



EDUCATION / COMMUNITY / ENVIRONMENT

The Germinator

SPRING 2022

VOL. 44 NO. 2

LET THE GROWING BEGIN

See what's ahead
for NPSAS Summer
events in 2022

PAGE 8

IMPORTS REDUCED

Producers net best prices ever

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2022 Conference review inside



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Learn more at www.sare.org

Farm and Ranch Transition & Estate Planning: A Look Inside the Tool Box

We are excited to announce an NPSAS Online Webinar Series! Now our members can look forward to a new educational opportunity once each quarter. The first installment in this series took place on Wednesday, April 27 featuring Russel Tweiten, the Vice-President of Agribusiness Consulting.

Russ spoke to NPSAS members about working through the complex issues of estate planning, entity planning, and farm transition. He also provided insights on planning for retirement and constructing a detailed plan based on the goals and needs of each individual. Members can access a recording of this session on <https://www.npsas.org/online-webinars/>.

The next session in this webinar series will focus on cover crops with experts from Albert Lea Seed. We are working towards selecting a date and will announce more details soon.

Currently, registration for this series is limited to NPSAS Members-Only. Remember to renew your membership to participate.

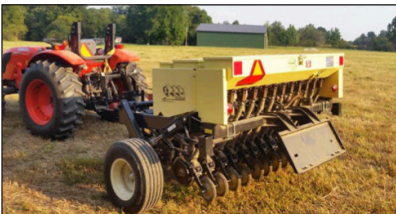


Russel Tweiten, CTFA, CRPC
VP Agribusiness Consulting

Russ was raised in the Fargo area and holds a B.S. Degree in Agricultural Economics from NDSU. He is a Certified Trust and Financial Advisor (CTFA) and a Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor (CRPC). Russ is also registered with the NDSU Extension Service as a Certified Farm/Ranch Succession Coordinator. He has been in the financial services business for over 20 years. Prior to AgCountry, Russ worked for two local Trust companies as a Vice President and Trust Officer. Russ speaks regularly on the topic of Farm and Ranch Succession Planning.

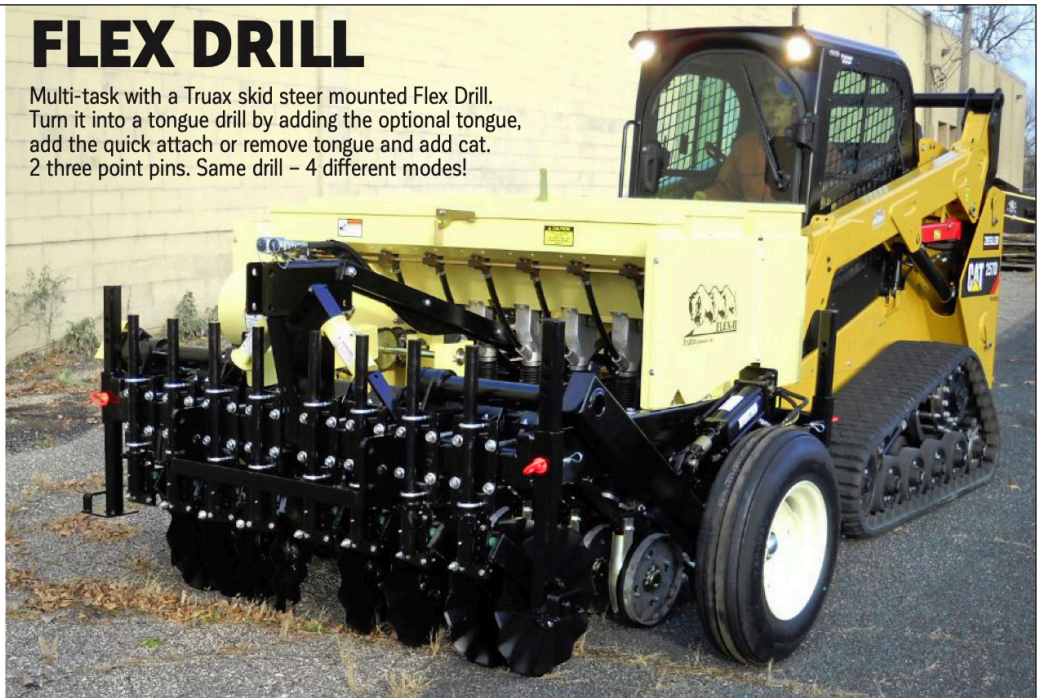
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Mission Statement

Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society
promotes sustainable food systems
through education, advocacy, and research.

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NPSAS occasionally includes guest articles and opinions. The opinions in these articles may not reflect the opinions or policy of the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society or its Board of Directors.

The Spirit of Change...

Change is something we've become all too familiar with over the last few years. We've had major changes with the COVID pandemic. We've had a new war that seems to be more impactful than any war since World War II. We've had changes in weather patterns that are impacting our agricultural operations with stronger winds, dryer droughts, severe flooding, and more significant storms. Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society has also seen changes. We've also seen that despite any of the above changes there are some things that remain the same.

We found in the heart of the pandemic the light that people brought to each other still shined through in the darkness with things like singing together outside apartment windows, lifting the spirits of each other, and making the medical and first responders feel appreciated for all they are doing.

As the war between Ukraine and Russia intensified, people from around the world watched and stood up to help the people of Ukraine. Donations have been made, homes have been opened, and volunteers stepped up to help. The spirit and generosity of people for me was made clear by the visual impact of the rows of empty strollers sitting on the barren platform at a Polish train station waiting for the Ukraine refugee mothers who got off the train. I could imagine those who donated felt the weight those mother's carried with nothing but their children and what they could carry with them. The strollers exemplified hope.

In March of 2019 a caravan of trucks went by on US Highway 281 that runs by our farm. The trucks were carrying hay to Nebraska farmers who were experiencing severe floods caused by more than 50" of snow that fell that winter. The floods left cattle stranded and much of the hay that was available was either inaccessible or ruined. Farmers to the north of Nebraska banded together collecting hay and hauled it down to them. The spirit of the people shined through.

NPSAS has also gone through changes these last few years. While those above are more extreme than what



Krysti Mikkonen,
NPSAS Board President

we've gone through, the spirit of the people that come forth in times of struggle to help is the same. We've had some turnover in the organization. Somehow, with the spirit of the members and passionate people who keep stepping up to help, we make it through.

