



Quarterly

The dawn of a new era in collective pricing, marketing and inventory by and for North America's organic farmers.

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www.ofarm.org

Welcome to the OFARM Quarterly

By: John Bobbe, OFARM executive director

Welcome to the Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM) Quarterly. The OFARM Quarterly will be published four or more times per year to keep farmers informed of developments in organic network marketing and pricing.

OFARM's mission is to coordinate the efforts of producer marketing groups to benefit and sustain organic producers. It began with farmers from a number of organizations discussing formation of a marketing-agency-in-common in 1998. In February 2001, OFARM officially came into being and currently has seven member organizations: Great Lakes Organic, Midwest Organic Farmers Coop, Buckwheat Growers Association of Minnesota, Organic Bean and Grain Marketing, Organic Farmers of Michigan, Kansas Organic Producers Association and National Farmers Organization. Collectively, these organizations represent the largest single organized block of production in North America covering producers in 18 states and Ontario.

OFARM Collective Marketing Expertise. Organic producers face many of the same challenges and pitfalls as conventional producers, including getting a price for what they sell to cover not just their costs, but returns for their labor, management and family living. The organic marketplace is no longer just local. Global events impact local prices and markets.

At least once a month, marketers from each OFARM member organization meet via conference call to discuss crop and weather conditions, contract information, prices and market trends, inventory management and buyer information. These marketers work to gain the competitive edge for their producers.

OFARM enables the marketers to develop and share information that is by and for organic producers, not developed by the industry to get you to sell your crop.

OFARM Benefits to You. Maximizing returns from each sale to benefit organic producer members is the goal of networking and collectively sharing pricing and market information. Other benefits include:

- Developing reliable inventory information
- Remaining current on markets and market trends
- Strengthens your position in the market by eliminating one-on-one negotiations with buyers
- Developing and monitoring producer-friendly contracts
- Developing and monitoring a list of sound, creditworthy buyers for OFARM member groups.
- Enhancing opportunities to add new crops and agronomic practices to farm rotations

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The President's Message

By: Oren Holle, OFARM president

Recently I was asked this question: What is your vision for the Organic Farmers Agency for Relationship Marketing? In short, I would answer: "To give organic producers the opportunity to have a voice in establishing the farmgate value of the food they produce."

Organic producers use a set of management practices that provide a viable and healthy alternative in our food and fiber production system. These practices are environmentally sound and sustainable through generations of production cycles.

To maintain this ideology the food products which leave our farms must move into the food system at a value that covers the costs of the producer's investment and provides a return for the labor and management skills of these producer families. This concept is a reasonable expectation for producers, giving a strong sense of economic stability to allow them to contribute to the social and environmental well being of their communities. A fair price at the farmgate translates into a reasonable sense of social justice.

As we continue to watch the ongoing trend of 'merger mania' in our food system it should give us reason to consider our loss of economic power, as individual producers, to demand a fair share of the consumer food dollar.

The first step to change this scenario is up to you as a producer. I believe it is absolutely essential that we join hands with our neighbors in our marketing efforts. Many are doing that now. It is evidenced by the successful marketing groups which already belong to OFARM to take their cooperative marketing effort to the next level. Working together under the OFARM umbrella this marketing leadership team is ready to assist you with your marketing efforts.

These groups are standing together for economic justice and have pledged to each other cooperation to market and manage the inventory of the fruits of the labors of their organic producer members. Collectively they have set forth on a mission to coordinate efforts of producer marketing groups to benefit and sustain organic producers. In addition, they have established a set of aims and objectives that have served well to keep them focused to the task of accomplishing that mission. OFARM is here today and here to stay!

OFARM Organization Blazes New Marketing Trail

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For too long, farmers have been at the mercy of buyers and get only the information the buyers want to share to complete the sale. OFARM works solely for the benefit of organic producers.

OFARM Growth and Development.

In addition to this newsletter, visit our web site at www.ofarm.org. You will find up-to-date information to assist you in keeping current about OFARM and markets. You will also find a calendar of meetings and other events

of interest to organic producers and links to other sites with relevant information to assist you in planning and decision-making.

We are open to your ideas and suggestions to make OFARM, as useful to you as possible. Please feel free to contact anyone from the contact list on page 4 to let us know how we can better meet your needs as OFARM, its member organizations and you seek profitability in this industry.

Calendar of Events

-- January 16 --

Great Lakes Organic annual meeting, Petrolia, Ontario, Canada

Contact: Roger Rivest,
519/882-4526

-- January 20-23 --

National Farmers Organization Annual Convention & NFOrganics meeting, Rochester, MN

Contact: LuAnn Robinson,
515/292-2000

-- January 23-25 --

Minnesota Grazing and Organic Conference, St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN

Contact: Darla Riley,
651/282-5140

-- January 24-26 --

Organic Goes Mainstream annual conference, Guelph University Centre, Ontario

Contact: Tomas Nimmo,
519/824-4120, Ext. 2558

-- January 31 - February 1 --

Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society annual conference, Western Ramkota Inn, Aberdeen, SD

Contact: Theresa Podoll,
701/883-4304

-- February 7 --

Kansas Organic Producers Association annual meeting.

Contact: Oren Holle,
785/337-2442

-- February 7-8 --

Kansas Sustainable Agriculture Roundup, Manhattan, Kansas

Contact: KRC, 785/873-3431,
ksrc@rainbowtel.net

-- February 20-21 --

Nebraska Sustainable Ag. Society, Aurora, NE

Contact: Paul Rohrbaugh,
402/869-2288

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Producer Portraits *David and Mary Campbell, Illinois*

OFARM's Campbell Family Looks at the Big Picture

Campbell Family Vital Statistics

Children: Juli, high school senior and Tom, 8th grade.

