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THE 37TH ANNUAL OEFFA CONFERENCE 2016

OHIO'S LARGEST SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND FARM CONFERENCE

GROWING RIGHT BY NATURE
GRANVILLE, OHIO FEB. 13-14



You won't want to miss *Growing Right by Nature*, OEFFA's 37th annual conference, an inspiring weekend to learn how we can efficiently, profitably, and successfully grow food by working with—rather than controlling—nature. Acquire practical knowledge and skills, make new friends and business contacts, and discover how you can join others in creating an ecologically sustainable agriculture future!

Three full day pre-conference workshop options kick things off on Friday, February 12. The "Call to Farm" workshop will provide guidance for those interested in beginning a farm operation, or those seeking to improve their current model. "What's the Matter with my Organic Matter?" will explore methods for improving soil organic matter content and fertility. Finally, OFARM Executive Director John Bobbe will lead a discussion based on his forthcoming book, *Organic Grain Marketing: A Farmers' Guide*. Bobbe will discuss strategies for profitable organic grain farming through sound planning, marketing, and contracting.

On Saturday and Sunday, Ohio's largest sustainable food and farm conference will feature keynote speakers Lindsey Lusher Shute and John Ikerd and approximately 100 workshops spanning 16 tracks on sustainable farming, gardening, homesteading, cooking, and livestock. But, wait! There's more: Source products for your farm, find services, and network with businesses and organizations at the trade show. Enjoy from-scratch meals made with local and organic ingredients. Bring the family—teens and children have their own conferences, and there is child care for the youngest kids. Then, unwind and socialize Saturday evening by watching a movie or learning how to contra dance.

(continued on pg. 5)



photo by George Remington

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OEFFA does not endorse the products or services of any advertiser, and reserves the right to refuse placement of inappropriate advertising.

OEFFA is recognized as a nonprofit organization by the Internal Revenue Service, and donations to OEFFA are deductible as a charitable contribution to the fullest extent of the law.

OEFFA shall be a democratic association of chartered grassroots chapters, existing within state bylaws, working together to create and promote a healthful, ecological, accountable, and sustainable system of agriculture in Ohio and elsewhere.

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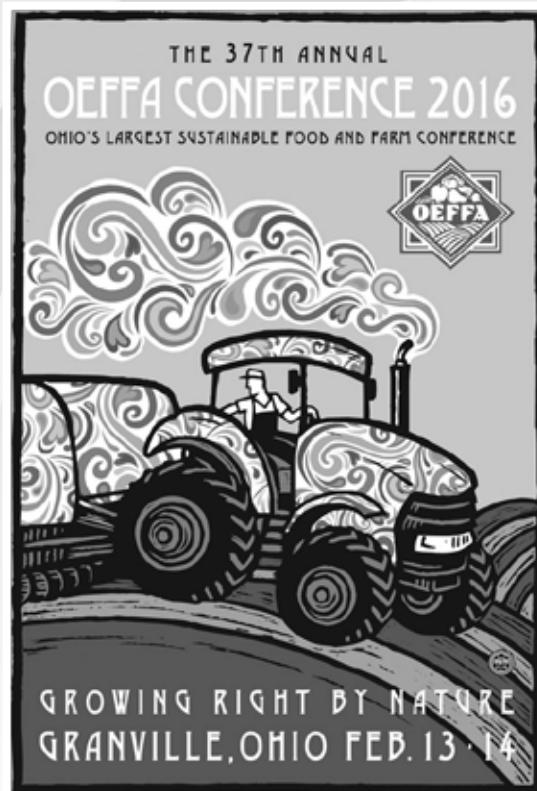
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A special thanks to Kevin Morgan at Kevin Morgan Studio in Athens, Ohio for creating this year's beautiful conference art.
www.kevinmorganstudio.com

Next deadline: December 15, 2015



Director's Letter

Carol Golland Executive Director

CREATING A BRIGHT AGRICULTURAL FUTURE TAKES ALL OF US

OEFFA recently released two new documents that paint a clear and inspiring picture of OEFFA's past and future: our annual report for 2014 and our strategic plan for 2016-2020. In considering these publications, one thing that stands out for me is the importance of our members. Achieving our goals, creating the world we hope for—in which agricultural practices protect and enhance natural resources, farm families prosper, and healthy food is accessible to all members of our communities—ultimately depends on folks like you engaging with the work we do.