Most recently we had our board chair, Kaye Kirsch step down to take a consulting position helping an organization out of state. She was an experienced, knowledgeable and passionate leader that brought stability and skills this board needed. We thank her for her service and hope she will return and we can welcome her back to the board again.

Heidi Marttila-Losure was helping with our publications. She stepped away to focus on time with family and other commitments. Verna Kragnes retired last fall after serving as the executive director. We appreciate the commitment and service of both of these individuals. They both brought their respective talents to the table and served the organization well with their skills and leadership.

The value and mission of this organization is obvious by the number of people who keep stepping in as new members, board members, staff members and volunteers to keep this organization stable. We appreciate you and thank you all for reminding us that while change can be hard, the spirit of people's passion helps ease the burden of change and keeps the spirit of Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society alive and well. 🐾





The pendulum swing of industry trends

Now, in my 30s, I am finding amusement in the fashion trends that teenagers and early twenty-somethings are wearing when just a short time ago, I was one of those on the curve of the fad, not fading behind like now. In college boot cut or flare jeans were the “it” item and then they quickly died out for skinny jeans. Now my beloved skinny jeans are out and flares are back in. As frivolous as fashion is, it is a great illustration of how truly fast time goes and in the way in which the pendulum of the world swings back and forth.

In the farming world in South Dakota, we are seeing a huge swing back in the pendulum industrial hemp industry. Hemp first arrived on the North American continent in the mid 1500s by Spanish colonization and was already being raised in the New England colonies by in the mid 1600s. It was an important fiber crop for cloth, canvas, paper and multiple maritime uses. Hemp continued to be an important crop into the 1930s in all agriculture areas until 1937 and the swing back of the passing of the Marihuana Tax Act.

There was a short but important reemergence of the industry during World War II. The USDA produced a film called “Hemp For Victory” to encourage US farmers to grow hemp for the war effort and during this time frame almost a million acres were grown across the Midwestern states. This quickly ended after the war and was virtually banned by the Controlled Substances Act of 1970 and once again the pendulum swung back hard ending the industry once again.

Just two years ago, an industrial hemp bill was passed to allow the first growing season in summer of 2021 since the banning of production. Almost 1600 acres were grown. Virtually, all in the state was for grain and fiber with roughly 2% being grown for CBD. During the 2021 state legislative session, there was lots of conversations

about what a great industry this could be because of the type of farming that is done here. It was especially exciting to discuss that someday down the road, South Dakota or our surrounding neighboring states would have processing plants and that would be a game changer for this business. It seemed like a pipe dream, but a fun one to think about.

In what seems like a split second, in the spring of 2022, there are two grain and fiber processing plants being constructed in Winfred and Wakonda, South Dakota. Along with the CBD processing plant already in Winfred and the large food processor in Sioux Falls extracting hemp protein, South Dakota is poised to be one of the leaders of industrial hemp in the country. There is expected to be about 4,000 acres grown in the state alone this summer. The future of hemp is bright and the products it can produce almost endless. I find it particularly exciting to see all the plastic products that can be replaced with hemp. It has been a fascinating experience to see industrial hemp go from a black sheep crop to many main stream farmers looking at the benefits of producing in less than two years. It leaves me hope that possibly my now own dated jeans choice will one day swing the pendulum back to fashionable and possibly be made with hemp! 🌱

STRAWBERRY: The taste of spring

Strawberry Oatmeal Bars

This recipe is a healthier fruit dessert made with fresh strawberries, whole grain butter crumb topping, and a lightly sweetened vanilla glaze. It's from The Well Plated Cookbook by Erin Clarke.

Strawberry Bars

- 1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup white whole wheat flour
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter melted
- 2 cups small-diced strawberries
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar

Vanilla Glaze

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup powdered sugar sifted
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon milk

1. Place a rack in the center of your oven and preheat to 375 degrees. Line an 8x8-inch baking pan with parchment paper so that the paper overhangs two sides like handles.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the oats, flour, brown sugar, ginger, and salt. Pour in the melted butter and stir until it forms clumps and the dry ingredients are evenly moistened. Set aside $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the crumble mixture, then press the rest into an even layer in the bottom of the prepared pan.
3. Scatter half of the strawberries over the crust. Sprinkle the cornstarch evenly over the top, then sprinkle on the lemon juice and $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of the granulated sugar. Scatter on the remaining berries, then the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon sugar. Sprinkle the reserved crumbs evenly over the top. You will have some fruit showing through.
4. Bake the bars for 35 to 40 minutes, until the fruit is bubbly and the crumb topping smells toasty and looks golden. Place the pan on a wire rack to cool completely.
5. While the bars cool, prepare the glaze: In a medium bowl, briskly whisk together the powdered sugar, vanilla, and milk until smooth. Feel free to add more milk if a thinner consistency is desired. Using the parchment-paper handles, lift the bars from the pan. Drizzle with glaze, slice, and serve.

Fresh Strawberry Cake

Jam-packed with fresh strawberries, this strawberry cake is one of the simplest, most delicious cakes you'll ever make. Modestly adapted from Martha Stewart Living (June 2005), via Karen Tannenbaum.

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour,
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
- About $\frac{3}{4}$ pound strawberries, hulled and halved

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F and butter a 9-inch deep dish pie pan or 9-inch square cake pan.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt. Set aside.
3. In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat the butter and 1 cup of the sugar until pale and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the egg and vanilla and beat on low speed until well combined. Gradually add the flour mixture, alternating with the milk, and beat on low speed until smooth.
4. Transfer the batter to the prepared pan and smooth with a spatula. Arrange the strawberries on top, cut side down, so that they completely cover the batter. Sprinkle the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar over the strawberries.
5. Bake for ten minutes, then reduce the heat to 325°F and bake until the cake is lightly golden and a tester comes out clean, about an hour. Let the cake cool in the pan on a rack. Serve with sweetened whipped cream or vanilla ice cream, if desired.





2022 Summer Events

This growing season is sure to be packed with great events connecting folks to the land and each other.

We are all teachers and learners! We rely on our members to offer up their expertise, time, and space as a resource.

If you're interested in hosting or organizing a field day, class, or tour please give us a call at 605-301-0460 or fill out the following form: <https://bit.ly/NPSASfarmtourhost>.

Any events already on your calendar we can help share! Let us know! Contact info@npsas.org

See you this summer!

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Contact 605-301-0460 or fill out the following form: <https://bit.ly/NPSASfarmtoursponsor>.

