection. However, it will be imperative that certifiers provide the matrix to be sampled, and sample methodology to the inspector as well as destination laboratory information and chain of custody documents. IOIA suggested that certifier policy includes clear guidance and instruction to inspectors who may need to collect a sample without the ability to communicate with a certifier. A guidance document and resulting decision tree are essential tools for inspectors, especially when faced with observation of potential contamination or fraud.

We see an agile and effective way to improve testing as illustrated by the flow-chart at right.



## Board of Directors Minutes Highlights - Spring 2024 - May June July (full minutes available to inspector members on the IOIA website)

**Board members:** Janine Gibson (Chair), Joe Ward (Vice-Chair), Kathe Purvis (Secretary), Allan Benjamin (Treasurer), Margarito Cal (Exec Committee At Large), Rhea Epp, Justin Hurley

### May 23, 2024 - 6:00 to 8:00 pm EDT by Zoom

**Attendance:** All board members in attendance. Janine chaired the meeting. Others: Margaret Scoles, ED, and Drew Gourdie, Business Development Director.

**Internal Financial Review:** Allan and IOIA's CPA will create a plan for Internal Financial Review to ensure areas of IOIA finances reviewed are complete and effective. Allan will coordinate with the IOIA bookkeeper. Margarito may not be able to attend in person but arrangements can be made so that he can attend remotely.

**Organic Professionals Qualifications Database/Organic Career Network:** Joe asks for a directive on how the BOD would move forward. Allan proposes a technical feasibility study to determine whether the project is likely to succeed. Janine commends Drew's participation and reporting to the BOD in Industry events. ED is directed to research the potential for a feasibility study. Joe to summarize the vision for an all-encompassing Hub to verify and publish credentials of professionals in all aspects of the Organic industry, not just for IOIA members. Drew to work with Joe.

**Updated Emergency Plan:** Joe commends all involved in developing and updating the Emergency Plan.

**2025 AGM:** Chico Hot Springs as the venue for the 2025 AGM has not yet been confirmed by return of a signed contract. After discussion the BOD agreed to continue with this venue. Margaret to approach partner organizations such as GOTS, IOIA APC and ROA to develop advanced training.

**Equity Learning Exchange:** Five IOIA representatives are participating in the Equity Learning Exchange.

An Equity Statement for IOIA is in development, reviewed with comments by BOD, suggestion of adding reference to IFOAM principles of Organic Agriculture > health, ecology, fairness, care. Janine & Drew note the networking opportunities attending this training. ACTION: Drew to consider whether IFOAM principles are a suitable reference. Justin – In due course to work towards inclusion of the Equity Statement in the Bylaws.

**ED Report:** The BOD thanks Eric Feutz for many years of service as IOIA Membership Chair.

The BOD approves and welcomes Terrance Layhew as IOIA Membership Chair.

### June 20, 2024 – 6:00 to 8:00 pm EDT by Zoom

**Attendance:** Five board members in attendance. Regrets from Joe and Kathe. Janine chaired the meeting. Others: Margaret Scoles, ED, and Drew Gourdie, Business Development Director.

**Internal Financial Review and Budget vs Actual:** Agreement to stick with our original budget. Allan confirmed that plans for the internal financial review were the same as presented at the May meeting.

**2025 AGM and Collaboration with ACA in VA:** Richmond event - Ask to get speaker costs covered. Two one-hour sessions available, repeat session, for an Inspection topic after lunch. Poll membership for attendance and topic interest.

**Setting priorities for fund development:** Promote the environmental and climate friendly role we play. e-Learning project with the Alliance and IFOAM a priority.

**ED Report: APC** - Margarito gave APC Committee news - delay until Kathe can join us to discuss again whether the proposal from Jim Pierce regarding inspector membership for the Fiji trainees. APC has not made a decision on whether to present a workshop in Taiwan in conjunction with IFOAM General Assembly. Vitoon reviewed his presentation on net zero carbon farming. Proposing to talk about carbon audits at AGM when/if it happens in Australia.

## Meet our Newest Board Members

**Rhea Epp**, Manitoba, CANADA lives in Winnipeg with her husband, two young children, and two dogs. She holds B. Sc. Biology, B. EH Environmental Health degrees. She says, “my passion for organics as a human health, animal welfare, and environmental health standard was the driving force behind my switch from the world of public health inspection to the world of organic inspection.”



Rhea just began organic inspecting in 2023, with both Crop and Livestock inspection trainings. However, with thousands of inspections under her belt (in program areas such as drinking water, swimming pools, daycares, restaurants, housing, infection control, foodborne illness investigations, and food processing facilities), including 20 organic inspections in 2023, she brought to organic inspecting a wealth of knowledge regarding all aspects of inspecting. Her experience and skills include leading a team, enforcement, mentoring, communicating with a multidisciplinary team, conflict resolution, policy development, technical document development, leading training sessions, and interpreting lab results.

As a candidate her goals and priorities - “In the next year, I would like to see the IOIA continue to expand its online training offerings and membership benefits. In the next 5 years, I hope to see the IOIA develop a more robust presence online, with the goal of uniting the global organic inspection community and educating the public on the important role an organic inspector plays. I would also like to see the expansion of the IOIA’s apprenticeship program to include local opportunities for new inspectors around the globe.”



