



*Organic Farmers Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM)*

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### **Organic Grain Marketing was Focus of OFARM 2022 Annual Meeting**

After two years of virtual meetings OFARM met in-person toward the end of February. The meeting included several collaborators and interested parties to share concerns and information regarding current issues related to organic grain marketing. This meeting was held in conjunction with the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) conference in La Crosse, WI.

OFARM is the umbrella organization that is comprised of three member cooperatives, Central Plains Organic Farmers (CPOF), Midwest Organic Farmers Cooperative (MOFC), and National Farmers Organics (NFO). Formed as a Marketing Agency in Common OFARM provides for the opportunity for our member cooperatives to collaborate in marketing information activity for the producer member's benefits. Its purpose is to provide a platform for sharing grain marketing concerns and information. OFARM is staying true to its fundamental purpose of providing an opportunity for producer representation in the process of negotiating for fair market access and farm gate price determination on behalf of its members. Organic producers continue their growing interest in a greater level of cooperation in marketing activities.



Participants were provided the opportunity to hear David Glasgow, Associate Deputy Administrator for the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) present updates about various current issues including the status of the Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) rule. This long overdue, exceptionally large rule includes language intended to close several obvious loopholes in organic production and logistics oversight. Glasgow expressed optimism with the increased involvement of other government agencies including Customs and Border Patrol, USDA's Inspector General and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

New at USDA is Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny Lester Moffitt who grew up working on an organic farm in California. The Administration has also filled the appointed position of Senior Advisor for Organic and Emerging Markets, giving the organic community a seat at the table across all USDA agencies.

Kevin Kiehnau and Jim Wedeberg from Organic Valley (OV) gave an update on the status of their dairy operation. Across the board the base price is stable to some increase for producers. Grass-fed dairy products are a bright spot with two hundred producers and adding. Organic Valley has done valuable work over the years for the organic dairy industry. [www.organicvalley.coop](http://www.organicvalley.coop)

Through the ongoing collaboration with several organizations that are highly active and influential in matters of political policy, OFARM retains the opportunity for participation in development of policy directives and encouragement of legislators and other government agencies to support various initiatives which can serve to benefit organic producers.

Patty Lovera, Policy Director for the Organic Farmers Association (OFA) provided updates “virtually” from Washington DC. [www.organicfarmersassociation.org](http://www.organicfarmersassociation.org) Priorities include Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) Rule, moving forward with the long overdue Origin of Livestock Rule (OOL) and reinstating Animal Welfare Standards - Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) with a new title Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) Rule. In addition to tracking the status of these three rules, OFA is working on priority objectives for the next Farm Bill.

OFARM fully supports the element of the proposed SOE rule to bring the many uncertified handlers into required organic certification to provide the opportunity for more robust oversight. OFARM fully supports the OOL Rule that would close the loophole for how dairy cows can be transitioned into organic production and fully supports the OLPS Rule to improve animal welfare standards in organic production.

Discussion included how organic producers can be more involved in the process to protect the integrity of the organic label. The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) will be meeting in April. There is the opportunity to submit comments.

NOSB [Home | Agricultural Marketing Service \(usda.gov\)](http://www.usda.gov)

Encouragement stated for producers to contact their US Representatives and US Senators to urge USDA to finalize the standards on the above listed organic rules.

Several NGO representatives attended to get acquainted and discuss how we can work together to benefit farmers and strengthen rural communities. Kate Hansen from Center for Rural Affairs stated, "Part of keeping rural communities strong is keeping people on the land." Lorri Stern from MOSES stated "Own the supply chain. Make connections with consumers." Doug Crabtree from Montana Organic Association (MOA) stated, "market the message to consumers of where food comes from with unique producer stories." Ariel Pressman and Abby Lundrigan from the Real Organic Project talked about their certification process for an additional label. Jeff Schahczenski from National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) shared information about recently updated and new publications. [NCAT.ORG](http://NCAT.ORG) | [ATTRA.NCAT.ORG](http://ATTRA.NCAT.ORG)

In other business conducted the OFARM Target Price List was updated, and several other organizational documents were reviewed and revised.

Overall OFARM remains committed 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.**

Organic Farmers Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM) [www.ofarm.org](http://www.ofarm.org)

USDA National Organic Program (NOP) [www.ams.usda.gov/Organic](http://www.ams.usda.gov/Organic)

Organic Farmers Association (OFA) [www.organicfarmersassociation.org](http://www.organicfarmersassociation.org)

National Organic Coalition (NOC) [www.NationalOrganicCoalition.org](http://www.NationalOrganicCoalition.org)