Thanks for the support!



DATE TBD, EARLY JULY

Doubting Thomas Farms MOORHEAD, MN

Soil health and cover crops will be the main topics of discussion at a field day at the Lee and Noreen Thomas farm near Moorhead, Minnesota. Participants can see fields with cover crops and take a look at the effect that cover crops and other practices can have on soil health. Noreen encourages people coming to the tour to wear good shoes and to bring a water bottle. The event will take place rain or shine.

TIME TBD: 12506 20th St. N., Moorhead, MN.



TUESDAY, JULY 19

Carrington Research Extension Center Annual Field Day & Cows & Co. Creamery Tours

CARRINGTON, ND

Review research work and educational programs underway at the CREC. The central location of the Carrington Center is significant in that research programs address research needs representing a significant part of agriculture in North Dakota.

Then stop by Cows & Co. Creamery, the source of Duchessa Gelato, to hear about this woman-led value-added venture. Tour includes gelato and cheese tasting.

9 AM–3 PM: Tour of Carrington Research Center, 663 Hwy 281 N., Carrington, ND. *Directions:* 3.5 miles north of Carrington, ND, on Hwy 281. West side. Watch for signs.

TIME TBD: Tour of Cows & Co. Creamery, 7321 1st Street NE, Carrington, ND. *Directions:* From U.S. Hwy 281, go east on Hwy 200 for 7 miles. Go south on 74th Avenue for 2 miles. Turn right (west) onto 1st Street NE.



DATE TBD, EARLY AUGUST

Horizon Hemp Seed Tour

WILLOW LAKE, SD

Enjoy a tour of Horizon Hemp Seeds' 200+ acre personal Certified Hemp Seed Fields. This tour will include presentations from individuals in the field along with opportunities to walk fields and get hands on with the plants. Experts will present on different facets of the industry before the field tour. Derrick Dohmann, Trav Bratland, and Tim Bratland are the people behind Horizon Hemp Seeds. It is highly recommended for anyone looking to get into the industry and also for folks that want to start to learn about the crop. We will also discuss markets along with the planting and harvest of the crop.

TIME TBD: Tour starts at the Bratland farm. *Directions:* From Willow Lake, go 3 miles east on Hwy 28.

FIND MORE DETAILS AND UPDATES AT

WWW.NPSAS.ORG



THURSDAY, JULY 21

Johnson Farms Tour

MADISON, SD

NPSAS members Charlie, Allan, Kevin, Jordan, and Aaron Johnson will share insights from their 45 years of organic grain farming. Coffee and rolls will be served in the morning. Lunch will be served on the farm. There is no cost to attend. Register for accurate meal counts and to receive directions to the farm. Registration details will be announced soon.

8:30 AM–1 PM: Presentations begin at St. Peter on the Prairie, 24311 452nd Ave.

Summary of NPSAS board meetings

Feb. 24, 2022, via Zoom conference:

- **Finance Committee:** Brad W. gave a high-level overview of the January and year to date preliminary financial report. Brad noted that there was a little positive income last month.
- **Executive Director's Report:**
- Jasper D. discussed the BRFD grant.
 - First invoice was recently sent for first quarter of 2022. Jasper was on a meeting for the grant.
 - Katie and Jasper discussed promoting this with our conference in 2023. It could be a breakout track at the conference.
 - We will also be adding the information as it becomes available to eSprouts and Germinator issues.
- Jasper D. let the Board know that we were unsuccessful in getting the SARE grant applied for this fall.
- CERES Trust let us know that the funding for 2022 has been terminated.
- Carrington sent the invoice for the corn trials, just over \$11,000, which was paid this month.
- Jasper D. and Katie S. had a conference wrap up meeting with Cole H.
- **Conference Planning Update:** Cole H. gave an overview of the conference financials. Attached is a breakdown of the conference income and expenses. Net income of \$11,478.
- 2023 conference planning.
 - We need to make a decision where to hold the 2023 conference. Fargo Holiday Inn have the January dates open.
 - Cole will send out an email to get official vote of the Board to move forward with the 2023 dates.
- **Governance / Strategic Planning:** Kaye Kirsch has resigned her position on the Board of Directors. Board of Directors will look to fill her position.

Mar. 24, 2022, via Zoom conference:

- **Finance report:** Brad W. gave a

high-level overview of financials. Brad said there were no concerns.

- **Action: Motion made and approved to accept the financial report as presented.**
- **Executive Director Report:** Report provided by Katie S. and Jasper D.
- Completed final conference wrap-up with Cole H.
 - Discussed upcoming events and the 2023 conference.
 - Going forward, Cole will take minutes during Conference Planning Committee meetings and provide a recap to committee members.
 - Cole is working to secure a location for the 2024 conference as the Holiday Inn (Fargo, ND) does not have our typical dates. Currently looking at Hilton Garden Inn and Delta.
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program - Preparing a Resilient Future Grant is still in the planning stages. We continue to be involved in meetings, calls, and get any information National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) needs from NPSAS.
- Finally able to gain full access to ND Secretary of State website. Updated the registered agent from Kaye K. to Brad W.
- Prepared a sign and brochures for participation at the National Ag Day Education Celebration in Aberdeen, SD. Krysti M. had a booth at the event and displayed NPSAS sign and brochures.
- Recently, an invoice was received from Kat and Company, Bismarck, ND for hosting the NPSAS website. Katie and Jasper requested a copy of the contract since the charges go back a couple of years. Once the contract is received and the charges are reviewed, the invoice will be paid.
- **Program Committee Report:** Krysti M. had a conversation with Cole regarding planning for the 2023 conference and summer programs.
 - Krysti is hopeful that the summer program schedule will be printed in upcoming edition of the Germinator.
 - Krysti would like to have a quarterly plan in place for the 2023 conference to ensure conference planning deadlines are met.
- Discussed the possibility of offering member only events at the conference and promote the events on Facebook. Promoting member only events on Facebook may entice non-members to join.
- One idea for the 2023 conference is a discussion around indoor food growing.
- Working on ways to engage membership with monthly or quarterly events that will discuss a topic of interest such as hemp for grain and fiber (including pricing and marketing). Another idea was a workshop discussing weed control. Other ideas were also discussed.
- Summer programming and SARE funding opportunities were also discussed. Cole has also been asking for summer event ideas. A summer hemp tour is being planned as well as a Farm Breeder Network event.
- **Board Election:**
- **Action: Motion made and approved for the following Board positions during 2022:**
 - **Chair – Krysti Mikkonen**
 - **Vice Chair – Mike Jorgenson**
 - **Chair of Farm Breeder Network – Rich Horsley**
 - **Treasurer – Brad Wolbert**
 - **Secretary – Randy Nelson**
- Discussed potential Board members.
 - Mike J. and Brad mentioned a few interested people.
 - **Action: Motion made and approved to add Thane Dockter (Bismarck, ND) and Martin Goter (Woodworth, ND) to Board of Directors.**
- Krysti discussed the need for a Board of Directors retreat. Dates for the retreat were talked about and a survey asking availability will be emailed out soon.
- The retreat would last about 3-4 hours and our monthly meeting would be held at the same time.
- Possible locations include the Carrington Research Farm.