Our redesigned annual report provides a visual snapshot of OEFFA's impact and programs, illustrating some of the ways our members have been involved in this work. For example, in 2014, 831 operations chose to be certified organic, 1,500 individuals took action on farm policy, more than 400 growers received one-on-one technical assistance, and 2,000 people attended educational and engaging farm tours.

Numbers alone, of course, can't tell the whole story; in fact, they only become meaningful if they translate to impact. That's why I want to encourage you to look at the strategic plan and ask yourself what in there really excites you, what speaks to why you support OEFFA, and how you want to get involved in making those goals a reality. I assure you, there's something for everyone, and everyone has a contribution to make. For example:

- Members **Kitty Leatham, Analena Bruce, Maureen Dawn, Warren Taylor, and Kip Rony** accompanied our Policy Program Coordinator Amalie Lipstreu to a meeting with Senator Sherrod Brown's staff to highlight our concerns about the "DARK Act" now moving through Congress, which would prohibit state non-GMO labeling.
- Members **Steve Corso** and **Rachel Tayse Balliuel** helped as servers at our recent Farmers' Table dinner in Geauga County, which helped fundraise and friendraise for OEFFA.
- Members such as **Tea Hills Farm, Fox Hollow Farm, Mile Creek Farm, Othmayr Farms**, and many others opened their farms to the public to share their techniques for growing organic and sustainable food for their communities.
- Member **Florence Jain** comes into the OEFFA office weekly to help with data entry and mailings.

In short, there are lots of different ways for members to be part of OEFFA, as volunteers, advocates, and educators. We need your help if we're going to achieve the ambitious goals we've put forth in our strategic plan. If you'd like to plug in, please give our office a call at (614) 421-2022 or send us an email at oeffa@oeffa.org. We'd love to talk with you!



Check out OEFFA's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan and 2014 Annual Report at www.oeffa.org/oeffa.php. If you don't have internet access, please feel free to give us a call at (614) 421-2022 and we'll mail a copy to you.



THE FARMERS' TABLE:

BREAKING BREAD, RECONNECTING FARMERS AND CONSUMERS



In August, more than 100 people joined OEFFA for The Farmers' Table at Maplestar Farms. It was an evening of bountiful local food and drinks and exceptional company!

"OEFFA's mission is to help farmers and consumers reconnect and together build a sustainable food system," said OEFFA Program Associate Milo Petruziello. "This dinner was a natural extension of that work, bringing people to the farm to enjoy a meal sourced from northeast Ohio farms and crafted by some of the region's finest chefs. Maplestar and other OEFFA member farms are working every day to rebuild these connections, and their hard work and support allows us to share these values through events like this."

"Holding an event where people can share a meal on the farm, from the farm, reminds me of growing up here," said Jake Trethewey, who owns and operates Maplestar Farm with his wife Dawn. "As small farms and farming communities have disappeared over the last 50 years, fewer people today have the opportunity to experience the friendship and community of sharing a meal on the farm."

Thanks to everyone that attended, and to our wonderful partners! OEFFA would especially like to thank the Tretheweys for being such gracious hosts; Chris Johnson, Erik Martinez, and Drew Racin of The Driftwood Group for preparing the menu (and owner Chris Hodgson and his wife Jacquelyn for helping out in the kitchen!); Alan Guebert for providing a toast and signing books, and our sponsors: Bat Barn Farm and Foraging, Birdsong Farm, Breakneck Acres, Breezy Hill Farm, edible Cleveland, Event Source, Frickaccio's, Infinite Garden Farm, Kevin Morgan Studio, Les Dames d'Escoffier Cleveland, Lucky Penny Farm, Mackenzie Creamery, maple & Vine, Market Garden Brewery, Miller's Organic Produce, Minced Market, Morningside Farm, Octagon Acres, OEFFA Lake Effect Chapter, Organic Valley, PlantScription, Rising Star Coffee Roasters, Schmidt Family Farms, Shagbark Seed & Mill, Snowville Creamery, Storehouse Tea, Stutzman Farms, and Tea Hills Farms.





