

ORGANIC VOICE



ORGANIC FARMERS ASSOCIATION

NO. 3 • NOV 2021

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President's Letter

Resiliency: the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, an ability to recover from or adjust easily to change, toughness. The last two growing seasons have certainly required resilience. With wild weather in many parts of the country and a lingering pandemic life has been pretty crazy. As organic farmers much of what we do is deal with change. There's always a plan B and C and so on... What I've found is that a certain resilience is built into organic agriculture. Too dry a year and a higher organic matter will help retain moisture, too wet and the soil drains better. The idea is to build that soil so that annual doses of soluble nutrients aren't necessary. The old adage holds true: feed the soil not the plant.

As Congress and the USDA consider climate change mitigation and carbon credits for stored carbon in the soil it seems to me that's what organic farmers have been doing for years. Not just to lock up the carbon in the atmosphere but to perform a plethora of beneficial activities. Having crop rotations is a requirement of organic management but there are many benefits to this practice besides just moving plants around. Research is showing that a large portion of the organic matter in the soil is made up of the dead bodies of microorganisms that are breaking down the organic matter. Crop rotations, particularly with cover crops, feed those organisms and build organic matter that is relatively stable but provides nutrients for future crops. Organic farms have been building these soils for years, many with impressive organic matter contents. How do you credit those farmers for their practices if we're only looking at year-to-year changes?

Soil is not like a tree. If you leave a tree alone, as long as it has room to grow it will sequester that carbon for a long time. We know that well managed pastures will do the same; the key is to keep the grasses actively growing. In cropping areas where soil is tilled maintaining or building soil is not a static process. Tillage and an active soil micro biome will break down the carbon in the soil and maintaining it is a process, one that should be credited. Research by our partners at the Rodale Institute is also showing that where you measure for carbon in the soil will show different results at different depths. Soils with a longer history of organic management show more organic matter deeper in the soil horizon while conventional soils tend to have carbon closer to the surface.



Organic farmers have been providing these benefits for decades. The concepts of good pasture management; crop rotations and cover crops on active living soils should be recognized. The truth is that much of agriculture is just catching up to what organic farmers have known all along: the soil is not a dead substrate that holds up the plants while you feed them chemical nutrients. It's a living process that should be treated as a process and not just a number on a scale to be reached.

At the Organic Farmers Association, we're having discussions about carbon farming but also about highly soluble nutrients and their place in organic agriculture. We're following the discussions in Washington about carbon credits and who should be getting those payments. And we're looking ahead to the writing of the next US Farm Bill and developing listening sessions to hear from organic farmers what their concerns are and how they may best be addressed.

Your support helps us to do these things and gives you a seat at the table when issues come up. Thank you for your support and for all the good work you do.

PS: And yes, we did have a nice pumpkin harvest this year!

Sincerely,

David Colson

Dave Colson, President
New Leaf Farm, Durham, Maine



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Sam Malriat, Rodale Institute

STAFF

Executive Director Kate Mendenhall

Policy Director Patty Lovera

CONTRIBUTORS

Writers: Patty Lovera, Ben Lilliston, Harriet Behar

Photography: Rich Ryan, Sara Tro

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Send comments & inquiries to:

Organic Farmers Association
PO BOX 709, Spirit Lake, IA 51360 USA
202-643-5363; OrganicFarmersAssociation.org

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Advocating for Organic in the Next Farm Bill

By, Patty Lovera, Policy Director

WHAT IS THE FARM BILL?

The Farm Bill is a massive piece of legislation that Congress passes roughly every five years. The Farm Bill covers the broad range of programs run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including commodity support programs, agricultural conservation programs, trade and international food aid, domestic nutrition assistance (SNAP), farm credit programs, rural development, agricultural research and extension, forestry, horticulture, crop insurance, and a variety of other policies. The current Farm Bill became law in late 2018 and expires in late September 2023.

But even when Congress is not actively writing a new Farm Bill, there is still work to be done. In between periods of congressional debate on the text of the bill, advocates like OFA work to make sure that the USDA is implementing the programs created by the Farm

Bill. For example, the 2018 Farm Bill instructed the USDA to establish new regulations to increase the department's capacity to detect and prevent fraud in organic supply chains. The USDA is still working on finalizing these new rules, three years after the Farm Bill became law, and OFA and other advocates have been pushing the department to finish a strong rule as soon as possible.

Other important topics for organic farmers in the Farm Bill include funding for organic-focused research, as well as the organic certification cost-share program. And the Farm Bill can create opportunities for harmful changes too, such as past attempts to change the requirements for who can serve on the National Organic Standards Board.



ORGANIC FARMER FARM BILL PRIORITIES


OFA is starting a process to set our priorities for the 2023 Farm Bill to make sure that the needs of organic farmers are a part of this omnibus bill's development. Even though Congress won't pass new legislation until 2023, the debate over what should be in that bill has already begun and will pick up steam in 2022.

To get ready, we are going to be reaching out to organic farmers and farm organizations around the country to get your input on what priorities we need to advocate for in the next Farm Bill.

In February 2022, OFA will be co-hosting a National Organic Farmers Meeting focused on generating national organic farmer priorities for the farm bill with the Organic Trade Association (OTA).

This fall, the Organic Trade Association will be hosting three meetings with organic stakeholders in partnership with Dr. Kathleen Merrigan from the SwetteCenter for Sustainable Food Systems at Arizona State University.

One meeting will be for organic certifiers, one is for national advocacy groups, and one meeting will be open to all.