Reviving the Farm Breeding Network

Our food security depends upon farmers' ability to obtain and grow a diversity of seeds for safe and nutritious foods. Their ability to do this is threatened by increasing corporate control of seeds and genetic material, including the patenting of genetics. Sustainable farmers are losing the power to choose what seed to grow, where the seed comes from, and how it is produced. Without ongoing variety improvement we are losing yield potential every year.

History of the Farm Breeding Club:

The Farm Breeding Club (FBC) brings farmers together to share knowledge and seed stock for seed saving, crop breeding and fellowship. This project gives farmers the information they need in order to participate as partners in public plant breeding and to take on their own breeding projects at home. Our goal is to revive a long tradition of seed saving and on farm breeding to ensure the availability of adapted and productive varieties. The FBC also seeks to maintain breeding and seed saving rights for farmers, the original plant breeders.

The NPSAS Farm Breeding Club is working to address priorities for new variety development set by the NPSAS membership. One of those priorities is helping members with their own on farm or in garden breeding projects. Over the years, we have developed several videos highlighting hard pollination of corn and squash, how and why to develop corn with crossing incompatibility, and the Value-Added Organic Grain project for which FBC and NDSU collaborates.


Rebranding and Rebooting:

2021 brought the discussion of transitioning the Farmer Breeder Club (FBC) to the Farm Breeder Network (FBN). Additionally, Rich Horsley has been elected to Chair the FBN and help direct the program.

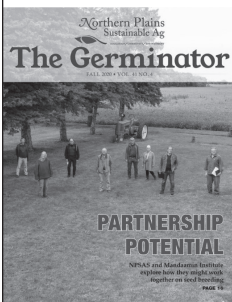

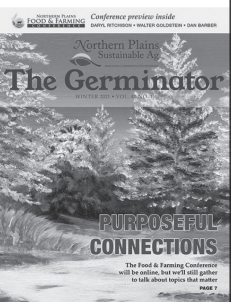
One project that we have been working towards is growing the end network users for FBC Dylan Wheat. NPSAS sees this as chance to promote a great product of the FBC. We look forward to expanding the project into this year and hope members are excited about the energy we hope to focus on this product.

Past Project List

- Specialty Crop Block Grant: Northern Plains Vegetable Variety Testing
- Increasing Varietal Suitability and Availability of Cowpea and Forage Radish Cover Crop Seed for Northern Climates
- Evaluating Early-Maturing, Cold-Tolerant White Sorghum Cultivars






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Growing Opportunity Guide Simplifies Federal Programs for Farmers

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) announced the publication of its brand new, fully updated Growing Opportunity: A Guide to USDA Sustainable Farming Programs. This free, comprehensive, practical guide is for farmers and ranchers who want to better understand which key federal programs offered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) can help them meet their needs and support their diversified, sustainable farming operations. The guide distills technical programs in a way that is accessible, serving as a valuable resource for farmers as they look for opportunities and financing to grow their farms and businesses and help build a more sustainable farming system.

USDA is partnering with farmer-serving organizations like NSAC and its members to better reach and serve an increasingly diverse farmer and rancher constituency for USDA programs. NSAC originally partnered with USDA in 2017 to produce the first edition of this guide to USDA programs for farmers and ranchers. This new edition has been updated to reflect program changes made since the 2018 Farm Bill.

The new guide is a resource for current farmers or would-be farmers seeking to:

- access capital, land, infrastructure, or technical assistance to begin or expand an operation;
- pursue new markets and sell fresh or value-added products directly to consumers, wholesalers, restaurants, schools, and food hubs; and/or
- consider diversification options, comprehensive conservation systems, and organic farming practices.

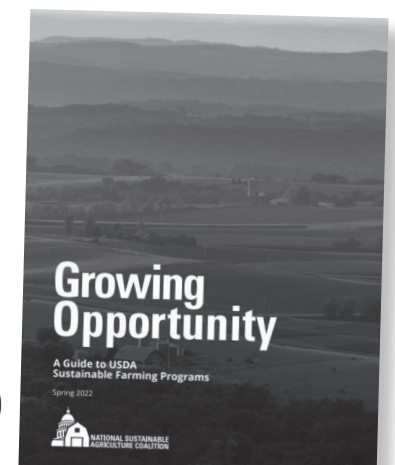
The guide includes detailed and concise program summaries, reference links, and key resources related to dozens of USDA programs that are designed to help farmers and ranchers start, maintain, and grow successful operations. These programs include:

- Direct and Guaranteed Farm Operating and Ownership Loans; Microloans; Down Payment Loan Program
- Land Contract Guarantee Program
- Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL)
- Conservation Reserve Program – Transition Incentives Program (CRP-TIP) and Field Border Buffer Initiative
- Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)
- Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)
- Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Audits

- Whole-Farm Revenue Protection Program (WFRP)
- Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) – Beginning Farmers; FCIC Organic
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP); EQIP Organic Initiative; EQIP High Tunnel System Initiative
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG)
- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE)

In the guide, programs are broken down by USDA agency and labeled by the type of service offered such as loans, rental payments, insurance, cost-share, auditing services, technical and financial assistance, and grant programs. The guide includes a matrix to help farmers easily match up their interests, such as value-added programs or cover crops, to programs that might help them, as well as a matrix highlighting programs with prioritized funding for beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, and military veterans.

NPSAS is a member of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.



**READ & DOWNLOAD
THE GUIDE AT:**

<https://sustainableagriculture.net>

USDA Releases Equity Action Plan

In support of Executive Order 13985 Advancing Racial Equity and Support to Underserved Communities, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) made its Equity Action Plan publicly available. The plan outlines actions USDA will take to advance programmatic equity to improve access to programs and services for underserved stakeholders and communities.

