

What's News In Organic

Cultivating a Strong Organic Industry since 1985



INFORMATION FLIER

A PUBLICATION OF THE
ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

– March 2019 –

This newsletter is published by the Organic Trade Association, Cultivating a Strong Organic Industry since 1985. The OTA is the North American trade association committed to the promotion of organic products in the market place, and the protection of the integrity of organic standards. Its membership includes producers, processors, distributors and retailers of organic foods, fibers, farm and garden supplies, and health and beauty products. OTA is your leading resource for information about this industry.

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GLOBAL ORGANIC AREA GROWS



Acreage managed organically in 2008 in the world totaled 35 million hectares (nearly 86.5 million acres) farmed by almost 1.4 million producers, according to data from The World of Organic Agriculture 2010 released in mid-February at BioFach. Organic agricultural land area increased in all regions, and was up nearly three million hectares, or nine percent, compared to 2007 data. Of the total area managed organically, 22 million hectares were grassland. In addition, 8.2 million hectares were used for cropland. The regions with the largest area of organically managed land are Oceania (12.1 million hectares in Australia, New Zealand, and surrounding island states), Europe (8.2 million hectares), and Latin America (8.1 million hectares), according to statistics in a chapter by Dr. Helga Willer.

Two-thirds of the world's organically managed land is in developed nations, with the remainder in developing countries. Australia, Argentina and China, she noted, are the countries with the most land farmed organically. Leading regions in the developing world include Latin America, Asia and Africa. Meanwhile, more than one third of organic producers are in Africa. The report also recorded 31 million hectares that are organic wild collection areas and land for bee keeping. The majority of this land is in developing countries.

Meanwhile, according to Organic Monitor estimates, global organic sales reached \$50.9 billion in 2008, double the \$25 billion recorded in 2003. The report is available for purchase from ifoam.org and fibl.org.



CELEBRATE ORGANIC HARVEST MONTH™

Organic industry gears up for Organic Harvest Month™

March is designated by the Organic Trade Association as Organic Harvest Month™—a time to focus attention on the benefits and practices of organic agriculture and to encourage consumers to increase their use of certified organic products.

As a result, various retailers, organizations, food co-ops, farm groups, and communities around the country are planning special celebrations during March to celebrate Organic Harvest Month™. These are seen as an ideal way to share information with consumers on what organic stands for and what organic products are available.

The main message OTA wishes to convey is that “organic” refers to the way agricultural products—including foods and fibers such as cotton—are grown and processed. OTA notes that “organic” stands for a commitment to an agricultural system that strives for a balance with nature, using methods and materials of low impact to the environment. Organic production systems are designed to replenish and maintain soil fertility, eliminate the use of toxic and persistent chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and build a biologically diverse agriculture.

“When consumers choose organic products, they’re voting for a more vibrant planet,” according to the Organic Trade Association. Events to mark the celebration range from in-store promotions of various organic products, organic tasting parties, “meet the farmer” events including farm tours, and community harvest festivals.

In conjunction with the March celebrations, OTA has developed the following list of “Five Easy Ways to Celebrate Organic Harvest Month” to share with consumers.

OTA is a membership-based business association representing the organic industry in North America. Anyone who would like to obtain more information about organic agriculture can visit OTA’s web site: ota.com.

Five Easy Ways to Celebrate Organic Harvest Month

PREPARE one meal with as many organic ingredients as possible. Don’t forget to serve the organic beverage of your choice with your meal and enjoy an organic dessert. (It is a celebration.)

GO SHOPPING and fill one grocery bag with all organic products. Remember, organic isn’t just in the produce aisle, it’s in the frozen section, in the health and beauty department, and it appears everywhere between dairy and canned goods. If you can’t find organic items in your store, talk to your grocer to find out about bringing some in.

WEAR organic cotton clothing, available in everything from socks to sweaters. Enjoy the comfort and style while you support agriculture that builds healthy soils and protects the environment.

INDULGE yourself. Take a long bath in water scented with organic oils. Nibble on rich organic chocolate. Sip organic wine, beer or even a martini made with organic vodka. Buy yourself a bouquet of organically grown flowers. Cuddle in a towel or robe made from organic cotton.

SAY THANK YOU to an organic grower or producer because they’re the ones who bring organic food and fiber products to the tables and stores all across North America. Grab a friend and go to your local farmers market where you can buy organic products directly from a certified organic grower and say “Thanks!”