Together, OFA and OTA will co-host the national farmer meeting in February 2022 (Virtual). Organic Farmers Association will bring a grassroots effort to the national organic farmer meeting and we invite state and regional groups to engage your organic farmer members in a state-level conversation to identify their farm bill priorities. Organic farm organizations that hold stakeholder meetings with their farmers and individual organic farmers will be invited to the February meeting to discuss organic farmer priorities. 

Patty Lovera is Policy Director of Organic Farmers Association. She makes sure that the policy priorities of certified organic farmers are represented in Washington, D.C.



Farm Bill Farmer Listening Sessions



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SINCE 1985
Organic
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HOW TO PARTICIPATE:

You may participate by doing ONE or ALL of the following:

1. Contact your state or regional organic farm organization and find out when they are holding their stakeholder farm bill meeting & participate with your regional peers in this discussion.
2. Submit your farm bill priorities via the meeting online survey.
3. Attend the February National Organic Farmer Meeting.

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COULD NEW CARBON MARKETS WORK FOR ORGANIC FARMERS?

WRITTEN BY:
BEN LILLISTON
DIRECTOR OF RURAL &
CLIMATE STRATEGIES
INSTITUTE FOR
AGRICULTURE AND TRADE
POLICY

The Paris Climate Agreement commits countries to reduce their emissions to what is called “net zero” by 2050. There is also rising pressure on companies to lower their carbon footprint. Both of these developments are creating new interest and investment in carbon markets. These markets include land-based offset, where credits are created when carbon is sequestered by

foresters or farmers and sold onto the market or directly to companies.

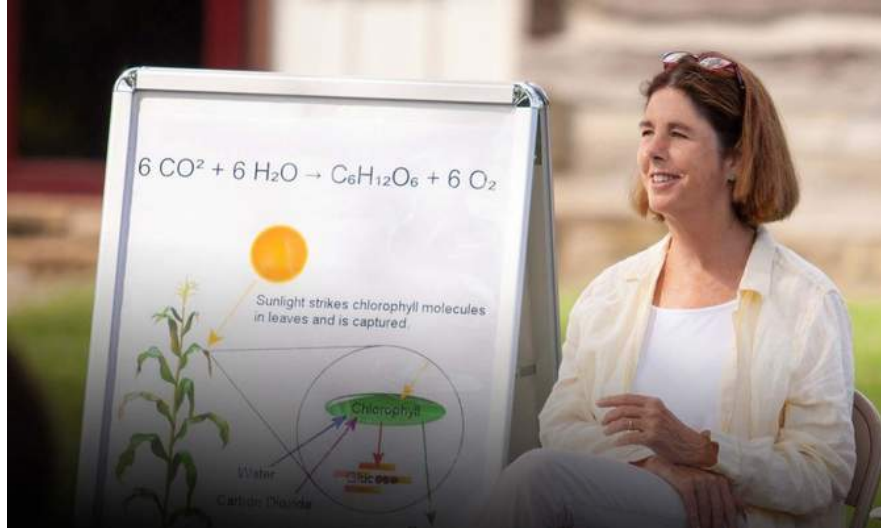
Organic systems are focused on building soil health and many of the farming practices that sequester carbon are familiar to organic farmers. But the quirks of these new markets also pose risks. **Could these new markets also be an opportunity for organic farmers? Well, it depends.**

WHAT ARE CARBON MARKETS?

The carbon market concept seems simple. A project developer works with a landowner to use agreed-upon scientific protocols to create a carbon credit based on carbon dioxide sequestered, whether through farming or forestry. That credit can then be sold to a company at an agreed price. The company can claim that carbon credit reduction and lower its own greenhouse gas footprint. While it seems simple, the specifics of how these markets work, and how this transaction takes place, are complicated with multiple decision points for farmers to decide whether it will work for them.

Currently, there are different rules, obligations, costs and prices for each carbon market. There are also differences between a government-run regulatory carbon market – such as California’s or the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) in the northeast states – and privately run carbon markets or offsets run by companies like Cargill with their farmer suppliers. For farmers, most of the recent interest is coming from private carbon markets, where the decision by companies to purchase land-based offset credits is driven primarily by pressure from shareholders, companies they do business with, or their public reputation.

These private carbon markets recognize a number of practices familiar to organic farmers as being able to sequester carbon including: no/minimum till; cover crop rotation; Adaptive Multi-Paddock grazing; afforestation or reforestation; avoided conversion of grassland; compost addition to rangeland.



Organic farmer Laura Freeman has been improving Mt. Folly Farm’s soil health and carbon sequestration practices since she became a Donella Meadows Fellow in 2007, where she worked with global climate models. Now, she has paired with American Farmland Trust to measure results of cover cropping, diversity, and roller/crimping over a 5-year period.

HOW DO THEY WORK?

But how the requirements for farmers to participate vary as each private carbon market has its own rules and methodology for generating and selling their farm-based offset credits. For example, carbon market developer Indigo requires farmers to enroll a minimum of 300 acres and include soil testing data, historical and seasonal data about planting and harvest dates, fertilizer types, amounts, and application dates, and tillage types and dates. Another major developer, Nori, requires a 1,000-acre minimum, has similar requirements of farmer data, sets a 10-year contract, and requires third-party verification. Nori doesn’t require upfront soil testing and uses COMET-Farm to generate a 10-year estimate of the changes in soil organic carbon from the adoption of regenerative practices.