All too often in the past, USDA programs and services were designed to benefit those with land, experience, money, and education while leaving behind those without means, resources or privilege of one kind or another. Over the course of decades, congressional reports, internal data, civil rights investigations, court actions, and stakeholder testimony have documented this long history of inequity and discrimination.

At the start of the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA took swift actions to analyze data, consider a wide range of diverse stakeholder input, and prioritize activities that are immediately responsive to the urgent needs of those who have historically had difficulty understanding or accessing USDA's programs and services.

"We are acknowledging USDA's storied history and charting a new path forward," said Secretary Vilsack. "Today's USDA is committed to rooting out systemic racism and advancing justice, equity, and

opportunity for all. USDA's Equity Action Plan serves as an initial roadmap for making sure our programs and services are accessible, especially to historically underserved communities and to those who need them most."

"To maintain public trust, USDA and its staff must be keenly aware and responsive to the unique needs of historically underserved communities. USDA is a customer-centric organization with a mission-oriented workforce. USDA's Equity Action Plan and our consistent emphasis on data-informed policy and north star of advancing equity is indicative of a renewed commitment to meaningfully addressing barriers that prevent access to USDA programs and services. Our vision is to live up to the promise of being the People's Department," said Deputy Secretary Jewel Bronaugh.

To craft this Equity Action Plan, USDA first assessed and identified key challenges and opportunities through analysis of data and robust stakeholder engagement. Concurrently, USDA convened staff and leaders across USDA components to learn together and evaluate systems, practices, and policies that hinder progress. USDA Mission Areas and staff offices have identified challenges and opportunities of particular focus. The USDA Equity Action Plan highlights a set of actions USDA will take to advance equity; these particular actions are highlighted in

the plan because of their potential high impact for underserved farmers and ranchers, families and children, and rural communities. Below is a summary:

1. Partner with trusted technical assistance providers
2. Reduce barriers to USDA programs and improve support to underserved farmers, ranchers, landowners, and farmworkers
3. Expand equitable access to USDA nutrition assistance programs
4. Increase USDA infrastructure investments that benefit underserved communities
5. Advance equity in federal procurement
6. Uphold Federal trust and treaty Responsibilities to Indian Tribes
7. Institutionalize an unwavering commitment to and actions towards ensuring civil rights

As USDA makes progress on the goals and actions articulated above, the Department will simultaneously partner with the Equity Commission on their future recommendations. In line with the best practices in the private and nonprofit sectors, USDA is also focused on creating an organization that systematically places diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) at the center of how we support USDA's workforce and performance. Foundational to these efforts is USDA's commitment to upholding and advancing civil rights and tribal sovereignty.

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NORTHERN PLAINS FOOD & FARMING CONFERENCE

Re-Setting the Food System:

Human Health, Soil Health, & Farm Viability

The 2022 Food & Farming Conference marked a return to in-person events for NPSAS. Over 150 attendees came out for two days of networking and education at the Holiday Inn, Fargo, ND, this January. The event featured several keynote presentations and breakout sessions, plus children's activities and over 25 sponsors and vendors offering advice and products.

A conference survey was sent to those who participated. If you haven't yet completed it, please do so. Your feedback is especially important as we continue to plan for conferences in the future. Go online: <https://bit.ly/2022conferencefeedback>

General Conference Highlights

Speakers focused on topics intended to spark the imagination and inform the work of those of us interested in sustainable agriculture.

KEYNOTE SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Gabe Brown, one of the pioneers of the current soil health movement, shared his approach to the regeneration of resources. His family holistically integrates mob grazing of grass-fed beef, sheep and poultry with a no-till cropping system, including a wide variety of cash crops with over 25 multi-species cover crops. Attendees learned how this diversity and integration could regenerate the natural resources on their own Ranch without using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides or fungicides.

Ted Matthews spoke on Human and Mental Health Awareness. With over 30 years of experience in counseling in rural areas, Matthews shared his expertise on farmer mental health support. He also spent time discussing family and couples communication. Mental Health is an important topic in rural areas with limited resources to address behavioral health needs.

Ken Meter delivered his presentation via Zoom and focused on Economic Viability. Ken's work on providing economic analyses for local food networks has impacted 140 regions in 40 states, two provinces, and three tribal nations. Guests were able to hear his insights that integrate market analysis, business development, systems thinking, and social concerns into helping our local food systems become stronger and more resilient.

NCR-SARE FARMERS FORUM

The Farmers Forum is a traveling annual event giving farmers, ranchers, researchers and others the chance to share information about sustainable agriculture practices with a national audience. These presentations focus on research, demonstration, and education projects that promote profitable practices that are good for the environment and community. This year's Farmers Forum featured projects from Miranda Meehan, Erin Gaugler, Michael Bredeson, Dr. Burton Johnson and Zachary Pull. The projects highlighted in these presentations and the Farmers Forum are funded by grants from North Central Region-Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE).





Holiday Inn developed an organic menu and provided excellent meals.



Attendees networked with cookbook authors Megan Myrdal, co-author of *Midwest Mediterranean*, and Beth Dooley, author of *The Perennial Kitchen*, at the Taste of Ag event.



On Friday evening, attendees enjoyed drinks with hors d'oeuvres while networking throughout the exhibit hall.



Gabe Brown gave a keynote presentation that was well attended.



The 2022 Farmer's Panel was a great success. This discussion was led by Lynn Brakke, Charlie Johnson, Brad Wolbert, and Mark Askegaard.



This activity focused on soil health and the children built a worm farm.



Kendall Swanson shared information about using hemp as animal feed.



Glen Rabenberg spoke to attends about the importance of healthy soil and how much credit your carbon might be worth.



NCR-SARE presenters, Miranda Meehan and Erin Gaugler, highlighted information about grazing management practices that enhance soil health.



Carmen Fernholz and Mike Schulist shared the latest from OFARM.



This breakout session, led by Krysti Mikkonen, was dedicated to the digital side of marketing your farm.



Ted Matthews discussed family and couples communication.