ORGANIC COTTON PLANTINGS UP



U.S. growers of organic cotton increased plantings of organic cotton acreage by 26 percent in 2009 over that planted the previous year, according to preliminary data collected by the Organic Trade Association (OTA) in a survey funded by Cotton Incorporated. Analysis of available data collected by an OTA survey of U.S. organic cotton producers and preliminary data from the Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative (TOCMC) put planted area at 10,731 acres in 2009, up from an estimated 8,539 acres in 2008. The 2009 plantings are the highest since 2001, when 11,586 acres were planted by U.S. cotton growers. Harvested acreage figures for 2009 are not yet available. However, estimates show that this could be as much as 9,555 acres, up from 7,289 acres harvested in 2008. Harvested organic cotton area in 2008 yielded 7,026 bales, of which 6,466 bales were upland cotton and 560 bales of pima cotton. This yield was significantly less than the 14,025 bales of organic cotton harvested from 8,510 acres in 2007. These yield differences reflected the extremely difficult weather conditions, including wind, hail and drought, in 2008 in contrast to excellent growing conditions in 2007.

Other survey findings revealed that the average price per pound farmers received for organic cotton in 2008 decreased from the previous year and ranged from 52 cents to \$1.35 for organic upland cotton in 2008, compared to \$1 to \$1.50 in 2007. Organic pima cotton prices ranged from \$1.05 to \$3 in 2007, compared to \$1.75 in 2008.

When asked what their greatest barriers are to planting more cotton in 2010, growers cited finding a market for their cotton, finding a market that will pay value-added costs of organic products, production challenges such as weeds and insects, weed control, and labor costs. Growers also cited competition from international organic cotton producers as well as the cost of transition to organic.

“When asked what their greatest barriers are to planting more cotton in 2010, growers cited finding a market that will pay value-added costs of organic products”

Meanwhile, globally, organic cotton production grew 20 percent during the 2008/2009 farming season, to reach 802,599 bales grown on 625,000 acres, according to the Organic Exchange Farm and Fiber Report 2009 released by Organic Exchange. Approximately 220,000 farmers grew organic cotton in 22 countries. The countries leading production (in order of rank) were India, Turkey, Syria, Tanzania, China, United States, Uganda, Peru, Egypt, and Burkina Faso. For a copy of the report, go to the Organic Exchange web site: organicexchange.org.



To harvest cotton, you have to kill the plant, which is traditionally done with chemicals. On an organic farm, instead, you have a machine that runs over several rows at once, going 2 miles an hour, baking the fields at 160 degrees to kill the plant. Here's the line where it had recently stopped. GPS-tracking gets it that straight.



OTA DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED WITH FAILURE TO PROTECT FARMER AND CONSUMER CHOICE

Unaddressed questions remain for the future of non-genetically engineered food and agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced plans to allow commercial planting of Forage Genetics International's (FGI) Glyphosate-Tolerant Alfalfa genetically engineered to tolerate St. Louis-based Monsanto's Roundup herbicide without any federal requirements to prevent contamination of the rest of alfalfa seed and plantings. The genetically engineered technology is licensed exclusively to the seed maker FGI by Monsanto. The expected impact of this decision is far reaching, particularly to organic farmers.

"This creates a perplexing situation when the market calls for a supply of crops free of genetic engineering. The organic standards prohibit the use of genetic engineering, and consumers will not tolerate the accidental presence of genetic engineered materials in organic products yet GE crops continue to proliferate unchecked," said Christine Bushway, Executive Director and CEO of the Organic Trade Association (OTA).

She added, "Preserving market and farmer choice and agricultural diversity are central to USDA's mission and the future of rural American livelihoods. This failure to do so will make it increasingly difficult to meet the growing demand for U.S. organic crops."



The organic sector is a profitable part of a diverse U.S. agricultural economy—a 26.6-billion-dollar-a-year industry that employs tens of thousands around the country, and helps keep at least 14,540 family farms operating in our rural countryside. Except for 2009, the organic industry has experienced double digit growth—often over 20 percent—annually for over a decade.

Unrestricted commercialization of genetically engineered crops—86 percent of the country's corn and 93 percent of soybeans—has resulted in widespread unlabeled presence of GE materials in mainstream food products unbeknownst to the average consumer. According to California's Department of Food and Agriculture, at least 70 percent of processed foods in American supermarkets now contain GE ingredients.