Address: Lily Lake Farm, Maple Park, Illinois, a town of nearly 800 east of Dekalb and almost 50 miles straight west of Chicago. The nearby town of Lily Lake (pop. 300) is named after the Campbell farm, which was homesteaded by Mary's great-great-grandfather in 1833.

The family moved onto the Illinois farm in 1988. Prior to that, they operated an organic dairy farm in Wisconsin, but, at that time they found organic farming challenging because they were too far away from an organic milk market. Today, their farm is situated on the edge of a rapid urban development belt west of Chicago, providing a stable market for organic produce.

Crops: The family is moving their 200-acre farm toward more organic row crops. The rotation has changed in the past several years from extensively hay to a three-year rotation. Year one is soft red winter wheat with red clover as a nitrogen source. Year two is corn and Year three is soybeans. The red clover is plowed down in September and then a cover crop of oats is planted. Other crops on the farm in the past included spelt, hard red winter wheat, rye, buckwheat, and alfalfa-grass hay. Major weed problems include Canadian thistle and mustard.

Dave considered 2002 an average crop year. For the most part, it was very dry with the exception of July 9 when they had a lifesaving rain.

Tillage: Chisel plowing, a small amount of mouldboard plowing for oats cover crop, disking and field cultivating are the primary tillage tools. The goal is to have something on the ground, whether it is winter wheat, oats cover crop, with the exception of corn ground that is chiseled in late fall.

The entire farm was certified organic in 1991. Originally they were certified by Organic Grower's and Buyers Association (OGBA). More recently, they were certified by OCIA and then last year, many in Midwest Organic Farmer's Coop switched to Indiana Certified Organic (ICO).

Dave was involved as a member of the steering committee in the formation of Midwest Organic Farmers Cooperative (MOFC) which was established April 9, 2001. At the first meeting, Dave was elected chairman of the board.

"When we look at the big picture, formation of MOFC has been good," said Dave. "We have had our struggles, but that is part of the territory." It was assumed from the very beginning that MOFC needed to be part of a larger marketing picture as a part of OFARM.

From Dave's perspective, the concept of marketing groups getting together under the concept of OFARM is necessary. "We'd be lost without it. I think the potential for OFARM is very good. The timing is very good for the potential of both MOFC and OFARM to take off," he noted.

Dave has marketed as an individual in the past. At the MOFC annual meeting in November, 2002, he pointed out that individual marketing is a, "...Lone ranger style of marketing. When you do it that way, some brokers are not so bad to deal with, others are not so good to deal with, you are very much at their mercy. It is very difficult at times. You are just out there, pitted against your friends and neighbors. For this to succeed, we certainly need a cooperative effort in our marketing."

Dave sees organics as the future. "As we say that the questions are how is this going to take place? How is it going to be implemented? Will it be driven by the large corporations or will it be driven by producers which I believe it needs to be?"

Midwest Organic Farmers Cooperative

The Midwest Organic Farmers Cooperative (MOFC) develops long-term relationships with buyers to provide member producers with stable and profitable prices for their corn, wheat, soybeans, spelt, hay, barley, oats and other small grains. MOFC works with new crops and varieties and other OFARM marketing groups to position members at the forefront of developing markets. Additionally, MOFC assists producers with certification, production, input sourcing, harvesting and handling crops.

Area covered: IL, MO, IA, WI, OH, IN, TN.

Calendar of Events

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-- February 22 --

Sustainable Farming Association
of Minnesota annual meeting,
Holiday Inn, Duluth, MN
Contact: DeEtta Bilek,
218/445-5475

-- February 25-26 --

OFARM Annual Meeting,
LaCrosse Center,
LaCrosse, WI Committees
meet Feb. 25 at Holiday
Inn, LaCrosse
Contact: Oren Holle,
785/337-2442

-- February 27 - March 1 --

Upper Midwest Organic Farming
Conference and Organic
University, LaCrosse Center,
LaCrosse, WI
Contact: Faye Jones,
715/772-3153

-- March 6-9 --

Natural Products Expo,
West Anaheim, CA

-- March 15 --

Buckwheat Growers Assn. Of
Minnesota Annual Meeting,
Wadena, MN
Contact: Tom Bilek,
218/631-9212

-- May 14-17 --

Organic Trade Association
convention, Convention Center,
Austin, TX
Contact: Organic Trade
Association, 413/774-7511

OFARM Member Organizations

Midwest Organic Farmers Co-op (Illinois)

Kevin Brussell, telephone: 217/923-2702, E-mail: rainyckkb@rr1.net
Website: www.midwestorganic.com

Organic Farmers of Michigan

Randy Hampshire, telephone: 989/683-3161, E-mail: hmpshrfm@avci.net

Organic Bean and Grain Marketing (Michigan)

Mark Vollmar, telephone: 989/673-6402, E-mail: mark@orbng.com
Website: www.orbng.com

Buckwheat Growers Association of Minnesota

Tom Bilek, telephone: 218/631-9212, E-mail: info@buckwheatgrowers.com
Website: www.buckwheatgrowers.com

Great Lakes Organic (Ontario, Canada)

Roger Rivest, telephone: 519/882-4526, E-mail: nlfarms@sprint.ca
Beatrix Enter, telephone: 877/409-9917, E-mail: benter@greatlakesorganic.com
Website: www.greatlakesorganic.com

Kansas Organic Producers Association

Ed Reznicek , telephone: 785/939-2032, E-mail: amerugi@jbntelco.com

National Farmers Organization

LuAnn Robinson , telephone: 515/292-2000, E-mail: lrobinson@nfo.org
Website: www.nforganics.org