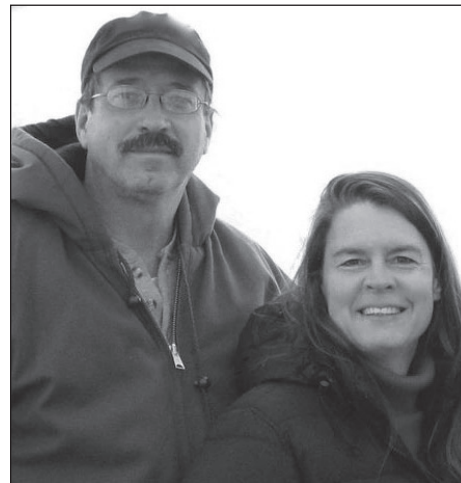


2022 NSPAS Steward of the Year: Dan & Theresa Podoll of Prairie Organic Seed

Theresa and Dan Podoll of Prairie Road Organic Seed of Fullerton, ND have been involved in organic farming long before it was “cool” to be organic. The Podolls began producing organic seed for catalog companies in 1997. They released several varieties that were initially simply bred for the Podoll’s own delicious consumption. In 2012, they started selling retail packets of seed under their Prairie Road Organic Seed label, and have placed seed racks with retail partners in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. In addition to a number of field crops the Podolls work with vegetable and spice seed as well including squash, pumpkins, popcorn, flint corn, basil, and cilantro.

While both Dan and Theresa spend

a great deal of time in the field. They make a great team because while Dan continues their mission taking in a little more of the field work, Theresa is able to spend time serving as an educator and advocate for the organic ag industry. Theresa can be credited with getting NPSAS off the ground as a founder of the organization. She has served as the first executive director of the NPSAS organization and helped to establish the Farm Breeder Club. In addition to this award, in 2014 Dan and Theresa were named Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service’s Organic Farmers of the Year. They are truly pioneers in the organic, soil, and seed industry and deserving of the honor of Stewards of the Year.



Dan & Theresa Podoll,
2022 NPSAS Steward of the Year

2022 NSPAS Friend of the Farmer: Curt Petrich

Although growing up in the Minneapolis area, Curt has been involved with agriculture for over 50 years. First working on a vegetable and sod farm until high school graduation. Curt attended the University of Minnesota Crookston majoring in soil science and agronomy. Curt has been involved in two dairy partnerships and farmed both conventional and organic crop production. Curt has held positions with an international natural and organic foods company as VP of Operations for their Raw Material Processing Facilities and VP of International Food Grade Soybean Sales and Genetics. Curt has served on many industry boards in leadership positions, Chaired the Northern Food Grade Soybean Association, Secretary/Treasurer of the Midwest Shippers Association,

Chaired the Specialty Soya & Grains Alliance and co-chaired the Strategic Human Utilization Committee for the United States Soybean Export Council and served on the NPSAS Board.

Curt is currently owner/partner of HC International, specializing in Domestic and International Sales and Marketing of IP Soybeans, Whole Grains and Ingredients.

As a member of NPSAS Curt was active as conference sponsor hosting a booth for several years. He served as a board member for 6 years and chairman for two of those years leading the organization through a number of transitions. His passion and dedication to the organization has not gone unnoticed. Thank you for your service Curt.



Krysti Mikkonen presenting Curt Petrich
with the 2022 NPSAS Friend of the Farmer
Award.

Interested in nominating a fellow member for the NPSAS 2023 Awards?

Each year NPSAS gives away two awards to members of the organization during the annual winter conference.

Go online to learn more about the criteria for the awards and complete the nomination form.

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Learn more at www.sare.org

Looking Ahead to the 2023 Conference: *What to Expect*

Throughout the 2022 event, our team enjoyed engaging with attendees to gain a better perspective on the NPSAS Food & Farming Conference. While having these conversations, it was clear that we needed to revive a few traditions.

One element that we intend to include again is the sound of local music. In the past, attendees could hear the venue filled with local musicians and acoustic instruments. We plan to bring this back in some way and let the acoustic sounds set the perfect mood for the event.

Additionally, we would like to return to hosting a silent

auction with bidding running through the conference. Attendees missed this portion of the event and expressed that it was an exciting piece of the experience. We are eager to provide this element in some form again.

Our team is looking forward to bringing these improvements to the next NPSAS Food & Farming conference, scheduled for January 26-28, 2023, in Fargo, ND. We will continue to recruit speakers to enrich the longtime producer, help those who are new, and inspire us to work together to help heal the earth. We hope to see you and your family next year.



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A Record Setting April

People were looking for animals, not Easter eggs, on Easter Sunday as Winter Storm Silas made it difficult to find anything in the depths of snow that stretched for miles across the Dakotas. A record setting 39" of snow fell near Minot, ND.

The massive winds created drifts taller than most people and stretching from Buffalo, SD, into Montana and well into Canada. So, when folks around the region are describing the weather this spring, it's no surprise to hear phrases and words like crazy, unbelievable, never in my life, outrageous, record-breaking, heart-breaking, and more. April has delivered far more than her tender flower-making showers. For those who are calving and taking care of animals, this weather is downright dangerous.

Social media posts on every channel depicted images of ranchers working in whiteout conditions to provide bedding for their animals, herding cows home for protection, and making room in shelters wherever they could. This is a prime season for calving for many operations. Weather like this is costly and dangerous for the animals and their caretakers. Seeing the images of the work ranchers go through in these conditions is heroic and frightening at the same time.

Wanting to not just be remembered for her Easter display, Mother Nature came back again for round-two the next weekend. Depending on where you were in the state of South Dakota on the weekend of April 23, you may have experienced a blizzard, high winds, tornadoes, thunderstorms, hail, rain, or even fire. The weather

maps were as colorful as they've ever been with a myriad of advisories, alerts, watches, and warnings.

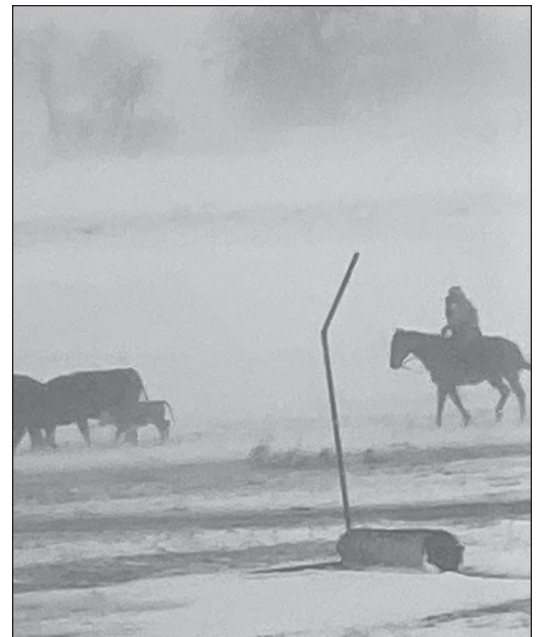
That storm left Kayla Benson Owen and her fiancé Tyler Fritz from the Belle Fourche area with all hands on deck when that blizzard dumped more heavy, wet snow. "We got a couple inches of rain the night before, and honestly, it was hard to tell the exact amount of snow. The winds were out of this world, so our guess would be roughly 12 inches."