The USDA organic program is the only federal food label that prohibits the use of GE crops or materials. Under current USDA policy, the organic sector bears the burden created by unchecked release of GE crops.



While USDA, for the first time, took a step and acknowledged organic and IP agriculture as a stakeholder in decisions around the release of GE crops it is a small step for organic alongside giant steps towards accelerated decisions to deregulate many new GE crops awaiting review at USDA. The organic industry and the loyal consumers of organic products will continue to resist this unrestricted commercialization of GE crops being brought to market by the well-funded and influential biotech industry.

In addition to concerns for the organic sector, many unanswered questions remain regarding genetic engineering. For instance, how does the biotech industry and USDA intend to control the rapid development of superweeds from the overuse of Roundup and other herbicides, analogous to the advent of antibiotic resistance with conventional agriculture's routine overuse of antibiotics to address overcrowding and growth rather than disease? Also, how do you conduct sound epidemiological science on the long-term health impact of genetically engineered substances that cannot be traced through the food system because foods produced using GE are not labeled as such?

"Until these questions are addressed, the argument that agricultural biotechnology represents 'sound science' is just not valid," Bushway added.



Alfalfa, a crucial link in our food chain, is being bioengineered for weed killer tolerance.

Today. Tomorrow. Together. Organic.



The Organic Trade Association (OTA)'s Annual Fund provides critical resources for the association's government affairs, media relations, and consumer marketing programs that are raising the profile of organic agriculture and products and encouraging growth in organic sales.

OTA would like to thank the following companies for their generous support of the current 2011 Annual Fund.

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POLLINATOR CONSERVATION: Organic Farms



An essential activity on farms, tillage can impact beneficial insect populations. Roughly 70 percent of native bees nest underground making the practice detrimental to both actively nesting, and dormant or developing bee larvae.

Organic farming offers many benefits to pollinators but some common organic-approved pesticides and practices can be potentially just as harmful to bees and other pollinators as conventional farming systems.

For example, in the absence of readily available herbicides, some organic farms depend more heavily on tillage as a primary weed control strategy. This greater soil disturbance may be detrimental to ground-nesting bees.

By understanding native bee biology, nesting habits, and the toxicity of various organic-approved pesticides, farmers can effectively balance their crop management strategies with the needs of their resident pollinators.

To address this need, the Xerces Society has developed Organic Farming for Bees, a tool kit for organic growers that includes guidance on how to minimize disturbance to pollinators from farm activities, and on how to provide nest sites and foraging patches. In particular, two fact sheets provide information on toxicity to native pollinators for all major organic-approved insecticides and about pollinator-friendly organic farming practices. Both of these fact sheets are now available at xerces.org

For additional information about protecting pollinating insects and providing habitat for them, visit the Pollinator Conservation Resource Center. The resource center includes a wealth of information and publications from a wide range of organizations. You'll find detailed region-by-region guidance about choosing plants, providing nest sites, and managing habitat.

Pollinator conservation has a special relevance to organic farms. In 2009, the National Organic Standards Board ratified the Biodiversity Rule, requiring organic farms to incorporate wildlife conservation as part of their formal USDA-NOP certification process. Protecting native pollinators provides farmers with a mechanism for meeting that requirement while at the same time enhancing crop production.

The new USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Organic Initiative also makes this subject particularly timely, since several of the practice standards being offered in many states to transitioning growers through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) have a dual emphasis on pest management and pollinator conservation.



Many organic farms already have healthy populations of native bees. In some cases, these wild insects can effectively provide all necessary crop pollination services when enough habitat is available and bee-friendly management practices are implemented.

TREND: Consumers continue to choose organic products as they become more available and visible in additional venues.



Mambo Sprouts Marketing released survey results in November showing that consumers are going back to basics to bolster their health. Findings showed 84 percent take vitamins, 73 percent eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, and 68 percent choose organic foods. In addition, 59 percent of consumers polled said they expect to increase the amount of organic products purchased during 2019.

The recession has prompted consumers of specialty foods to cook more often at home and to plan more meals ahead of time, according to research from the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade, Inc. The findings, presented in “Today’s Specialty Food Consumer 2018,” showed that organic foods appeal most to those ages 35 to 44.

The market for products marketed on the basis of ethical standards, including organic, is thriving despite the recession, according to a report by Packaged Facts released in October 2018. “Our survey indicates that more shoppers understand the environmental, social, and economic implications of their choices. The result is a sizeable number of consumers who will purchase typically more expensive ethical products even in economically challenging times,” according to Don Montuori, publisher of Packaged Facts.

