



Organic Farmers Agency for Relationship Marketing

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After two years of meeting virtually, the OFARM Annual Fall Meeting was held this year in-person, September 7th, 8th, & 9th at the Midwest Organic Farmers Cooperative (MOFC) facility in Piper City IL. This was an opportunity for us to meet several members of the MOFC co-op. We thank them for hosting the meeting.

A longstanding agenda item at all our full membership meetings has always been 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 weather related factors. OFARM has often been criticized for the price levels contained in this document. However, it is most important to constantly be reminded that these prices 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. Visit our web page www.ofarm.org to see our latest updates. In this era of appropriate concern and conversation about the effects of climate change, it is noted that an extensive range of Eco System Services are provided by organic production systems. It is OFARM's firm position that the value of these services must be reflected in the market **(Target Price List)** rather than being relegated to new and questionable initiatives such as the Carbon Market approach. While admirable in concept OFARM fears that the result will fall short of adequately compensating producers for the benefits organic agriculture can and does provide to address this critical issue.

In other business, it has become customary to review an update from the National Organic Program (NOP) through our ongoing relationship with David Glasgow, Associate Deputy Administrator for the NOP. With the increases in the funding support from program resources, which were championed by OFARM producers and our affiliates, the levels of NOP oversight have significantly increased, and NOP is to be commended for this progress. It was noted that the wheels of program administration still turn far too slowly.

- However, we renewed our urgency for the final implementation of the Origin of Livestock rule which continues to be a serious detriment to family oriented organic dairy farms through unfair practices of transition of dairy stock into large CAFO operations.

- The Livestock Practices Rule falls in the same category and must move forward to uphold this basic organic practice as intended by the Organic Foods Production Act, an act which largely governs organic agriculture and provides the integrity of the USDA Organic label.
- The Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule (SOE) is still in process and NOP was once again encouraged to move it forward as quickly as possible. Several elements of the rule are being moved forward and once again the NOP is to be commended for the increase in oversight and the progress that is being made in this area. The increased cooperation among various oversight and enforcement agencies involved in international trade and commerce is encouraging.

Glasgow confirmed that all three rules are a priority for NOP and the Administration along with several National List and other rules that impact producers across the organic community.

Updates were given “virtually” from several of our affiliates with whom we collaborate on policy issues. Our appreciation goes to Abby Youngblood from the National Organic Coalition (NOC), Kate Mendenhall from the Organic Farmers Association (OFA), Kevin Kiehnau with Organic Valley (OV), and Julia Barton with the Ohio Ecological Food and Farming Association (OEFFA). OFARM continues to inform these and some other organizations, including Cornucopia, of organic grain producers’ concerns and issues as this collaborative initiative addresses the political and policy front. They are collectively on board with our determination to move NOP initiatives forward.

The group successfully completed some significant business in moving the organization forward.

- Since OFARM is entering its third decade of operation the board felt that serious thought needs to be given to strategic planning and setting directions for the organization for the next five to ten years. Discussion included OFARM’s plan for growth and direction which will be needed to continue to adequately represent and assist producers as they encounter a rapidly changing and consolidating organic market where the individual producer’s voice and influence becomes less significant. OFARM fully recognizes the increasing urgency for producers to have the opportunity to address these marketing issues through cooperative action.
- Consequently, OFARM has met with several NGOs to discuss the current administration’s inclination toward environmental issues that may provide an opportunity for gains in funding for sound farming practices, including funds for conservation measures and more adequate research for their benefits and implementation. This may be a once in a lifetime opportunity to bring about change in ag policy while climate change is the driving force.
- There was additional discussion with a group of NGOs to further our desire and need for greater collaboration and cooperation on the wide range of issues confronting organic agriculture including the need for increased cooperative marketing which OFARM brings to the table. Further conversations are in the planning stages.
- We are looking forward to our Annual Membership Meeting to be held in-person February 21st – 23rd in La Crosse WI.

OFARM remains true to its fundamental mission to ‘Establish and maintain sustainable prices for organic farm production through coordinated efforts of organic farmer cooperative marketing groups while protecting and defending the organic standards and promoting environmentally friendly production practices’.

OFARM’s website: www.ofarm.org

USDA, NOP website: www.ams.usda.gov/Organic