As if dealing with the snow and trying to keep animals sheltered wasn't enough. More than 14,500 customers lost power as the weight of the heavy wet snow, fierce wind, and freezing rain pulled down power line poles in both states. When asked if she lost power, Owen stated thankfully they were lucky they didn't. Nor did they lose any animals thanks to their perseverance and hard work.

Reflecting on this vicious April weather, it's important to remember the rancher families who worked through it to feed us. It might be worth saying an extra great big thank you to the ranchers you know and those you scroll across with their images on social media. They put in a lot of time, sacrifice, and heart into caring for their livestock so they can help feed the world. 🐾



Tyler Fritz takes feed to the sheep as well as food to the two Great Pyrenees/Akbash guard dogs, Rip and Sis as they protect the sheep from predators in the blizzard. Photo by Kayla Benson Owen



Tyler Fritz and his trusty horse Bronco work together to bring the cows and their new calves closer to home for safety and protection. Photo by Kayla Benson Owen

Imports significantly reduced—OFARM members and other U.S. producers net best prices ever

Organic Farm Gate prices for sales contracts for several organic grains, most notably soybeans, have reached all-time highs.

They have reached, and in several cases exceeded the levels of the OFARM Target Price List which is generated by both producers and OFARM Coop Member leadership input to establish fair and equitable price goals that provide the income for an economic, environmental, and socially responsible organic production unit.

Why is it happening? Obviously, buyers are scrambling to fill their needs when there are simply not enough to go around. Most would say that it is a simple supply-demand issue. Agreed, at least to some extent. But why and how did the equation change so drastically? The huge overarching reason is the significant reduction in flow of organic grain imports, many of which were questionably fraudulent.

OFARM in collaboration with its member co-ops has been at the forefront in identifying and taking steps to address the issue. Let's review the history that uncovered the import fraud issue.

As the 2014 harvest began to move into the market the diminished contracting opportunities were being driven by a market psychology that imports were available at lower prices and domestic producers would need to compete with those import price levels. That mantra has been at the forefront of contracting discussions on an ongoing basis with only sparse buyer consideration for support of domestic only usage policy. We thank and support those who have made that commitment.

Identified origins of those early import shipments were immediately suspect and OFARM alerted the NOP of suspicion of fraudulent activity. The general response from NOP, with its limited resources for surveillance, was that the certification paperwork was

in order, most of which was not seen until after the product had entered the domestic market stream. OFARM engaged its collaborators and raised the bar of suspicion and pressured for greater active investigation.

OFARM began to dialog with European connections, uncovering more irregularities, raising the bar to pressure the NOP to do its job. Lack of resources was the main excuse, which was certainly a legitimate point, with a measly eight employees and only one enforcement position.

In May of 2016 Midwest Organic Cooperative marketer, Merle Kramer, uncovered some extremely suspect activity. 450,000 bushels of supposed organic corn began to offload from the vessel, Nakagowa, docked in Burns Harbor, onto trucks bound for organic mills making organic feed. Reality began to set in when its identified origins would have very little possibility of legitimacy.

Identifying the enormity of the situation, OFARM began to rally the troops, so to speak, to pressure congress for more funding for the NOP which was falling behind in its ability to oversee this new, overwhelming, international trade which was growing exponentially in very short order, with fraud suspicion and evidence growing. September 2016. OFARM uncovers the second shipload of potentially fraudulent organic grain porting in Olympia, WA. OFARM filed complaints with the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) on both ships.

Filing complaints with, not only the NOP, but also with the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), OFARM was turning up the heat to bring forth action.

More information was forwarded regarding additional shiploads of grain bound for US ports. September



Oren Holle, OFARM President.
oholle@bluevalley.net

2017. OFARM provided information of a shipment of organic corn and soybean meal projected to arrive in the Bellingham, WA port two weeks in advance of its arrival. OFARM received the information from Organic Arable in the U.K. The ship anchored offshore while USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) agents boarded the ship. The corn cargo was refused entry into the U.S.

With continued dialogue with the NOP in the person of David Glasgow increased cooperation between government agencies, including (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) led to inspections and several stop shipments due to irregularities. Now the magnitude of the problem became apparent.

Because of the dogged determination of John Bobbe, OFARM's former Executive, and working relationship with European based Organic Arable – Andrew Trump, the Cornucopia institute – Anne Ross, and investigation by Washington Post reporter, Peter Worisky, the resulting Post story exposed the depth and breath of the fraud issue.

Finally, the efforts to petition congress for more funding gained enough traction and NOP was able to see its

way clear to add staff currently 70+, creating a host of new processes for certifier oversight and a significantly more robust enforcement protocol along with a much-improved inter-agency relationship profile. This staff increase has also allowed for a greater outreach to organic stakeholders. OFARM continues to maintain a direct connection with NOP leadership and staff at our meetings.

Pressure from OFARM and its collaboration with National Organic Coalition, Organic Farmers Association, the Cornucopia Institute, along with Food and Water Watch, and their further contact and collaboration with other concerned NGOs has kept up the pressure to bring about more constructive change. Together we applied enough pressure to bring about the development and drafting of a new and additional ruling now known as the Standard for Organic Enforcement


(SOE Rule). While still awaiting its finality because of the snail's pace of initiating new governmental policies, SOE has set the tone for a much more robust system of oversight of organic operations, traders, handlers and others in the supply chain, both international and domestic.

Revisiting the agreements with other countries, and specifically, India, much has been accomplished already in curbing not only fraudulent activity but shutting down some operations not willing or able to meet the new requirements in place to be directly certified under the provisions required of domestic producers and other entities.