Gourmet Gorilla, Inc., which supplies local and organic food to schools in Chicago, IL, has recently acquired Green Bag Lunch, which allows 20,000 students at 60 schools in the Chicago area to have access to Gourmet Gorilla’s Organic School Lunch Programs.

CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers) has certified Baredessono Hotel and Spa’s organic vegetable garden in Yountville, CA. Food from the certified organic garden is served in the hotel’s restaurant.

Gourmet Chef Paul Bertolli has developed fresh, ready-to-heat organic dishes that are being marketed through Costco warehouse stores.

Organic grocer Earth Fare opened its 17th location in December 3 with a store opening in Chattanooga, TN.

Sales of organic, shade-grown coffee also certified as “Bird Friendly” rose to nearly \$3.5 million in 2008, according to a report by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center of the National Zoo. According to the report, 61 percent of all Bird Friendly coffee roasted was consumed in the United States, followed by Japan, at 36 percent, and Canada, at 3 percent. In related news, the National Zoo partnered with coffee roaster Golden Valley Farms to serve Bird Friendly certified organic coffee in the zoo’s three restaurants as of Dec. 1, 2018.

Green Initiative is sponsoring a Living Fence Organic Garden at a local community center for children in Florida. Global Organic Specialty Source (GOSS) provided the scholarship. Seeds, transplants and other items were donated to help the center children grow and eat organic food. GOSS will develop the project into a full-raised bed community garden.





2019 OTA Organic Leadership Award Winners

An OTA Organic Leadership Award is the association's highest honor. The award is given annually to an individual, inside or outside the organic industry, who has shown leadership and vision in furthering goals of the organic movement.

Theresa Marquez of Organic Valley and Bob Quinn of Kamut® International received OTA's prestigious Organic Leadership Awards for 2018 in ceremonies held Friday evening, Jan. 15, in Boston during OTA's Annual Dinner and Dance.

"Theresa Marquez and Bob Quinn have shown outstanding initiative and devotion to organic, and their contributions clearly demonstrate how organic enterprises and agriculture can thrive and make a difference to consumers, farmers and to our planet,"

-OTA's Executive Director Christine Bushway.

2019 Organic Leadership Award in the Growing Organic Agriculture category



Bob Quinn, President of Kamut® International, has been involved in organic agriculture since the 1970s. Quinn has promoted organic agriculture throughout his home state of Montana, encouraging other farmers—including U.S. Senator Jon Tester—to go organic. He works closely with Montana State University personnel on testing of new farming systems and new crops to provide farmers a substitute for the use of conventional fertilizer and pesticides.

2019 Organic Leadership Award in the Growing Organic Industry category



Theresa Marquez, Chief Marketing Executive at Organic Valley, has been involved in organic for the past 35 years. Marquez has served on the Board of Directors of the Organic Foods Production Association (the original organization that subsequently became OTA), OTA, and The Organic Center. She has grown Organic Valley, America's largest organic farming cooperative, from \$5 million to \$523 million in annual sales.

In special tributes to Quinn and Marquez, video messages from Senator Jon Tester of Montana and Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan were played during the ceremonies.

MARCH 2019 EVENTS

HACCP Training for Organic Handlers: Mar 9-10, Anaheim CA

This two-day course, immediately preceding Natural Products Expo West, provides instruction in the seven principles of HACCP, how they relate to prerequisite and organic certification programs, how to write HACCP Plans and implement HACCP in organic food environments. This course is designed for individuals responsible for organic and food safety programs in small to medium sized processing facilities as well as those responsible for the communications messaging of the facilities. Registration is open.

Natural Products Expo West: Mar 10-13, Anaheim CA

OTA will be exhibiting and presenting at Natural Products Expo West. Please stay tuned to OTA member publications for a schedule of member forum and task force meetings being held in conjunction with the show.
expowest.com

Reverse Trade Mission: Mar 11-13, Expo West, Anaheim CA

OTA can help your organic business meet with food ingredient buyers and retail buyers at the trade show. Contact Jessica Poingt for details:
jpoingt@ota.com.

Sustainable Cosmetics Summit: March 12-14, New York NY

OTA is a supporting organization for the Sustainable Cosmetics Summit in NYC. The event encourages sustainability in the beauty industry by bringing together key stakeholders to debate major industry issues in a high-level forum. The conference program is still under development.
sustainablecosmeticssummit.com