Let's take a look at some of the key issues for farmers to consider as these markets develop:

CARBON OFFSET PRICES – ARE THEY HIGH ENOUGH?

Currently, prices on private carbon markets run by Nori and Indigo range in the \$15-\$20 per credit range. The pricing for companies purchasing offsets directly from farmers, such as Cargill or Bayer/Monsanto, is less publicly available. Farmers should be clear on how prices may change over the course of the contract. Carbon market backers believe these prices will rise as demand from companies rises. However, because the purchase of offsets is optional, the companies could choose not to purchase offsets once they become too expensive – or purchase offset credits created in other parts of the world that may be cheaper. Some farmers may recall the [Chicago Climate Exchange](#), which managed a private offset market involving 8,700 farmers in the 2000s, only to have prices and the market collapse in 2010.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

A carbon credit is designed to offset pollution from a company in the current year. As a result, the offset must cover carbon sequestered in the current year. For the participating farmer, this likely means they will be engaging in new practices (known in the carbon market speak as additionality). Farmers should consider additional costs associated with producing, measuring, and verifying the carbon credit, including third-party verification if required. For example, Nori does require third-party verification that could cost up to \$3,000 per project, while Indigo requires soil test data from the farmer.

"Farmers who have been practicing strong soil health building systems for years or decades do not get credit for the carbon stored in the past.

...long-time soil carbon builders may actually be at a disadvantage when it comes to developing carbon credits. "

WHAT ABOUT PAST CARBON SEQUESTERED?

As stated earlier, the credit only covers new (or additional) carbon that has been sequestered. Farmers who have been practicing strong soil health building systems for years or decades do not get credit for the carbon stored in the past. Some soil science seems to indicate there are limits to how much carbon can be stored within the soil, so long-time soil carbon builders may actually be at a disadvantage when it comes to developing carbon credits.

WHAT ARE THE CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS?

Farmers should be aware of whether they qualify and their legal obligations if they pursue a contract. Carbon stored in the soil can also be released if farming practices change, particularly through tillage. For this reason, the carbon credit contract requires farmers to keep the carbon in the soil during the length of the contract. There can be a number of reasons why a farmer may need to change practices – from changes in weather or extreme weather events to family finances. Farmers should be clear about what their contractual obligations are under the carbon credit contract and for exactly how long the contract continues. Additionally, farmers should understand provisions within the contract for natural disasters such as floods, wildfires or hurricanes, that could disrupt the integrity of the carbon credit through no fault of the farmer.

WHAT ARE SOME CRITICISMS OF CARBON MARKETS?

One of the fundamental criticisms of carbon markets is that they don't work well to reduce emissions – and in a climate crisis, that needs to be prioritized. The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced dramatically in the next 10 to 15 years. Thus far, carbon markets have not produced major reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Some of the sharpest criticisms of carbon markets come from the environmental justice community. Many sources of greenhouse gas pollution are also sources of other toxic air pollutants that affect human health. Many of those pollution sources

"One of the fundamental criticisms of carbon markets is that they don't work well to reduce emissions – and in a climate crisis, that needs to be prioritized."

are located in communities of color. Critics such as the Climate Justice Alliance, argue that offset credits allow companies off the hook from reducing their own pollution and associated damage to public health.

There are also continued concerns about the integrity of land-based offsets. The IPCC report concluded that there is not a one-to-one connection between industrial sources of emissions and land-based carbon sequestration, which involve a living ecosystem. The science around carbon sequestration continues to evolve, particularly on the rate of sequestration over time. And the IPCC points out, climate change itself may slow or disrupt our ability to sequester carbon over time.

From farmers, there have been other concerns. Some feel the markets favor certain parts of the country over others because certain soil types can more easily sequester carbon. Others have expressed concern about how their on-farm data will be used by project developers and companies. And there continue to be challenges in accessing these markets for smaller-scale farmers and those renting farmland.

Despite rising curiosity in carbon markets, their future remains uncertain. Government-run carbon markets at the state level continue to struggle to reduce emissions and lift the price of carbon. Currently, there is no major push to create a national government-run carbon market. There is support in Congress to create common rules for private carbon markets, administered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

It is good to see that the practices many organic farmers have been using for decades are now recognized for their climate benefits. But how those benefits provided by organic farmers will be valued through climate policy and the marketplace remains to be seen.



Ben Lilliston is the director of rural strategies and climate change at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. Ben reports, analyzes and writes about the intersection of climate, agriculture and trade policy.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ATTRA, [Payments for Ecosystem Benefits](#), 2020.

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, [Climate Solutions for Farmers](#), 2021.

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policies (IATP), [Carbon Markets and Agriculture](#), 2020.

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ORGANIC PRODUCERS NOT IMMUNE TO POOR TREATMENT BY BIG AG

By, Harriet Behar, Thirteen Mile Farm

With loss of markets in both grain and dairy in July and August 2021, the organic community took two big hits this summer. Pipeline Foods, a grain dealer that bought and sold organic and non-GMO grains in the United States and Canada, declared bankruptcy in the middle of July. Danone, the parent company of Horizon Organic, canceled organic milk contracts with 89 producers in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire and northern New York.

Pipeline Foods with annual sales of \$225 million in 2020, is a privately held company that rapidly expanded from its founding in 2017 through numerous large-scale acquisitions of processing, storage, and sales infrastructure, to become a “supply chain solutions” company. Danone North America is a subsidiary of Danone, a European company, and purchased Horizon Organic when it was a publicly-traded company in 2017.

WE NEED SMART GROWTH

As organic products continue to gain greater market share around the globe, the small and mid-sized organic companies who have built their brands by working with family-scale farmers, are being bought out by equity investment companies or multinational corporations or are changed into publicly-traded businesses. In all of these models, the investors in these mega-operations have the profit motive as their overall goal. At this large scale, gains are made by the pennies by unit, so these types of businesses seek out large corporate farms to provide their raw commodities. Larger volumes than found on family farms result in lower costs of transportation. These companies also push factory farm operations to lower-priced contracts, which conspires to wipe out more family-scale farms from the landscape.



This spring, OFA farm members passed this position directing our work in this issue:

OFA SUPPORTS competitive markets for agriculture and food products through policies that reduce current and future consolidation, limit mergers, redirect food and farmer subsidies toward local producers, and encourage local economic resilience through building regional food systems that support local producers, processors, and distributors and communities.

Organic farmers know that it is the health of the overall ecosystem on their farm that is foundational to producing acceptable yields while at the same time building soil health for the future. In the early days of organic, many of the companies and the marketplace embraced a similar viewpoint when building relationships between farmers and their buyers and those selling foods to distributors and retailers. Gone is the model where these companies make business decisions based not only on their financial health but also the long-term health of the market sector and those that supply their raw materials, the farmers.

CAN CORPORATE VALUES CLAIMS BE TRUSTED?

For both Danone and Pipeline, it is ironic that they managed their businesses in a way to severely hurt the farmers who trusted them. Danone is a Certified B Corporation, which is supposed to balance purpose and profit and serve the global community as a force for good. Do the many northeast organic dairy farmers who have lost their market feel they have been treated “Honestly, Responsibly, Ethically or Sustainably” as required by the B Corporation certification?

DANONE N.A. FAILED FAMILY DAIRY FARMERS

The organic milk market has been suffering from over-

supply for many years which can be traced to the proliferation of organic mega-dairies in west and south.

These operations have been exposed through many newspaper articles and through a few National Organic Program enforcement actions as not following the pasture regulation which mandates a minimum of 30% of the ruminant animal's nutrition come from grazing.

In addition, a sneaky loophole where new organic dairy animals can be sourced for increasing the dairy herd has been used by these large-scale operations to avoid raising organic calves for their future herds and instead continuously transition nonorganic animals to produce organic milk. Family scale farmers do not use this “origin of livestock” loophole and mostly exemplify excellent grazing on their farms, since they are building multi-generational businesses and seek to leave their farm in better condition than when they took over. Continuous improvement is not the cornerstone of factory farms, short term profit is sought at the expense of the financial viability and ecosystem health of the operation.

While organic dairy farmers and the greater organic community have been shining a bright light on these issues for over a decade, the National Organic Program has not seen its way to speedy relief. These 89 organic dairy farmers are paying the price of the lack of regulatory change, as well as being the victims of “transportation and operational challenges”.

A true partner with these farmers would have sought out solutions such as building more processing infrastructure in the region to lessen the miles traveled from farm to milk bottler. Unfortunately, Danone did not bring creativity or entrepreneurship to the table when making their decision to devastate this mass of organic dairy farmers. The market is too tight to find another buyer for their milk, which will lead to the next generation no longer being on the farm, and the current farmers losing their livelihoods and possibly their homes.

A HISTORY OF ORGANIC CONSOLIDATION

Dr. Philip H. Howard, PhD is a member of the faculty at Michigan State University and studies the food system, focusing on consolidation in food and beverage industries. He has studied organic consolidation for the past two decades (see his chart below).

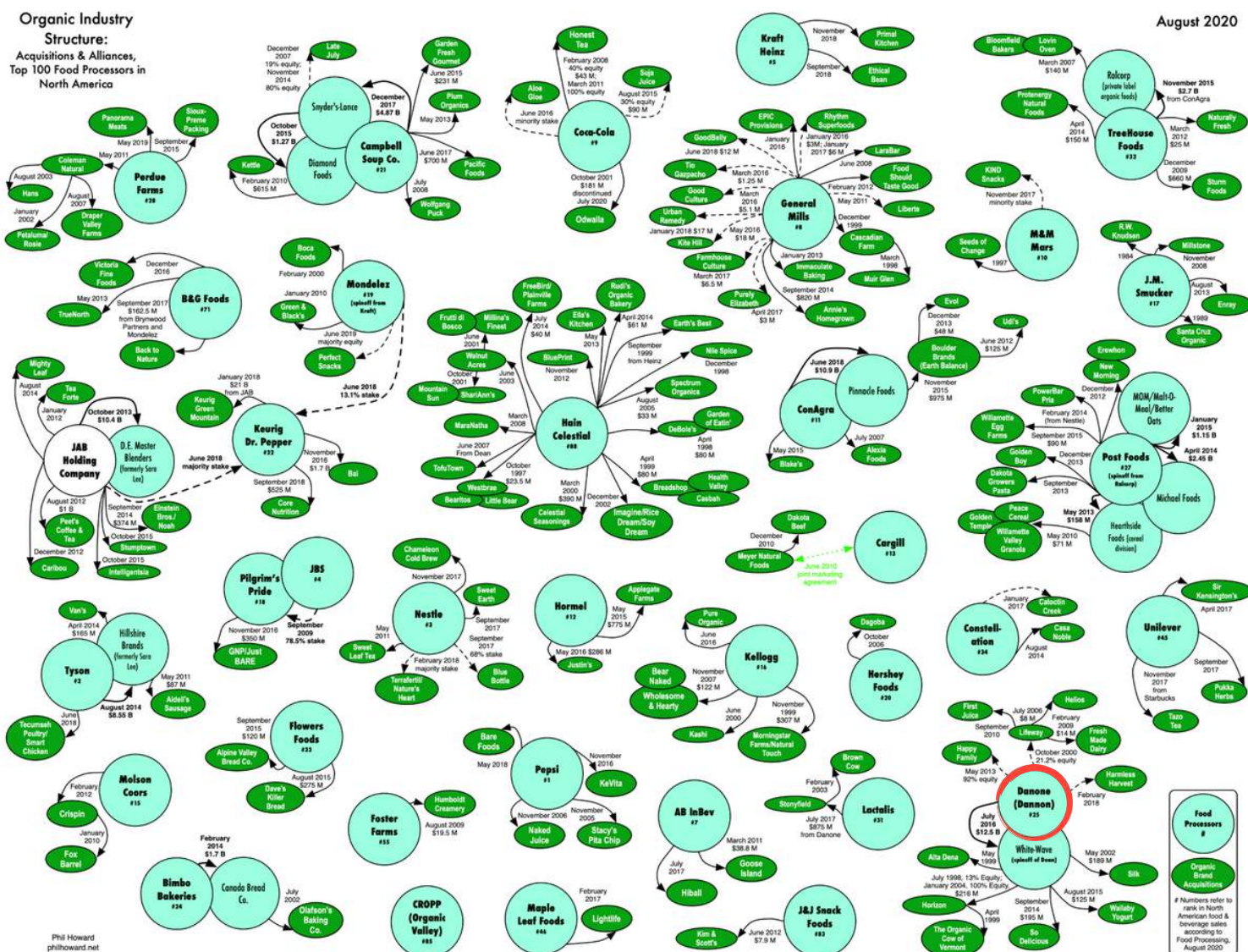
Dr. Howard identifies that "nearly all of the 30 largest processors in North America have acquired organic brands." He also highlights that the "scale of transactions has increased," multinational companies are paying billions for organic acquisitions.

Consolidation creates an unequal playing field where fewer and fewer food system players are making

decisions about our national food and agriculture policies. While one might assume that consolidation would increase food access and lower food prices due to increased efficiencies and streamlined distribution, Dr. Howard has found the opposite: food and agriculture consolidation has reduced food access and caused food prices to increase. He notes in a [recent article](#), "Consolidation makes it easier for any industry to maintain high prices. With few players, companies simply match each other's price increases rather than competing with them."

In order to reduce organic consolidation and return power to local communities, organic farmers need to have a strong voice in changing these policies in D.C.

<https://philhoward.net/2020/09/24/organic-processing-industry-structure-2020/>



PIPELINE BANKRUPTCY LEFT FARMERS SCRAMBLING & TRACKING PAYMENT

I spoke with many employees of Pipeline Foods, which promoted their business to farmers as being their most trustworthy partner. Pipeline would help farmers from their first day of transition to organic with educational information, and then stand ready to buy their crops for a “good price”.

Setting up this type of vertically integrated system, where the farmers are locked in as a seller of their grain to Pipeline, gave Pipeline a more stable grain supply, but in the end did not serve the farmers at all.

To add to the injury, each state has its own method of overseeing agricultural bankruptcies. Some farmers have tight contracts that do not allow them to sell their grain to any other entity other than Pipeline, resulting in great uncertainty for both the money promised from both last year’s and this year’s crops.

FARMERS NEED BETTER MARKET OPTIONS

Organic farming used to be a path to family farm stability but is becoming a casualty of big ag and our market-driven economy. Organic farming requires significant management and thought. Adding market headaches to the farmer’s workload is not welcome. Now, Farmers must be savvier in whom they choose to work with, seeking out better buyers, perhaps even at a somewhat lower price, to build trustworthy relationships that understand a strong rural farm economy benefits us all. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many weaknesses in our supply chain, now is the time to build solutions that work for family-scale farms. 🌱

Harriet Behar runs organic Sweet Springs Farm in Gays Mills, Wisconsin. She serves on the OFA Governing Council and Policy Committee and has been involved with federal, state and local policy advocacy for over 30 years.



MORE INFO IF YOU HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY PIPELINE FOODS, LLC BANKRUPTCY

On July 8th, Pipeline Foods filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. According to the company’s website, it contracted with 1,461 growers in 2019 (most recent data).

If you are an organic grain producer who sold grain to Pipeline Foods and have not been paid, there are a few things you can do right now:

1. Contact the state department of agriculture for the state where your grain was delivered. Many states have grain dealer licensing programs that administer funds or insurance programs to cover obligations from grain dealer defaults. Each state has its own program and links to programs in many of the states where Pipeline bought grain are listed on OFA’s website.

2. If you delivered grain in a different state than where your farm is located, you may also want to contact your state department of agriculture to see if there are programs that cover this loss.

3. Consider seeking legal help if you made deliveries shortly before the bankruptcy filing, or before making any new deliveries to Pipeline.

4. Farmers in Michigan, Minnesota and Iowa who have a contract with Pipeline Foods for delivery on a date after July 8, 2021 can now be relieved of any liability or claim by Pipeline to fulfill this contract. Details for filing a notice about not fulfilling a contract are on the OFA website.

[**CLICK TO READ MORE**](#)

CHANGES TO CROP INSURANCE FOR ORGANIC PRODUCERS

On September 1, the USDA announced changes to the **Whole-Farm Revenue Protection program** for the 2022 season. Two of the changes could make the program work better for organic producers:

-Increasing expansion limits for organic producers to the higher of \$500,000 or 35 %. Previously, small- and medium-size organic operations were held to the same 35% limit to expansion as conventional practice producers.

-Allowing a producer to report acreage as certified organic, or as acreage in transition to organic, when the producer has requested an organic certification by the

acreage reporting date. This change fulfills one of the policy positions OFA farm members adopted earlier this year. [You can read more about the changes to the Whole Farm Revenue program by clicking here.](#)

In early October, USDA announced a new insurance option for small farms who sell locally. The new **Micro Farm policy** simplifies record keeping and includes revenue from post-production costs, such as washing and packaging commodities and value-added products, as allowable revenue that are covered by the policy.

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the [RMA Agent Locator](#).

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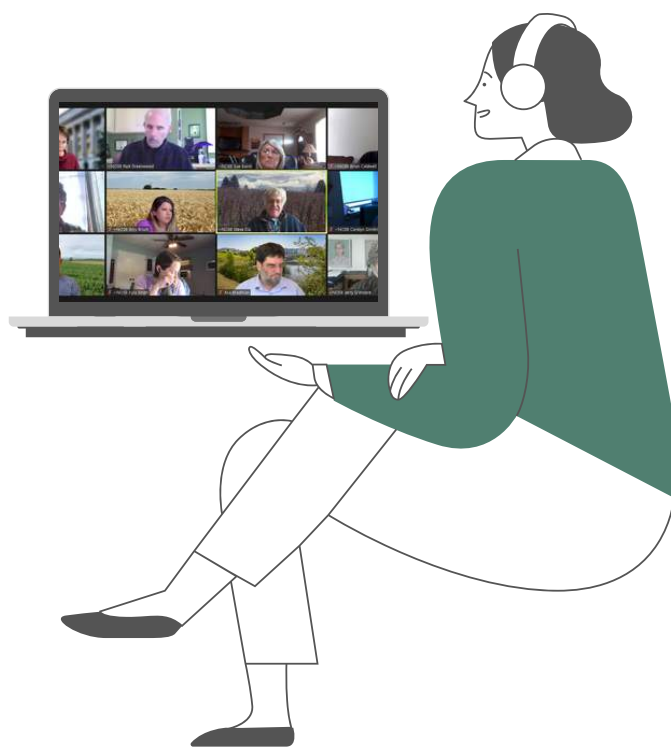
NOSB Fall Meeting Highlights for Organic Farmers

By, Harriet Behar

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held their 2021 fall meeting again in a virtual format, with two full days of almost 100 public commenters and three days of Board deliberations on crops, livestock, handling and other topics. This meeting covered a variety of proposed new standards, newly petitioned materials, materials reviewed every 5 years under the sunset clause, and materials under review to improve their current annotation for use. In order for materials to be used on organic farms or in organic processed food, the NOSB has the responsibility to review and approve these materials, and every five years they must reapprove them to be retained on the National List.

HOW DO MATERIALS GET APPROVED FOR ORGANIC USE?

The USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) cannot place any items on the approved list without NOSB review and approval, but the NOP and the USDA secretary can decline to accept the recommendation of the NOSB when



addressing sunset items (scheduled to come off the list) or new items that the NOSB approved.

PETITIONED NEW MATERIALS FOR USE IN ORGANIC

AMMONIA EXTRACT was a controversial material with a multi-list proposal. The use of highly soluble fertility inputs, their effect on soil health and how these materials interact with the foundational principle of organic agriculture “feed the soil, not the plant” was discussed by many public commenters (both pro and con) as well as NOSB members during this meeting. The NOSB voted at this meeting that ammonia extracts could be made in a

way that is non-synthetic (natural). **They then voted to prohibit the following:**

Stripped Ammonia – created by separating, isolating and/or capturing ammonia or ammonium from an agricultural feedstock or other natural source using methods such as, but not limited to, steam stripping, pressurized air, heat, condensation, and/or distillation.

Concentrated Ammonia – contains greater than 3% ammoniacal nitrogen and the total nitrogen content is predominately (i.e., >50%) in the ammonia or ammonium form.

The following statement was not approved and it will be sent back to subcommittee to be possibly be revisited in another form at the spring 2022 NOSB meeting, "Nitrogen products with a C:N ratio of 3:1 or less, including those that are components of a blended fertilizer formulation, are limited to a cumulative total use of 20% of crop needs."

BIODEGRADABLE BIOBASED MULCH FILM, of interest to vegetable and fruit growers, is approved and on the National List, but under the current annotation, there are no products on the market that meet the strict requirement that it needed to be sourced from 100% biobased materials. **The board voted to approve biodegradable biobased mulch film sourced from 80% biobased materials.** The NOSB believes that this annotation will provide an incentive to produce a material that organic growers can use. If this becomes available, growers can use this material without



needing to remove it at the end of the growing season, and would not need to bring truckloads of plastic mulch to the landfill.

BIOCHAR produced through the burning of manure was not approved. The standards currently prohibit ash from manure burning in organic crop production and the Board did not feel, even with the more-controlled burning method proposed, this was a climate-friendly or soil health friendly use for manure. Biochar made from plant materials is still allowed.

KASUGAMYCIN is an antibiotic used to control fireblight in fruit trees. In the past, some antibiotics had been approved for this use, but eventually were not renewed at sunset review due to the concern of antibiotic resistance in crops and humans when used year after year. Antibiotic use is not allowed in organic livestock production. **This material was not approved by the Board.**

SODIUM NITRATE is currently on the National List as a prohibited natural product, but allowed when providing less than 20% of the nitrogen needs of the crop. Over 7 years ago, the NOSB voted to make this material completely prohibited, but the NOP did not implement this recommendation and also removed this material from the 5-yr sunset review. **The NOSB voted to allow this material so it would again be part of the sunset review process.** It is unclear what action the NOP will take.

CHITOSAN, a pesticide derived from seafood shells, targets early and late blight, downy and powdery mildew, and grey mold was petitioned to be allowed for plant disease control, but **was not approved**.

HYDRONIUM was petitioned as pH adjuster for manure, to lessen offensive odors. **The Board did not approve this material**, expressing concern it was not necessary and that changing the pH could affect soil health in some circumstances.

CARBON DIOXIDE was petitioned as both a plant or soil amendment as well as an algacide for cleaning irrigation lines. **The Board did not vote on this material and sent it back to subcommittee for more review**; it will be brought up again at the spring 2022 NOSB meeting.

LITHOTHAMNION is an algae and **was voted by the Board as a non-agricultural substance as well as a material that could not be harvested and sold as organic under the wild crop harvest standard**.

SYNTHETIC MATERIALS

The following synthetic materials were voted to remain on the National List at sunset: Copper sulfate, Ozone gas, Peracetic acid, EPA List 3 - Inerts of unknown toxicity, Chlorine materials and Magnesium oxide. The following natural materials were voted to remain prohibited for use in organic crop production: Calcium chloride and Rotenone.

For livestock producers, the following synthetic materials were voted to remain on the National List: activated charcoal, Calcium borogluconate, Calcium propionate, Chlorine materials, Kaolin pectin, Mineral oil, Nutritive supplements, Propylene glycol, Sodium chlorite, acidified and zinc sulfate. Most of these materials address livestock health issues from milk fever to hoof rot as well as are used to disinfect such as udders before milking. There were no new livestock material petitions.

OTHER NOSB DISCUSSION

The Board discussed a variety of other topics concerning the definition and continued review of genetic engineering, agricultural research priorities affecting organic producers, climate change and public comments at the NOSB meetings. They recognized that farmer participation is somewhat stifled by the spring and fall meeting dates, which are very busy times of year for U.S. farmers. The Board stated they wanted find solutions that would increase farmer opportunities to weigh in on organic issues that so profoundly affect their farms and livelihoods. 🌱



Harriet Behar runs organic Sweet Springs Farm in Gays Mills, Wisconsin. Harriet recently served as Chair of the National Organic Standards Board. She has been an organic inspector since 1992 and has visited more than 2200 organic farms and processing facilities around the world.



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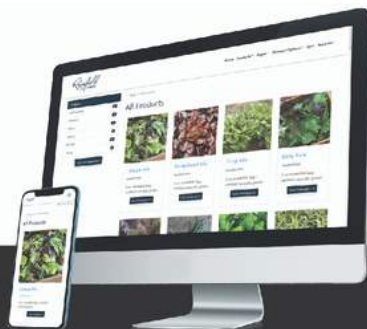
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ORGANIC FARMERS

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WA KOU HANG TWIN CITIES GREEN FARM MARINE ON ST. CROIX, MN

FARM SIZE: 3 acres

PRODUCTS: Zucchini, bok choy, cucumbers, tomatoes, cabbage, green beans, cilantro, beets, green onions, chards, collard green, parsley, basil, okra, & Asian greens.

YEAR CERTIFIED: 2018 under Big River Farm (Incubator farm) and 2021 certified independently

Why did you become a farmer?

Being healthy is very important to me. I love to grow organic vegetables, so that's why I became an organic certified grower.

Why did you choose to be certified organic?

I wanted to create a farm business that has a third party to certify my produce. In addition, I want my customers to trust my products and services.

What are the toughest challenges you face as an organic producer?

I would say time management and recordkeeping are the two [main] challenges. It is not difficult, but I must have good recordkeeping and use my time in the field wisely.

How do you market your products?

We sell our produce to local food hubs/food aggregator who runs a CSA; restaurants; and farmers markets.

What are the most valuable lessons you've learned since you started?

I would say start from small was the key to success of what I have learned so far. I started with 1/4 acre for my first year, moved to 1 acre in my second year, 2.25 acres in my third year, and 3 acres in my fourth year.

What is most rewarding about being an organic farmer?

I am very proud of myself and of my farm team because I am a BIPOC farmer, but I have the ability to create a farm business that follows organic certified guidelines.

What is one thing that would help more Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian farmers transition to organic?

Health is the most important aspect that BIPOC farmers have to think about. If you grow vegetables conventionally and use chemical fertilizer and pesticides, you are the first hand that would impose to health risk because you will use chemicals for most of the time in your field year after year. Growing food organically, you would feel safe and it doesn't impose long-term health problems. In addition, your customer would be happy with your produce. That is my recommendation to BIPOC farmers.





Photo Credits: Sara Tro Photography

CHUCK AND MADI ALRIDGE JASPER MEADOWS FARM FREEVILLE, NY

FARM SIZE: 17 acres

PRODUCTS: Eggs (chicken, duck, guinea), chicken broilers, asparagus, garden vegetables. Developing apple orchard, berry patch, and hoping to add maple and walnut syrups.

YEAR CERTIFIED: 2019

Why did you become farmers?

We decided to become farmers in preparation for retirement from our respective careers. We want to remain active and improve our health and the health of our community by producing the highest quality food we can offer.

Why did you choose to be certified organic?

We chose to become certified organic to provide the highest quality products available. We were going to follow and maintain the organic standards anyway, so becoming certified only made sense.

How do you market your products?

We have an online store for pick up here at the farm, at a local food-hub, and at our weekly booth at the Freeville Farmers Market. We have a produce stand here at the farm, as well, for any overflow. We wholesale our eggs to a local grocery store and our local co-op.

What are the toughest challenges you face as an organic producer?

The paperwork is daunting at times.

What are the most valuable lessons you've learned since you started?

Keeping records current is the best way to handle the paperwork. Ask questions!

What is most rewarding about being organic farmers?

We love being able to provide our customers with the highest quality food we can. We practice organic and incorporate elements of biodynamic farming, as well. We are proud that our farm has nearly a 0% carbon footprint as we are powered primarily by solar panels, utilize water conservation methods, and compost the waste that is produced. Our livestock feeds our soil which in turn feeds our produce which feeds us and our livestock – and the cycle continues.

What is one thing that would help more Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian farmers transition to organic?

It would be fantastic if the organic certifiers offered more hands-on tutoring to help demystify the process and help show/demonstrate that is actually achievable.



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- Findings from organic & transitioning Black, Indigenous, LatinX and Asian farmers focus group
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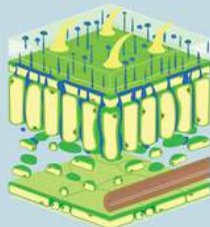
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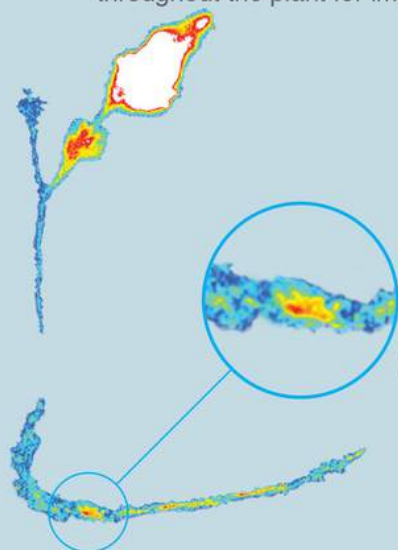
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- ☐ I work for or serve in a leadership role with an **organic farm organization**.
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- ☐ **SOUTH** (TX, OK, AR, LA, MS, AL, GA, FL, SC, NC, TN, KY, VA, WV, MD, Territories)
- ☐ **NORTHEAST** (NY, VT, NH, ME, MA, RI, CT, NJ, DE)



YOUR POLICY PRIORITIES

Please **SELECT THE TOP THREE** policy positions you think should be the **HIGHEST PRIORITIES** for Organic Farmers Association:

- ☐ Access to Affordable Land
- ☐ Animal Welfare Rule: Reinstating the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices Rule (OLPP)
- ☐ Beginning Farmer Support
- ☐ Climate Change
- ☐ Crop Insurance Improvements for Organic Producers
- ☐ Dismantling Corporate Consolidation within the Organic Market
- ☐ Expanded Organic Research
- ☐ Food Safety (FSMA implementation)
- ☐ Increasing Organic Farmer Diversity (Supporting more diverse farmers)
- ☐ Labor & Immigration
- ☐ National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) issues and agenda
- ☐ NOP Enforcement to Ensure Organic Integrity
- ☐ NRCS: EQIP, CSP, CRP Programs for Extended Organic Support
- ☐ Organic Certification Cost Share
- ☐ Organic Dairy Standards & Enforcement (i.e., Origin of Livestock & Pasture Rule)
- ☐ Organic Import Fraud
- ☐ Organic Production Market and Data Initiatives
- ☐ Pesticide & GMO Contamination
- ☐ Prohibiting Containers in Organic Production (with the exceptions of transplants and plants sold in their containers).
- ☐ Prohibiting Hydroponics in Organic Production
- ☐ Prohibiting Soluble Nitrogen in Organic Production
- ☐ Public Seeds & Breeds Research
- ☐ Water: Clean Water, Access, Etc.
- ☐ Other (please specify):

SUBMIT YOUR POLICY POSITIONS FOR THE POLICY COMMITTEE TO REVIEW

If you have identified a policy priority or change to an existing OFA policy you would like the OFA Policy Committee to consider, please submit your policy concern(s) below. Please be **specific**.

POLICY PROPOSAL #1

Policy Topic/Title:

Recommended OFA Policy Position (Example: OFA Support [policy description]):

More information about why this policy is important:

Could OFA contact you for more information? ☐ Yes ☐ No

POLICY PROPOSAL #2

Policy Topic/Title:

Recommended OFA Policy Position (Example: OFA Support [policy description]):

More information about why this policy is important:

Could OFA contact you for more information? ☐ Yes ☐ No

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Your policy positions and priorities will be kept confidential and only shared as a group. If you have expert knowledge for a policy position, OFA may reach out to you for more info.

Name_____

Farm Name/Org_____

Address_____

Town_____State_____Zip_____

Email_____

Phone_____

RETURN COMPLETED SURVEYS TO:

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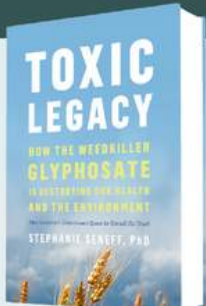
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