That, ladies and gentlemen is a nutshell synopsis of the happenings that have brought about the current market opportunities for US grain producers. How much credit can OFARM and its strong collaborative bond with

its co-op members and their producers take for its lead in the process? Some would say OFARM is directly responsible for \$30.00+ soybeans and other attractive market levels. Some would argue it would have happened anyway. One thing is clear. OFARM has been and is continuing to work diligently to fulfill its mission to, **Establish and maintain sustainable prices for organic farm production through coordinated efforts of organic farmer cooperative marketing groups while protecting and defending the organic standards and promoting environmentally friendly production practices.**

The collective cooperative marketing programs of the OFARM Family of Cooperatives is worth your participation and support. Check us out at ofarm.org and contact one of our professional marketers. ☺

 SUSTAINABLE TARGET PRICING LIST				
GRAIN	DESCRIPTION	TARGET PRICE		
Barley-Feed Grade	48# Bushel	\$10.00	-	\$12.00
Barley-Milling Grade	48# Bushel	\$12.00	-	\$13.00
Dry Beans	per pound	\$0.70	-	\$1.00
Buckwheat	48# Bushel	\$0.40	-	\$0.45
Blue Corn	56# Bushel	\$19.00	-	\$22.50
Corn-Food Grade	#1 Yellow	\$13.00	-	\$15.00
Corn-Feed Grade	#2 Yellow	\$10.00	-	\$12.00
Flax - Golden and Brown	56# Bushel	\$0.60	-	\$1.10
Kernza	Food Grade per #	\$6.00	-	\$6.00
Millet	per pound	\$0.23	-	\$0.24
Milo-White-Gluten free	56# Bushel	\$10.00	-	\$12.00
Oats-Food Grade	38# Bushel	\$7.50	-	\$8.50
Oats-Feed Grade	32# Bushel	\$6.50	-	\$7.50
Field Peas (Feed)	60# Bushel	\$16.00	-	\$20.00
Rye	56# Bushel	\$11.00	-	\$14.00
Soybeans-Feed Grade	#2 or Screenings	\$28.00	-	\$32.00
Soybean Meal	Feed Grade per Ton	\$1,150.00	-	\$1,350.00
Soybeans -Food Grade	60 # bushel	\$32.00	-	\$36.00
Spelt-Food Grade	11% Protein	\$0.25	-	\$0.30
Sunflowers	Oil type per #	\$0.65	-	\$1.00
Triticale	56# Bushel	\$11.00	-	\$14.00
SR Winter + Low Pro HRW	#1	\$12.00	-	\$15.00
Wheat-HR Spring	#1 14% Protein	\$15.00	-	\$18.00
Wheat-HR Winter	#1 12% protein	\$14.00	-	\$17.00
Wheat-Feed Grade	11% and below Protein	\$10.00	-	\$13.00
Hay	Per point RFV	\$1.35	-	\$1.75

Updated Feb. 2022. All Prices are FOB the Farm in U.S. Dollars Subject to Rgnl Variation. Storage and handling extra.

These target prices represent the levels OFARM organic grain producers in the **United States** have determined are necessary to sustain a fair and profitable return and provide opportunity to transition and maintain a solid base of available **Grown in the USA grain production.**

Anticipating ever increasing actual production costs we would expect to be revising these target prices with modest upward adjustments for future crop years.

WHY THESE HIGH TARGET PRICES?

OFARM Pricing Goals Include:

1. Organic price for production of healthy, wholesome food in an environmentally responsible manner.
2. Income enhancement to provide for support for the social and economic viability of the community.
3. The full recovery of all actual production inputs including those unique to the production, handling, and marketing of organic grain. Return to investment that provides for the acquisition and ownership of the land and related infrastructure required for organic food production.
4. A return to labor and management that provides family income at levels that allow for the full involvement and adequate compensation of all members of this partnership in the operation of an organic production unit.
5. This compensation must extend to the education, training and transition to a future generation of organic farmers.



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Building social support in rural communities

Social connections are important for good health. People who are connected with friends, family members, neighbors and others experience better physical and emotional health, and even a longer life.

WHY BUILD SOCIAL CONNECTIONS?

Social relationships are particularly important when people are experiencing tough times. At these times, the people you connect with can serve as an informal support network. Members of your network can:

- Listen to your concerns
- Help brainstorm options
- Comfort you when you are down
- Find ways to meet your needs

RURAL CHALLENGES

People living in rural areas might face specific challenges related to transportation, distance, and fewer social activities. These challenges can make building and maintaining social connections difficult. Many rural residents experience loneliness or social isolation

that affects their physical and emotional health. But there are still ways to grow and maintain your social network wherever you live.

IDENTIFYING YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

To help you identify your support network, answer the following questions and list the names of people who give you support:

- Who listens to you when you need someone to talk to?
- Who appreciates you for who you are and what you do?
- Who stands up for you, even when they might not totally agree with what you're doing?
- Who do you consult with when you have a problem or need advice?

Continued on page 22



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SOCIAL SUPPORT continued from page 21

- Who helps you make decisions when you need to think through options and consequences?

The people you named for each of these questions form your informal support network.

BUILDING & KEEPING A SUPPORT NETWORK

As you look over the people you named, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you have needs that are not being met? Which of these needs are most important to you now?
- Who could help fill these needs if you took the risk of asking?
- What specific steps could you take to expand your support network? What things can you do this week? Next week?

Consider approaching your daily life with the goal of making friendships that will add to your support network. The process of building a support network is like making a patchwork quilt — a variety of different pieces are added over the years. Sometimes an unusual piece adds some special quality that you had not expected. Sometimes you may

need to patch over places where the material has faded or worn thin.

Supportive friendships often come about indirectly from working and socializing with others. In order for this to occur, it may be helpful to reach out to others by:

- Taking time for your family.
- Volunteering with community groups and organizations.
- Visiting your neighbors.
- Joining a club or hobby group.

Take time to tend to your social relationships in order to maintain your support network. By reaching out to others and taking advantage of their support and friendship, you can gain strength to deal with problems, take control of difficult situations, prevent isolation and promote physical and emotional health. 🌱

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Call Minnesota Farm and Rural Helpline 833-600-2670 x 1
Visit Minnesota University of Minnesota Coping with Rural Stress
webpage: z.umn.edu/ruralstress

Danes, Sharon M.; Michaels, Cari. (2020). Building social support in rural communities. University of Minnesota. Extension.. Retrieved from the University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy, <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/213308>. Jacobson

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- **Communications:** Develops guidelines and oversees consistent, effective communication aligned with the NPSAS mission.
- **Farm Breeding Network:** Address priorities for new variety development.

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