**Justin Hurley**, North Carolina, USA – says his intro to Organic was as a young sous chef in 1982 in St Louis, Missouri when his Swiss chef mentor asked some local suppliers if pesticides or herbicides were used. In the Colorado mountains in the mid 90’s, his wife was a grocery manager/buyer for Alfalfas/Wild Oats, they were trying to eat organic, and as a chef he was ordering organic elk from a friend’s ranch.

Later, after becoming a certified ServSafe instructor and proctor, he was researching organic claims online. He stumbled onto the IOIA’s website and decided that was what he wanted to do. He took the processing training in May 2015. After six months of volunteering on two organic farms and completing mentoring, he was given a trial by fire in late November 2015 as a certifier gave him sixteen not yet scheduled inspections to be completed “in the next three weeks”. He worked for five certifiers in the beginning conducting organic processing inspections, has since cut down to two, and now does approximately 200 retail and 50-60 processing inspections yearly.

His Goals and Priorities: “to fully understand and roll out S.O.E. consistently with everyone on the same page; more mentoring and live support for new inspectors; overall inspector compensation and mentor compensation group travel rates / discounts; more accountability generally for inspections - the same things the NOP sometimes tells us we’re not doing – correct mass balances, reviewing OSP with client, opening meeting, spending proper amount of time at inspections.”

Justin is best known to the IOIA staff for his assistance with AGM planning – it was Justin who helped plan the entertainment in Charleston in 2018 and he recommended the walking tour guide in New Orleans.



**Joseph W. Ward, Ph.D.**, Iowa, USA – currently serving as IOIA’s Vice-Chair - was born in Indiana and raised on a livestock farm. Active in 4-H and FFA, he attended Purdue University earning a BS in Animal Science and MS in Ruminant Nutrition. He also earned a PhD from Oklahoma State University in Ruminant Nutrition. As an animal nutritionist, he has consulted, published, and lectured in Europe, the Far East, Australia and South Africa. In 2001, he converted an Iowa feed manufacturing plant into a certified facility. He has served on several executive boards of directors, as an advisor to the State of Iowa’s Organic Certification Program and Past President to the Iowa Organic Association. He has been active in organic livestock production, manufacturing, and processing since the early 90’s. He has been active in research that promotes holistic animal health through improved production practices emphasizing certified organic ingredients. Since 2001, he has conducted 2500+ crops, livestock, and processor inspections.

His Goals and Priorities - “IOIA must continue to develop strategies and inspector educational training to ensure organic integrity in the marketplace. IOIA must also continue its leadership and advocacy roles in providing direction to its membership for accreditation and explore innovative ways to expand globally the integrity and sustainability of organics.”



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*KEEP IOIA STRONG – LEND YOUR STRENGTH AND GET INVOLVED!*

## 2024 - 2025 Calendar

### **September 4** Grounds for Organic Coffee Certification

John Foster of Wolf & Associates, and Peter Kettler will join Mike Ebert of Firedancer Coffee Consultants for a free webinar for coffee producers, cooperatives and exporters on September 4 at **3 p.m. EDT**.

The webinar will cover the Strengthening Organic Enforcement regulations, which pose significant changes for anyone exporting organic coffee to the United States. [Sign up here](#).

**September 1 -30** [Organic Month](#), Canada. The annual celebration of organic food, farming, and products.

**October 21** Pre-NOSB National Organic Coalition Meeting, Portland, Oregon

**October 22 - 24** [Fall NOSB meeting](#), Portland, Oregon

**October 29 - 30** [3rd International Conference on Agroecology and Organic Farming](#), Montreal, Quebec

**November 4 - 8** IOIA Basic Crop Inspection Training, Frankfort, KY

[Addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Kentucky Organic Agriculture sector](#)

**November 6 & 7** [Organic Connections](#) Conference & Trade Show, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

**November 8** Organic Livestock and Poultry Standard webinar

IOIA in collaboration with Strengthening Organic Systems. See page 2 for details.

**November 18 - 22** Basic Crop and Basic Processing Inspection Training, plus IOIA/ACA Certifier Training, Farmington, Minnesota. See page 10 for details.

**November 18 - 19** [Organic Summit](#), Ottawa, ON, Canada

**November 30 - December 6** 21st IFOAM [Organic World Congress](#), preconference sessions, and General Assembly, Taiwan

**December 4-7** [Acres U.S.A. Eco-Ag Conference & Trade Show](#), Cincinnati, Ohio

**January 27** Inspector Social and Networking, Richmond, VA. See page 4 for more info.

**January 28 - 31, 2025** [Accredited Certifiers Association Conference](#), Richmond, VA. See page 4 for more info.

**March 25** [IOIA AGM and Advanced Training](#), Chico Hot Springs, Montana. See page 1 for info.

**June 2 - 4** [Biofach America](#) - Atlanta, GA.

*PLEASE SEE PAGES 2 & 3 FOR THE CURRENT LIST OF  
IOIA LIVE ONLINE, ONSITE, WEBINAR AND SELF-PACED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES*