

# The Germinator

SPRING 2023

VOL. 43 NO. 2

A new series  
Dedicated to

## THE ROAD TO ORGANIC

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## 2023 CONFERENCE REVIEW

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Photo by Krysti Mikkonen


## Cover Credits

Can you see the heart in this image? We know it was a winter to remember on the Northern Plains here in 2023 for sure. It seems like spring would never come, but the geese are flying and there have been some nice spring days already. We have heart and hope that spring is here and planting will soon begin.


This photo was taken at the Mikkonen Organic farm in Frederick, SD. It was a beautiful, crisp, spring morning. What a great way to start a day with a stunningly picturesque morning walk. The mixture of dew and frost on the grass, the misty fog lifting, and the sun peeking through the trees at sunrise provided the perfect setting. The icing on the cake is the heart shaped sun peeking through the trees that says it all. Farming truly does have our hearts.

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**“If we had no winter,  
the spring would not be  
so pleasant.”**

**Anne Bradstreet, poet**

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## Mission Statement

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

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in these articles may not reflect the opinions or policy of the Northern  
Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society or its Board of Directors.



I hope you enjoy this Spring issue of your *Germinator* magazine, though it sure doesn't feel like Spring out these days! As much as we want the warm weather to get here, in all honesty you probably just got done digging yourself out of the yard or are stuck in a snowbank and reading this while waiting for someone to pull you out. The snow is welcome after the dry summer we had last year and hopefully it will provide us with adequate moisture as we eventually get into the fields in the coming months, though it seems we are looking at a late start on planting. My prayers go out to everyone who has had to endure this weather this Winter, especially the ranchers as they struggle to keep their animals fed and are welcoming new life into their herds.

There has been a lot of work going on behind the scenes in the past few months. I would like to congratulate Krysti Mikkonen on her new position as the official Executive Director of NPSAS, and thank her as well for accepting the position when the Board offered it to her. A big thanks goes out to Kelly Monroe as well for working as her assistant.

If you did not attend the conference in Fargo this year, let me assure you that Krysti and Kelly proved themselves beyond measure. We would not have had the conference that we did without their hard work and dedication to our mission, that goes for the whole board and anyone that helped make it a success as well! Speaking of conferences, don't forget to mark your calendars now for our Conference in Aberdeen next year (January 25 th -27 th 2024), I highly recommend booking your rooms now.

We are working to bring the Farm Breeder Network (formerly Farm Breeder Club) back together and had planned on having a potluck just like old times, but had to settle with Zoom meetings with the weather. Hopefully we can reschedule the potluck this Spring yet, before we get busy with field work. The Farm Breeder Network is looking forward to continuing some of the projects that were worked on previously, host field days, and is preparing grant applications to help fund some of these endeavors. It was also decided to sell off some of the equipment that is no longer being used; allowing some additional funds to work with.

We are putting a lot of work into bringing some of our older members who we have lost contact with back into the group as well as building the group back up with new members. If I may take the liberty of an analogy, NPSAS could be viewed as the plant and our members the vital soil microbes. We are looking at improving the incentives for our members and growing our symbiotic relationship. Some of the things that are being looked at are providing webinar replays in the member section of our website, improving the content of the *Germinator*, a classifieds and forum section within the members section of our website, as well as working with our vendors to secure a discount for our members.

As always, we welcome any and all of your comments or suggestions, please let us know how we are doing and where we can improve. This feedback from you, helps us to know how we can bring more value to your memberships and benefit you all. We do have one board position open yet and if you or someone you know is interested in our mission, contact myself or any of our board members.

*Happy planting!*



Martin Goter



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## RIPE Program Promotes Sustainability

The Rural Investment to Protect our Environment (RIPE) program is a government initiative aimed at providing financial support to farmers who are actively involved in environmentally sound practices. This program has been designed to protect and enhance the environment while promoting sustainable agriculture practices in rural communities.

Organic and regenerative farmers who are already using environmentally sound practices will be some of the primary beneficiaries of the RIPE program. These farmers have been at the forefront of promoting sustainable agriculture practices that protect the environment, conserve natural resources, and promote healthy ecosystems. The program will provide them with financial support to continue their efforts and encourage other farmers to adopt sustainable practices.

One of the primary benefits of the RIPE program is the financial assistance it will provide. Many farmers in the organic, regenerative, and biological sectors operate on tight margins, and the program will provide them with additional resources to invest in sustainable practices that may not have been feasible otherwise. This financial support may include funds for soil testing, crop rotation, cover crops, and other practices that improve soil health and promote biodiversity.

The RIPE program will also provide organic and regenerative farmers

with access to technical assistance and expertise. This will include training on sustainable agriculture practices, soil management, pest and disease control, and other issues that are critical to maintaining healthy and productive farms. This assistance will be particularly valuable for small-scale farmers who may not have the resources to invest in research and development.

Another significant benefit of the RIPE program for organic, regenerative, and biological farmers is the potential to increase demand for their products. The program will help raise awareness of sustainable agriculture practices and promote the benefits of organic, regenerative, and biological farming. This increased awareness may lead to increased demand for products that are grown using environmentally sound practices, creating new opportunities for farmers in these sectors.

Finally, the RIPE program will help organic and regenerative farmers to continue to play a leading role in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable agriculture practices.

These farmers have been pioneers in promoting sustainable agriculture practices and have demonstrated that it is possible to produce food in a way that is both environmentally sound and economically viable. The RIPE program will help them to continue to lead the way in promoting sustainable agriculture and protecting our environment for future generations.

The Rural Investment to Protect our Environment (RIPE) program is a significant step towards promoting sustainable agriculture practices and protecting our environment. The program will provide organic, regenerative, and biological farmers with financial support, technical assistance, and increased demand for their products. It will also help to promote sustainable agriculture practices and encourage other farmers to adopt environmentally sound practices. Overall, the RIPE program is an important investment in our future and will have a significant impact on organic, regenerative, and biological farmers who are already actively using environmentally sound practices.



# SPRING into Action: Your Organization Needs You

The NPSAS Board of Directors asked if I would be willing to accept the position of executive director of this amazing organization on a permanent basis. It is exciting to be part of the organization that has meant so much to the Mikkonen Organic family farm since 1989. I am honored to serve. I hope and pray that with the support and action of the board and members of this organization we can take the various ideas that define SPRING and bring renewed strength to NPSAS.

Spring brings about new life and I hope that together we can bring that breath of new life to the organization. The board and I are hoping to bring renewed excitement, new life for the organization, and bring back the family spirit that has defined this organization and made it unique and special.

There is so much more support, acceptance, and programming available now more than ever. It is a great time to be part of NPSAS.

Let's SPRING into action this season. This is YOUR organization and I am here to support, engage, highlight, help, educate, inspire, and create community among our members. The best way to do that is to involve our members, to help you tell your stories, and get you to spring into action to get the most out of your organization.

## HERE ARE SOME IDEAS

- Hosting a field day tells your story and helps other members grow in their industry
- Get the content you want serving on the Planning Committee for the annual conference
- Sign-up to mentor a new and/or transitioning organic farmer
- Sign-up to work with a mentor as a new or transitioning organic farmer
- Write an article for The Germinator our Quarterly Publication
- Share farm related images and other creative content for social media and in the Germinator
- Present a workshop at the conference or Quarterly Member Webinars
- Serve on the Board of Directors

Help NPSAS Spring back to the vibrant, engaging organization it once was.



Executive Director Krysti Mikkonen

## HOST A FIELD DAY

We'll help you share your farm story

### BENEFITS

- Expands marketing opportunities for your operation
- Educates friends & neighbors
- Provides networking opportunities
- Inspires others to new practices
- Generates peer to peer learning

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Interested in Hosting Call  
Krysti @ 605-380-3770



# NPSAS Annual Board Meeting – January 26, 2023

**Board Attendees:** Martin Goter, Nichole Hensen, Rich Horsley, Mike Jorgenson, Brad Wolbert, Steve Zwinger, and Randy Nelson and Executive Director: Krysti Mikkonen

Financial Brad W. presented financials to the members and answered questions. Brad noted we lost \$129,000. Most of the money was related to staff expenses. Staff has been reduced and other costs were evaluated and reduced as able. A detailed financial report was handed out to members attending and can be obtained by contacting NPSAS. Krysti M. reported that Organic Crop Improvement Association, distributor of the Transition to Organic Production Practices grant, contacted NPSAS requesting NPSAS to apply for the grant which is approximately \$130,000 a year. Krysti also noted other grants that NPSAS is currently working with.

## Election results

Rich Horsley was elected for another three-year term. Three write-in votes were cast; two votes for Emily Stiegelmeier and one vote for Aaron Johnson.

## New Business Topic Summary

One member suggested that members of NPSAS should be able to have free ads in the back of The Germinator. One member suggested NPSAS should

pick a priority and that priority should be organic farming. Other members suggested keeping NPSAS open to both organic and conventional farmers to increase membership. Much discussion followed. Farm Breeder Network could focus on organic seed breeding. Sponsors should be invited to write articles for The Germinator. One member would like to continue seeing a paper copy of The Germinator while another member would appreciate a digital option.

## January Board Meeting Summary:

**Attendees:** Steve Zwinger, Brad Wolbert, Krysti Mikkonen, Mike Jorgenson, Rich Horsley, Martin Goter, and Randy Nelson. The board meeting was called to order at 8:08 by Martin Goter.

**Action:** Motion made and approved to accept the electronic meeting minutes from December 30 and minutes from the December meeting. Martin Goter introduced our newest board member, Steve Zwinger.

Financial Brad W. gave a high-level overview of financials and noted that we had income. Talked about equipment owned by NPSAS and what should be done with the equipment. That topic will be added to the Farm Breeder Network meeting agenda.

**Action:** Motion made and approved to accept the financial report as presented

## Executive Director Report by Krysti Mikkonen

Discussion was held regarding The Germinator. Working with NCAT to finalize the Organic Academy Road Show as part of the Building a Resilient Future Grant Project. We will be submitting a proposal to OCIA regarding the TOPP (Transition to Organic Production Partnership) grant. It is a 5-year grant to create at and through NPSAS programming, technical assistance, and education, mentorship, and other support services to help farmers transition to organic farming certification. Krysti noted she would like to have both storage units cleaned out as soon as possible.

## Program Committee

- Winter Conference Planning is continuing & will make a profit this year.
- Conversation on the conference Quarterly member only events with events being held during the latter part of each quarter.

## Governance/Strategic Planning

Welcome Steve Zwinger to the NPSAS Board!! NPSAS Conference awards that will be given at the conference are: Steve Zwinger received Steward of the Year and Karl Hoppe received Friend of Farmer Award

# February Board Meeting Summary

**Board Attendees:** Brad Wolbert, Rich Horsley, Nicole Hensen, Martin Goter, and Randy Nelson. Executive Director: Krysti Mikkonen Guest: Kelly Monroe

## Financial

Brad W. gave a high-level overview of January & year to date preliminary financial Reports. Brad noted that we generated income from the annual conference. Board discussed switching banks to one that has more locations in South Dakota and North Dakota.

**Action:** Motion made and approved to accept the financial reports as presented.

## Executive Director Report by Krysti Mikkonen

Discussed conference wrap-up and review as well as discussion on keynote speakers for next year and the Organic Academy Road Show (OARS) report on the assessment of BFRD Preparing a Resilient Future Grant meeting and call. OARS was happy with attendance.

Presented information on Member Leap software for membership management and presented possible options for a website if MemberLeap is not a viable option..

**Action:** Motion made and approved to pay up to \$5000 for new website and Member Leap integration. A monthly fee of \$185 will be assessed for service fee and QuickBooks subscription.

## Governance/Strategic Planning

Board retreat was scheduled in Aberdeen for March 27th at the Ramkota.

Yearly calendar was reviewed by Krysti. Talked about having a list of people that are participating on committees.

# Farm Breeder Network Notes

Farm Breeder Club is a research and development committee of NPSAS made up of producers, end users, buyers, chefs and bakers as well as other parties interested in helping farmers grow quality foods and make more money per acre through quality seed development and market creation.

The group discussed seed inventory held by farmers in NPSAS - There is Interest in Devyatkia buckwheat, dylan wheat, white sorghum, and more

- 250 lbs of Lucille Emmer
- Einkorn, Spelt, Emmer (plant introductions) 100 lines of each then 10, then 1
- Radish (a few lbs), Cow peas (a few lbs), Devyatkia buckwheat (400-500 bushel) , Einkorn (3 varieties), Spelt (2 spring varieties), white sorghum, yellow corn, and small samples of a number
- Cow peas (5 most adaptive lines 2.4 -7.3 kg of seed) Batwsana shorthorn (1323 per/ acre) PI293499 (1347 yield per/ acre w/ best early vigor) Dylan wheat (10 bags of 50/lb bags stock seed),
- Dylan Wheat (semi-load)
- Einkorn Berries (8 - 50 lb bags)
- White Sorghum (2 or so 5 gallon pails, bulk population)

## The group discussed testing - Radish/Cow Pea Cover Crop

The current equipment inventory and location owned by NPSAS includes the following:

- Stengel Seed - Dehuller
- Nichole Hensen - Grain Mill
- Owen Trangsgrud - 20 ft. Deck Over Trailer
- Edd Gerger - JD Corn Sheller
- Glen Philbrick - Belt Thrasher

- Martin Goter - Push Planter
- Tommy T - Allis Chalmers (PTO operated combine)

## OPINS indicated they can help Package and bag a minimum bushel (tote or more) anything that grows Texas to Canada

1. FOCUS & PRIORITY of grains was narrowed down to the following:
2. Dylan wheat - Royalty
3. Devyatkia buckwheat
4. White Sorghum - Royalty potential

Cow Pea Potential for direct Market Food Grade direct market bagging -

At the upcoming meetings the group will

- Define Projects
- Discuss Grant opportunities
- Seed Variety Ownership and Royalty
- Defining the specific scope of Farm Breeder Network
- Assess seed needs for 2024 and beyond

## Farm Breeder Network will be meeting the Second Tuesday of the month at 1:00 pm via zoom.

An attempt to do an in-person potluck meeting was thwarted by a snow storm. The group will try again. If you'd like to join these meeting, send an email to [info@npsas.org](mailto:info@npsas.org) and you will be added to the email notification list.



## Seeds

*I love the little brains  
of seed*

*sleeping deeply  
under snow  
dreaming*

*Of their destinies  
As plants and trees  
Each seed will know*

*Just what to be  
And when to grow.*

*Spring is soon.  
Let's watch the show.*

*By Amy Ludwig VanDerwater*



## Frivolous Lawsuits Banned

With both the South Dakota Farm Bureau and Farmers Union supporting South Dakota House Bill 1090, one might argue it is good legislation. Time will tell. Governor Kristi Noem signed a bill helping farmers and ranchers by preventing frivolous lawsuits against them.

Agriculture is South Dakota's largest industry bringing in an estimated \$32 billion in sales each year. With the industry coming under more and more opposition around the country. This could offer some much needed protection in the future for the farmers, ranchers, and the state.

The legislation signed by Governor Kristi Noem is designed to protect South Dakota farmers from some nuisance claims filed against them. Claims can still be filed by a landowner or renter who are within a mile of a farm or ranch. In addition, landowners are still accountable to follow all local, state, and federal laws.

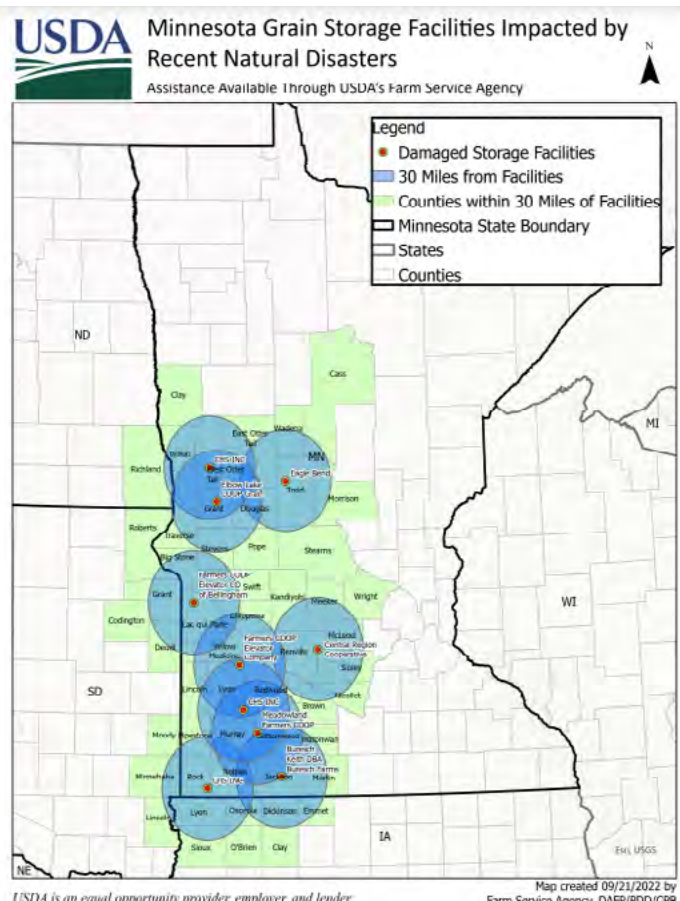
## Government Offers Farm Storage Help After Storms

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that producers in counties affected by eligible disaster events in Kentucky, Minnesota, South Dakota, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, and Tennessee can apply for cost-share assistance through the Emergency Grain Storage Facility Assistance Program (EGSFP). The new program provides cost-share assistance for the construction of new grain storage capacity and drying and handling needs, in order to support the orderly marketing of commodities. An initial allocation of \$20 million in cost-share assistance is available to agricultural producers in affected counties impacted by the damage to or destruction of large commercial grain elevators as a result of natural disasters from Dec. 1, 2021, to Aug. 1, 2022. The application period opens later this month and closes Dec. 29, 2023.

Maps showing the location of damaged grain facilities in Kentucky, Minnesota, South Dakota and surrounding eligible areas are available online. These maps depict damaged storage facility locations and the affected counties within a 30-mile radius of these facilities where producers may be eligible to apply for EGSFP benefits if they can demonstrate a need for additional on-farm grain storage capacity.

Producers must submit the EGSFP Application, form FSA-413, and any additional required forms to their FSA

county office either in person, by mail, email, or facsimile starting later this month and by the Dec. 29, 2023, deadline. Form FSA-413-1, Continuation Sheet for EGSFP, must be submitted with the FSA-413 when a group of producers are applying for assistance.



## States Present Legislation to Prevent Foreign Government ownership of Land

In a move to protect farmland ownership for domestic agriculture, proposed legislation restricting foreign entities from acquiring farmland in the state is one step closer to becoming law in North Dakota. If it passes, the law would take effect immediately if upon signed by Governor Doug Burgum and limits the amount of farmland that can be owned by non-U.S. citizens to 160 acres.

This move by North Dakota follows similar legislative actions taken by neighboring states, South Dakota and Minnesota, earlier this year. South Dakota introduced a bill that places a cap on foreign land ownership at 320 acres, while Minnesota has placed a ban on all foreign ownership of farmland.

*Continued on page 11*

# NRCS invests \$75 million to assist producers transitioning to organic production.

WASHINGTON, April 10, 2023 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced details around its \$75 million investment in conservation assistance for producers transitioning to organic production. As part of the multi-agency Organic Transition Initiative (OTI), USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will dedicate financial and technical assistance to a new organic management standard and partner with new organic technical experts to increase staff capacity and expertise.

The investment, which includes funds from the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), will help build new and better markets and income streams, strengthen local and regional food systems and increase affordable food supply for more Americans, while promoting climate-smart agriculture and ensuring equity for all producers.

"Producers transitioning to organic can count on NRCS for assistance through the process," said NRCS Chief Terry Cosby. "By strengthening our technical proficiency and providing technical and financial assistance through new tools and practices, we can better support producers through the challenges of organic transition."

## Direct Farmer Assistance

NRCS will dedicate \$70 million to assist producers with a new organic management standard under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

NRCS will help producers adopt the new organic management standard, which allows flexibility for producers to get the assistance and education they need such as attending workshops or requesting help from experts or mentors. It supports conservation practices required for organic certification and may provide foregone income reimbursement for dips in production during the



Farmers transitioning could use more resources from NRCS with new funding.

transition period.

Higher payment rates and other options are available for underserved producers including socially disadvantaged, beginning, veteran, and limited resource farmers and ranchers.

## How to Apply

Eligible producers include farmers, ranchers, forest landowners, and other producers beginning or in the process of transitioning to organic certification.

NRCS will announce state-specific deadlines later this year, after which producers can apply through NRCS at their local USDA Service Center.

## Notice of Funding for Seven New Positions

NRCS will dedicate \$5 million

to partner with six organic technical experts through five-year agreements. The organic experts will develop regional networks and support NRCS staff who provide services to USDA customers. These services include hosting hands-on organic training and fielding organic-related staff questions. One organic research position will support this network.

A Notice of Funding Opportunity, closing on June 11, 2023, outlines requirements for proposals from regional organizations and partners.

## About the Organic Transition Initiative

These NRCS investments are part of the OTI, a multi-agency \$300 million effort to support organic and transitioning producers.



Continued from page 9

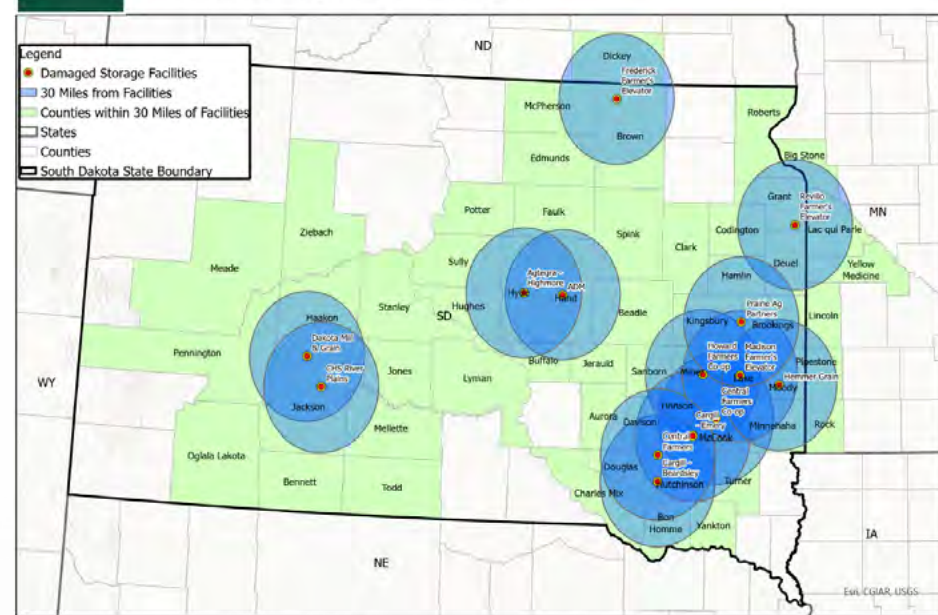
Although these measures have been criticized by some as protectionist, supporters argue that they are necessary to protect the nation's food security and the viability of the agricultural industry. The new laws have been welcomed by farmers and ranchers in the region who believe that they will help to maintain the integrity of the state's farmland and prevent it from being sold off to foreign investors.

## Big Corporations Support Regenerative Ag

There are some well-known businesses taking a collaborative interest in helping farmers adopt and implement more environmentally sustainable growing practices. General Mills, Arthur Baking, PepsiCo, Anheuser-Busch, Unilever,

### USDA South Dakota Grain Storage Facilities Impacted by Recent Natural Disasters

Assistance Available Through USDA's Farm Service Agency



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Map created 09/21/2022 by Farm Service Agency, DAPP/POD/CPB

and the Walmart Foundation created The Trusted Advisor Partnership to help farmers and those that work with farmers have the right knowledge and technical skills to improve soil and grow their farms' outputs.

North Dakota is the first state to pilot the program. As much as 50%

of the topsoil has been lost in some parts of the state which impacts the land's ability to produce quality agricultural products. This regenerative agriculture project is working toward providing financial incentives to farmers who participate in regenerative practices.

Continued from page 10

OTI also includes farmer-to-farmer mentoring, direct support for crop insurance, and market development projects.

In addition to NRCS, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) are the primary agencies supporting OTI and are closely collaborating on implementation. As part of OTI's cross-agency coordination, NRCS organic specialists will be closely connected with the AMS Transition to Organic Partnership Program regional partners, to align and share resources and best practices. NRCS and AMS's National Organic Program also plan to coordinate data collection activities, to prevent transitioning

farmers from having to submit duplicative information as much as possible. AMS will also soon announce a funding program to support the creation of new and improved markets for domestically produced organic products and provide critical companion resources to existing and transitioning organic producers.

RMA reminds producers interested in the Transitional and Organic Grower Assistance Program, also part of OTI, to visit with their crop insurance agent for more information. Premium benefits for eligible policies will be automatically applied to the producer's billing statement later this year.

### Other USDA Organic Assistance

OTI complements existing

assistance for organic producers, including FSA's Organic Certification Cost Share Program which helps producers obtain or renew their organic certification.

RMA also administers federal crop insurance options, including Whole Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm, which may be good options for organic producers. The National Organic Program is a federal regulatory program, administered by AMS, that develops and enforces consistent national standards for organically produced agricultural products sold in the United States.

### More Information

For more information, visit [farmers.gov/organic](https://farmers.gov/organic).

# Conference Sponsors 2023

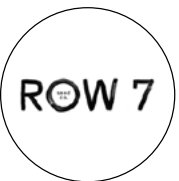
## Show Stopper



## Purple Ribbon Sponsors



## Blue Ribbon & Non-Profit Partner





# Food & Farming Conference Review

Despite the winter that's been bestowed upon the region, the 2023 Food and Farming Conference was able to bring members old and new together and spring some life and ideas into those who were able to attend. There was learning, laughter, listening, and legitimate, lively conversation.



A new element to the conference was the pre-conference Organic Academy Road Show held on Thursday. This event was very well received by the attendees with great advice, resources, and experience on organic farming and organic transition.

Also new to the conference were some first-hand panel discussions from members and guests of NPSAS. These panels included a partner panel titled Living with a Farmer talking about the work that goes into supporting the farmers and ranchers as a spouse and partner. There

were also panels on value-added agriculture with stories from producers that created one or more direct-to-consumer products made from the crop or livestock they've raised. The last panel that generated great questions in conversation was on getting to the buyer which provided some insight into how good strong markets can be created for the food that attendees are growing.

The event also featured a number of great workshops. Many of the presenters were SARE grant recipients. NPSAS is grateful for the support SARE provides to

encourage research for producers and academics and encourages and supports the researchers to share what they learned at events like this.

There was a great keynote from North Dakota native, author, and former Secretary of Ag Sarah Vogel talking about keeping farmers on their land and the impact of corporate farming laws and why it's important to pay attention to related legislation. Closing out the conference was an educational presentation from Annie Bikle, one of the authors of What Your Food Ate.

*Continued on page 14*

*Continued from page 13*

## The Organic Academy Road Show OARS into Fargo

The Organic Academy Road Show (OARS) arrived in Fargo for a couple below zero-degree days as a part of the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture (NPSAS) annual conference. The OARS is part of a three-year regional National Institute for Food and Agriculture Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Project that is designed to explore the value, viability and resilience of raising organic field crops. The project is led by the National Center for Appropriate Technology, based in Montana with many collaborative partner organizations, including NPSAS, within a five-state region of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana.

Taught largely by very experienced organic farmers and ranchers, the Fargo OARS session included topics such as crop

rotations, cover cropping, organic grass-finished beef production, integration of livestock and cropping systems, economic possibilities, and challenges of organic field crop production. The OARS sessions also included a tour of the North Dakota State University Farm Breeder Network. Part of the OARS sessions were integrated with the NPSAS sessions on perennial flax production and strip-till organic corn rotation establishment with alfalfa.

The OARS session included farmers and ranchers from North and South Dakota and Minnesota, as well as several North Dakota State University agriculture students. Participants noted the casual style of the sessions and the ability to network with other organic farmers. There was a desire to cover more topics, particularly weed control and tillage. Travel scholarships of \$200 each were provided for beginning farmers

and ranchers to attend.

"This project is unique in that it will help beginning farmers and ranchers fully explore the economic and productive viability of organic systems in the Northern Great Plains", said Jeff Schahczenski, NCAT Agricultural and Natural Resource Economist and Project Director.

Two OARS sessions have been held to date and the OARS will be returning to the NPSAS annual conference next year in South Dakota. The next OARS in the region will be in Aurora, Nebraska, August 18 and 19, 2023. The local hosts are the Center for Rural Affairs and the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society.

If you have ideas and topics for the OARS session next year the organizers would like to know. To share your ideas or obtain more details about the project, Preparing a Resilient Future., contact Jeff at [jeffs@ncat.org](mailto:jeffs@ncat.org).



Deanna Gierszewski, ND Dept. of Ag shares her why at the OARS session.





For the first time ever we had a workshop on living with a farmer.



NPSAS Staff members Krysti Mikkonen, Exec. Director & Kelly Monroe, Exec. Assistant welcomed attendees and vendors.



The value-added ag panel got attendees ideas flowing about what's possible.



Special thanks to the vendors who help make the conference possible.



The NPSAS vendors are great and help make the conference possible!



# The Taste of Ag was a resounding success!



Jerry Nelson sharing his humorous farm stories.



So many great vendors who told their story and shared a literal taste of their business.



Cows and Co Creamery shares a story with their cheese samples.



It was fun to have the auction back and plans are for it to be even better next year.



The musical talent from NPSAS members was on point.



# Karl Hoppe - Friend of the Farmer

Karl Hoppe earned his bachelors, Masters and PhD degrees at South Dakota State University. He is a Livestock Systems Specialist at North Dakota State University, working at the Carrington Research Extension Center. Karl has been with the university since 1990, and has earned multiple national honors for his extension efforts, including being named to the National Association of County Agricultural Agents Hall of Fame in 2022.

His involvement in farming, conservation and sustainability led to an additional appointment as SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) State Coordinator for North Dakota. Education in sustainability lead to outreach with 1994 land grant colleges and development of the North Dakota SARE Discovery program.

Livestock production is a major emphasis in Karl's life with sole ownership of a cattle and sheep ranch. Ranching led to a 31-year member of the North Dakota Stockmen Association where he was a director on the NDSA Feeder Council and ND Lamb and Wool Growers Association. Karl attended his first NACAA AMPIC at Little Rock, AR in 1992 and 24 years later received the NACAA Distinguished Service Award. Karl participated or coordinated seven NACAA AMPIC Animal Science Preconference Tours and was NACAA North Cen-



Ex. Director, Krysti Mikkonen presented Karl Hoppe with the 2023 Friend of the Farmer award for his work.



2023 NPSAS Award Winners Karl Hoppe and Steve Zwinger.

tral Vice-Chair for the Animal Science Committee from 2019-2021.

SARE has long been a great sponsor and supporter of NPSAS events like this. They help farmers, ranchers, and researcher try new and innovative sustainable projects that get shared with us here. Karl had been a supporter of NPSAS and a known face through the years at conferences and field day events. "Every staff member over the last five year I served on the board of this organization comes back with the comment, "Karl said"... followed by some good advice and direction on how to to help SARE help NPSAS" said Krysti Mikkonen, former Board Member and current Executive Director of NPSAS. Yes it's Karl's job, but it's clear he cares about NPSAS and the success of the members.



# Steve Zwinger - Steward of the Year

Steve has just retired as a research agronomist from the NDSU Carrington Research Extension Center. He had worked in that position for over 40 years with the main emphasis being cultivar development, general agronomy production, alternative crops, cover crops and forage crops.

The past 20 years, Steve's main research focus has been in organic agriculture. Steve first conducted research on organic farms before establishing organic land at NDSU Carrington. Two fields at the center have been transitioned and are certified organic to conduct research applicable to organic management. Much of the research conducted has been related to variety evaluation, along with cultivar development for organic production. Steve, while at NDSU released two winter rye varieties along with a pending buckwheat line for possible release.

Steve is a founding member of the NPSAS Farm Breeding Network, previously known as Farm Breeding Club, where we worked together to evaluate and develop crops and



NPSAS board President, Martin Goter presents Steward of the Year to Steve Zwinger

varieties adapted to organic agriculture. The FBN worked on a number of underserved crops including the ancient grains, emmer, einkorn, and spelt. Other seed development proj-

ects include: field pea, cowpea, hairy vetch, white sorghum, radish and

buckwheat. The release of a spring wheat, FBN Dylan, a farmer led developed variety was assisted by Steve, along with NPSAS members. He has been involved with the FBN since the beginning and has plans to continue working with the group. Steve will continue working on his farm organically farming the original quarter of land his parents lived on over 80 years ago. In addition to seed saving and plant improvement of heirloom seeds, he currently has a seed company named Prairie Seeds. Prairie Seeds is an organic seed company that grows a diverse variety of crops to garden vegetable seed. He also grows vegetables for local markets.




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State Coordinator -  
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[Karl.hoppe@ndsu.edu](mailto:Karl.hoppe@ndsu.edu)  
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*Thanks for your continued support of NPSAS!*

***The NPSAS Board & Staff are committed to honoring and building on what the founders created and previous boards and staff nurtured. We will serve the mission of the organization to the highest standard to ensure NPSAS is here to serve for generations to come.***



***Scan to start your NPSAS Membership Today!***



# Learn All About NCI's Second Annual Ancient Grains Conference

The Northern Crops Institute (NCI) is looking forward to hosting the second Ancient Grains Conference on July 25th at the Oliver Kelley Farm in Elk River, MN. This year's theme is "Growing Into Our Future", and aims to provide an educational and promotional setting to explore characteristics and utilization of ancient grains.

Last year's conference brought 50+ attendees from across the industry, including producers, millers, bakers, academics, and others. They participated in 4 panel discussions; Agronomy, Trends & Applications, hands-on Kitchen Demonstration, and Health & Nutrition. The conference offered a true crash-course in the viability of Ancient Grains in the future and why they've quickly become the latest hot macro food trend. The success and positive feedback of the first conference has led to NCI to host a second Ancient Grains Conference.

This year's Ancient Grains Conference will kick off with returning keynote speaker, Shrene White from Ardent Mills, who will be presenting on The State of the Ancient Grains Movement. There will be a number of presentations and breakout sessions for participants, including, a Producer Panel, Nutrition Panel, and hands-on baking demonstrations. Alyssa Hartman from the Artisan Grains Collaborative will be leading a panel on Connecting the Value Chain, and Dana Thompson from The Sioux Chef will be joining this year's conference as the lunch speaker.

Networking may possibly be the most important opportunity this conference provides. Last year's event resulted in many new relationships that will strengthen the Ancient Grains movement. Many participants are returning, and this year's event will provide ample opportunity to connect again.

## Registration includes:

Access to the conference  
Complimentary refreshments & lunch  
An invite to the welcome reception the night before



## Registration Rates:

Early Bird: \$195/person (on or before June 19, 2023)

Standard: \$250/person (on or after June 20, 2023)

For more information about the conference and to register, please visit [ancientgrainsconference.com](http://ancientgrainsconference.com).



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# OFARM Focuses on Three Issues

The Annual Meeting of the Organic Farmers Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM) was held during a snowstorm week on February 22-23, 2023, in conjunction with the Marbleseed (formerly MOSES) conference in Lacrosse, WI.

A long standing agenda item at all of our full membership meetings is to review and update the OFARM Target Price List. This year was no exception especially considering the strengthening of organic grain prices due to growing interest in cooperative organic marketing, as well as the market impacts from NOP actions which have significantly curtailed imported feed ingredients, most notably soybeans and corn. Recent upticks are noted and increased surveillance will be paramount.

OFARM's belief on price levels is to represent the levels OFARM organic grain producers in the United States have determined as necessary to sustain a fair and profitable return, and provide opportunity to transition and maintain a solid base of available grown in the USA organic grain and hay production.

The organization's mission and vision statements were reviewed and adopted:

"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."

"To provide for an economically sustainable marketing platform and process for the producers of organic products, where the producers have a voice and a seat at the bargaining table in determination and negotiation for equitable market levels."

The balance of the meeting was focused on three primary issues:

1. The review of the recently released Standard for Organic Enforcement (SOE) rule where OFARM was highly involved in its formation. We thank all those who collaborated with us in bringing this much needed rule to fruition. David Glasgow, Assistant Deputy Administrator, NOP provided an update on the SOE rule and demonstrated the effectiveness of the increased resources by including part of the team, now in place, to carry out the implementation. Other representatives from the NOP added comments about their respective roles in NOP surveillance and oversight. OFARM applauds the NOP for its action in the release and implementation of this new set of rules, which will do much for the integrity of organics and significantly reduce the possibilities for fraudulent activity.

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2. The approval of the USDA Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CASF) grant application was discussed at length. The Partnership of Marbledseed as the lead participant and OFARM, Ohio Ecological Food and Farming Association (OEFFA), Tennessee State University and Michael Fields Institute as collaborating partners, brings together a multi-faceted initiative to evaluate and promote organic agriculture as climate smart. There will be much to be accomplished.

3. The inclusion of OFARM as a primary partner in two regional areas of the USDA'S Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) initiative was next on the agenda. The organization looks forward to participation in both the Midwest and the Plains regions. This initiative can serve to enhance domes-

tic organic transition and mentor those who make the commitment to assist in their success.

The recent version of the proposed Organic Livestock and Poultry rule also garnered some attention and the comments given were noted. The proposed rule does very little to truly curb the continuation and growth of the CAFO type operations which make it nearly impossible for family farm size operations to access any part of the market they dominate.

Given all the anticipated activity, sessions for strategic planning will be an immediate priority.

The next in-person gathering will likely be in the Sioux City, Iowa/Sioux Falls, South Dakota area the week of September 4 – details to be worked out soon.



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# The Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP)

is investing up to \$100 million over five years in cooperative agreements with non-profit



The Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) is investing up to \$100 million over five years in cooperative agreements with non-profit organizations who will partner with others to provide technical assistance and wrap-around support for transitioning and existing organic farmers.

TOPP is a collaborative effort involving many partners working together towards a common goal of providing mentoring services, technical assistance, community building, and organic workforce development. Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society (NPSAS) is one of 20 organizations working with OCIA International in forming partnerships to serve transitioning and existing organic farmers.

## The partner organizations will:

- Connect transitioning farmers with mentors for at least one year after certification.
- Build paid mentoring networks to share practical insights and advice.
- Provide community building opportunities to include:

- Train-the-mentor support
- Technical assistance
- Workshops and field days covering topics including organic production practices, certification, conservation planning, business development (including navigating the supply chain), regulations, and marketing
- Help producers overcome technical, cultural, and financial shifts during and following certification.
- Engage educational and training institutions (including crop advisors and extension agents) on organic workforce training and education and future human capital planning.
- Over time, technical assistance

resources will be made available to all candidates and existing organic farmers through the USDA website.

- The NPSAS mission is to serve its members through education, support, information, and community in their organic, sustainable and regenerative agriculture journey. This and future issues of The Germinator will feature a four-page section dedicated to transitioning to organic farming. If there are specific questions or areas of information you'd like to know about regarding the transition process, you would like a mentor to work with you in the organic transition journey, or you could serve as a mentor for someone who is transitioning reach out to Krysti Mikkonen at [director@npsas.org](mailto:director@npsas.org).

# The Joy of Foraged Foods

I've seen a lot of interest in learning the skill and art of foraging over the last several years, and I think that's a great thing! Foraging gives us the opportunity to get out of our kitchen and homes after a long winter of being cooped up inside. It's an excellent excuse to get out on an early spring day and spend some time outside foraging, which is simply the gathering of wild food, something that was a necessity for our ancestors.

Most of the plants we are foraging are considered weeds, which is really nothing more than a plant out of place! I've often wondered why we as a civilization stopped eating foods that have provided for our ancestors all throughout history. Why do we eat kale, but not lamb's quarter? Why do we eat spinach, but not stinging nettle? They are all edible, and dare I say, delicious, and absolutely nutritious!

These recipes only scratch the surface of foraging opportunities available. There is just so much out there that I have enjoyed over the past years. Things like morel mushrooms, other wild mushrooms, garlic mustard pesto, sauteed sour dock (also known as curly dock), mulberries, lambs quarters, chickweed, purslane, henbit, purple dead nettle, ramps (mmmmmm....), borage and nasturtium flowers, and so much more.

However, before you get carried away, a warning you

should adhere to closely. Never put anything into your mouth that you are not 100% sure of what it is or its edibility. You never know the danger that lies within a plant. There are practically unlimited resources available for education to hone your skill of foraging. There are wonderful books, on-line communities, helpful apps, workshops, and YouTube, but nothing beats foraging with a knowledgeable forager to help show you the ropes.

For me, foraging is a passion that I stumbled upon in the fall of 2015. I was attending an event entitled "Becoming an Outdoors-Woman", which is an event held annually that introduces women to outdoor skills. I cannot recommend this program highly enough. This program inspired me to become a South Dakota Master Naturalist and a Master Gardener. There is a whole world of exciting foraging to be discovered out there. Hopefully you will find it as exciting and rewarding as I do. Enjoy!!

## Stinging Nettle

Nettle grows wild throughout the United States and Canada. Its arrival is a sure sign that spring is here. It can be found in wooded areas and wide-open spaces alike. I have found it along fence rows, as well as river beds, and along walking paths. I love nettle. It is so nourishing in the springtime, and is considered a powerhouse superfood, as it boasts a full spectrum of vitamins and minerals. It can be used as a substitute for spinach in practically every way. When harvesting nettle, look for the young plants, before they flower.

Although it is edible all summer, the young plants will offer the most tender greens. You will want to wear gloves when you harvest nettle, as it does sting, as its name implies. I cut the top few sections of young leaves off the plant and let them fall into my basket as I harvest. After you bring your greens into the kitchen, and wash them, you have a few options to neutralize the sting of the nettle. Upon cooking, including steaming, the sting will be neutralized and your greens are ready to be used spinach in any recipe.

A few of my favorite ways are in frittatas and soups. Also, you can dehydrate Nettle and then grind it up to be used throughout the winter to bring nutrition to your dishes. I do this and use dried nettle anyplace you might use parsley or other dried herbs. I also drink nettle tea for its nourishing benefits.

*Continued on page 27*



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## Ingredients

- 4 Tablespoons Olive Oil
- 12 ounces Mushrooms (foraged morel mushrooms are WONDERFUL in this recipe)
- 2 Cups Stinging Nettles (you can use spinach)
- 6 Large Eggs
- 3/4 Cup Shredded Cheese of your choice
- Pinch Salt/Pepper

# Mushroom & Stinging Nettle Frittata



## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F
2. Heat 3 Tbs oil in 10 inch cast iron (or oven safe) skillet over medium/high heat. Add sliced mushrooms and sauté until almost tender. Add the nettle and sauté 1 more minute. Remove mushrooms and nettle from pan, set aside. Reduce heat to medium.
3. Mix eggs, 1/2 cup cheese, salt and pepper. Add 1 Tbs oil to pan, coating the bottom and sides. Pour egg mixture into pan. Add the mushrooms and nettle on top of eggs in an even layer. Cook on the stovetop for 3-4 minutes or until sides begin to set.
4. Top with remaining cheese then transfer to oven. Bake 4-5 minutes or until middle is almost set. Then broil on high for 2 minutes until top is light golden brown.
5. Remove from oven. Allow frittata to cool 5-10 minutes before slicing and serving. Sprinkle with salt/pepper to taste.



# Dandelion

The herbalist Rosemary Gladstar says this about the dandelion, "Half the world loves it, uses it for medicine and dines on it regularly. The other half wages war on it with a heavy arsenal of pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides. Who's winning? Well, the dandelion, of course"! The entire dandelion plant is edible, nutritious, and provides beneficial, medicinal support. It is packed with vitamins, minerals, and contains potent antioxidants. In addition to the long list of potential health benefits, it is delicious as well. The young spring greens of the dandelion are wonderfully tasty raw in a salad, while older leaves do well cooked similar to how you would cook collard greens. The root can be dried and powdered then used to make a delicious drink that is much like coffee. The flowers can be made into jelly, wine, or my favourite: fritters. I also dehydrate dandelion greens to add extra nutrition to my meals throughout the winter, much like I do with nettle, and kale, actually. Dandelion Fritters (also delicious with red clover blossoms)



## Ingredients

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| • 1 cup flour                  | • 1 teaspoon baking powder   |
| • 2 tablespoons sugar or honey | • Oil for frying (heat tolerant, coconut or avocado is best)   |
| • 1 teaspoon vanilla           | • 1 cup freshly picked fully opened dandelion flower heads – use ASAP as they begin to close right away) |
| • ½ teaspoon cinnamon          |  |
| • 1 cup milk                   |  |
| • 1 egg                        |  |



## Instructions

1. Whisk all ingredients together (except flowers)
2. Dip the dandelions in the batter
3. Fry in hot oil, flower side down, for 20 to 30 seconds, then flip and fry 20 -30 seconds again
4. Drain in a paper towel. Top with powdered or granulated sugar. Enjoy immediately.

Violet flowers from the Viola genus are a gorgeous part of the annual display of spring blossoms. Commonly found all over the Northern Hemisphere and in the South American Andes and Hawaii, violets are edible plants that can beautifully adorn salads and cakes. They also make delicious and pretty teas and syrups. Extensively used in European cooking, particularly in French cuisine, violets aren't that common in food in the United States. However, with the wide availability of these flowers, it'd be a shame not to try a recipe, which can transform many recipes into beautifully colored violet creations. Think of buttercream frosting, beverages, macarons, or cake batters with a hint of violet color and a fruity berry taste.



## OCIA R&E Mentorship Program

### **Paid Mentor Opportunities for Organic Growers:**

As a Core Partner in the USDA's Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP), OCIA Research & Education is looking for organic growers in the Great Plains Region (NE, CO, KS, OK, ND, SD) to serve as mentors to farmers who are transitioning to organic.

Mentors need to be certified by any USDA-NOP certifier and in good standing OR have a minimum of 3 years experience in organic production. A commitment to 45 hours per 12-month cycle will include 2 on-farm visits, 3 touch points during the growing season, and mentor trainings. Mentors will be provided a \$3,000 yearly stipend for their participation and travel.

If you are interested in being contacted further regarding a mentor training for this exciting new program, please email [info@ocia.org](mailto:info@ocia.org).



# 6 Things I learned in Organic Transition

Here are six things that I have learned through the process of transitioning some of our farm acres to organic. My wife and I moved back to her family farm in 2017. We are the fourth generation to be on the land and farm in Cathay, ND, which is about 40 minutes northwest of Carrington.

We started the transition to organic five years ago. We farm a total of about 4000 acres and as of 2023 we will have about 1000 acres of those acres into organic production. Our organic grains are currently hemp for grain, field peas, winter wheat, flax, winter rye, and more as we try to figure out what works best for our operation. The farm was not opposed to organic production before Cara (my wife) and I moved back to the farm, just weren't sure how to do it and Todd (my father-in-law) wasn't sure how many more years he would be farming either.

## Here are three things that I practice on our farm:

#1 Read, read, and read some more. I'm relatively new to farming so my biggest asset is reading or listening to books. I wanted to be a dairy farmer as a child but didn't continue with that pursuit after middle school. As we moved out to the farm, I knew that I had to learn a lot and learn it quickly in order to help the farm continue in the right direction. I continue to try to read and/or listen to 24 books a year to keep me sharp and learn about other farmers or innovators from the past or present. Here are a few books I have enjoyed reading: Mainline Farming for the 21st Century by Dan Skow; Atomic Habits by James Clear; Lentil Underground by Liz Carlisle, and Folk, This Aint Normal by Joel Salatin.

#2 Stay organized. Easier said than done some days but with the paperwork and paper trails needed for organic production, document everything. I have copies of receipts, texts to my wife with details, notepads in trucks and tractors, and bins labeled well. You can't over document your work. If you stick to this process, your certifying/inspector will sincerely appreciate it. It will in turn make your life easier too, in the long run.

#3 You do what is best for your



farm. There are tons of ways to farm and that's what I love so much about farming. We are self employed entrepreneurs and can farm however you see fit. Your neighbors farm differently than you, they don't know your bottom line, and they don't always want what is best for your future.

## My father-in-law always says, "Farming would be easy if I didn't have neighbors." We don't need to compare ourselves to our peers.

I would encourage you to work well with your neighbors and the community, and learn from some of their practices but farm for YOUR family and farm how YOU want to farm.

#4 Marketing can be made easy. Marketing is one of the things most farmers just plain hate to do. Organic marketing can be even more difficult because you can't just bring it next door to the elevator; and who knows how that field will end up for the year.

We can go around and around on how hard it is to market your grain but from my limited experience. The market is looking... even cold calling some of you for your good quality ORGANIC grain. We at NPSAS have some wonderful sponsors who pride themselves on working with local, family farms. Reach out to some of them and get an idea of what they are looking for. I have been very happy to work with them and I can't always say the same about our local elevator.

#5 Weeds aren't all bad. Weeds aren't just out of place plants. After reading the books, Weeds and Why They Grow. Which is also called, When Weeds Talk, by Jay L. McCaman(not sure why he changed the title but he did). It gives you the formula for why that weed has popped up in your field. The weeds are basically exclaiming, FIX THIS SPOT IN THE SOIL! Jay has gone to all the weeds in the book and discovered what type of soil caused each of the weeds to appear. The idea that if we correct the soil we can help remove and/or reduce the weed population in our fields is amazing. We don't add more oil to our car engines when the check engine light pops on so don't try to eliminate every weed problem with the same one trick either.

#6 There are still good people in this world. I love working with good people. I will spend more money working with someone I enjoy talking to or working with that someone who saves me a few bucks but I can't stand to be around or work with. In the organic world, there are wonderful teachers, farmers, and advisors who all want to share ideas and help you become a better person. NPSAS has been a big part of helping me find these good people to work with and build relationships with them. We, as the board, are trying our best to keep bringing in good people to help this organization flourish in the future.





Ben Adolf in his relay crop field

## Relay Cropping Facts in Transition

Relay cropping is an agricultural practice where two or more crops are grown on the same field during a single growing season. This practice has several benefits, including increased productivity, improved soil health, and reduced pest and disease pressure. When transitioning from conventional farming to organic farming, relay cropping can be an effective tool for reducing the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, while still maintaining high yields.

The main advantage of relay cropping is that it allows farmers to maximize their land use by growing multiple crops in the same field. This can be particularly useful for organic farmers who may have limited access to land or resources. By planting a second crop after the first crop has been harvested, farmers can avoid leaving the soil bare, which can lead to erosion, nutrient depletion, and weed growth. Relay cropping can also help to break pest and disease cycles, as different crops attract different pests and diseases.

One of the most common relay cropping systems is the use of cover crops. Cover crops are grown primarily to protect the soil from erosion and improve soil health, but they can also be used to provide additional benefits such as nitrogen fixation, weed suppression, and pest control. When transitioning to organic farming, cover crops can be a valuable tool for reducing the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, as they can provide a natural source of nutrients and help to suppress weed and pest populations.

Another type of relay cropping

system is intercropping, where two or more crops are grown in the same field at the same time. Intercropping can help to reduce pest and disease pressure, as different crops can attract different pests and diseases. It can also help to increase productivity, as crops can share resources such as sunlight, water, and nutrients. Intercropping can be particularly effective in organic farming, as it can help to maintain soil health and reduce the need for synthetic inputs.

Ben Adolf, Fairhaven, IL, a former conventional agronomist who is in the process of converting their family farm to organic production and encourages relay cropping even though many discouraged him.

When transitioning from conventional farming to organic farming, there are several factors to consider when implementing relay cropping systems.

1. Farmers should carefully select crops that are well-suited to their specific growing conditions, as different crops have different requirements for nutrients, water,

and sunlight.

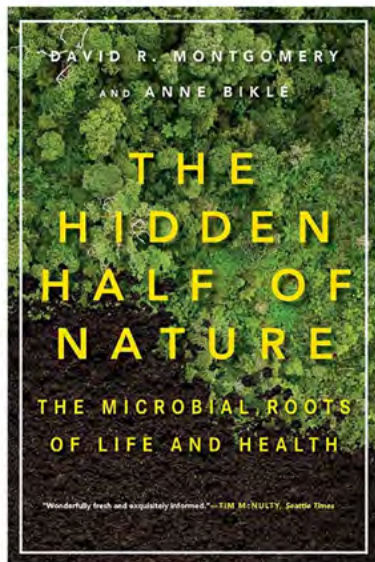
2. Farmers should ensure that they have adequate equipment and resources to manage multiple crops, as relay cropping can be more labor-intensive than conventional monoculture systems.
3. Farmers should carefully monitor their soil health and nutrient levels, as adding too much or too little of certain nutrients can have negative impacts on crop growth and soil health.

Relay cropping can be a valuable tool for farmers transitioning from conventional farming to organic farming. By maximizing land use, improving soil health, and reducing pest and disease pressure, relay cropping can help to increase productivity and reduce the need for synthetic inputs. However, it is important for farmers to carefully consider their specific growing conditions and resources when implementing relay cropping systems. With careful planning and management, relay cropping can be a sustainable and effective practice for organic farming.



# Great Reads for Better Farming

2023 Conference Speakers David Montgomery and Anne Biklé



**“The Hidden Half of Nature” by David R. Montgomery and Anne Biklé**

This book is a fascinating exploration of the complex and often overlooked world of soil microbiology. Montgomery and Biklé draw on their experience as scientists and gardeners to make a compelling case for why healthy soil is essential for both human and environmental health. Their writing is engaging and accessible, and the book is filled

with intriguing stories and practical advice for improving soil health. Whether you're a scientist, a gardener, or just someone interested in the natural world, “The Hidden Half of Nature” is a must-read.



**“The Soil Will Save Us” by Kristin Ohlson**

This book is a must-read for anyone interested in soil health and regenerative farming. Ohlson masterfully weaves together science, history, and personal stories to make a compelling case for why healthy soil is essential for both our planet and our own health. Her writing is clear and engaging, and the book is packed with fascinating

insights and practical advice for farmers, gardeners, and anyone else looking to support a more sustainable future.



## ANCIENT GRAINS CONFERENCE 2023

JULY 25TH, 2023

📍 OLIVER KELLEY FARM | ELK RIVER, MN

### ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The Ancient Grains Conference aims to provide an educational and promotional setting to explore the characteristics and utilization of Ancient Grains. This year's theme is Growing Into Our Future.

Join us as we hear from speakers on topics including: the state of the ancient grains movement, the value chain, nutrition and more! There will also be a hands-on baking experience.

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REGISTRATION

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