CONGRESS PASSES BILL TO OBSCURE GE FOOD IN THE MARKETPLACE

On July 23, members of the House of Representatives passed HR 1599, the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act, with the support of 230 Republicans and 45 Democrats. Representatives Joyce Beatty and Tim Ryan were the only Ohio votes recorded against the bill, which has been dubbed the Deny Americans the Right to Know (DARK) Act.

The House vote completely ignores overwhelming public support for transparency, instead favoring the interests of large corporate agribusinesses who benefit from being able to hide and obscure accurate genetic engineering (GE) information from consumers.

Under the House bill:

- ◇ Any previously passed state labeling bills are void and states are prohibited from taking future action to label genetically engineered food.
- ◇ In order to even consider a federal GE label, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) must find a "material difference" in the GE food, but even then is not compelled to require labeling.
- ◇ A new process of certifying non-GE food established through the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Process Verified Program would replace other non-GE labels, such as the Non-GMO Project's butterfly label. Under the program, meat and dairy products from livestock fed GE grain could be labeled as non-GE, along with products containing GE processing aids, enzymes, and microorganisms.

Instead of putting the burden of disclosing how food is produced where it belongs—on the companies that grow and manufacture GE foods—this bill takes a giant leap backwards for families seeking the truth about the food they put on the dinner table, by allowing misleading and inaccurate non-GE labels on greenwashed foods containing GE inputs. Moreover, it discourages our nations' actual non-GE farmers and producers from seeking out non-GE verification status to differentiate their products.

The Senate is expected to take the up their version of the bill soon and it is imperative that Senators Brown and Portman hear from constituents. Contact Senator Brown at (888) 896-6446 and Senator Portman at (800) 205-6446 and tell them you want the right to know what you eat and feed your family! Watch <http://policy.oeffa.org/gelabeling> for up to date information on the status of the bill and opportunities to take action.

How Ohio's Congressional Delegation Voted on HR 1599

	R	Chabot, Steve	OH 1st
	R	Wenstrup, Brad	OH 2nd
x	D	Beatty, Joyce	OH 3rd
	R	Jordan, Jim	OH 4th
	R	Latta, Robert	OH 5th
	R	Johnson, Bill	OH 6th
	R	Gibbs, Bob	OH 7th
*	D	Kaptur, Marcy	OH 9th

	R	Turner, Michael	OH 10th
	D	Fudge, Marcia	OH 11th
	R	Tiberi, Pat	OH 12th
x	D	Ryan, Tim	OH 13th
	R	Joyce, David	OH 14th
	R	Stivers, Steve	OH 15th
	R	Renacci, James	OH 16th
yes = no = x absent = *			

July 23, 2015 Source: www.govtrack.us



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

OEFFA'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Are you or someone you know dedicated to sustainable agriculture and looking for an opportunity to deepen your commitment to OEFFA and help us grow as an organization?

OEFFA is now seeking nominations for board members! The membership will elect two at-large representatives to the Board of Trustees at the annual business meeting, which will be held at the OEFFA conference on February 13 in Granville. Each Trustee will serve a three-year term.

If you would like to make a nomination, please contact Perry Clutts at (740) 474-2840 or addyg1000@gmail.com. Nominations submitted by December 15 will appear in OEFFA's winter newsletter. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor on the day of the election. To learn more about the roles and responsibilities of board members, contact Carol Goland at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 202 or cgoland@oeffa.org.

OEFFA'S STEWARDSHIP AND SERVICE AWARDS

Do you know someone who not only is committed to sustainable agriculture in their own lives, but also works to impact social change, educate and engage their community, or has otherwise shown leadership toward building sustainable, local food systems? Nominate them for OEFFA's Stewardship or Service Award!

The Stewardship Award recognizes outstanding contributions to the cultivation of sustainable agriculture and the Service Award recognizes outstanding service in support of sustainable agriculture. The awards are announced each year as part of OEFFA's annual conference. To see a list of previous winners, go to www.oeffa.org/news.

To nominate yourself or someone you know, email stewardship@oeffa.org or write to OEFFA Stewardship and Service Awards, 41 Croswell Rd., Columbus, OH 43214. The deadline for nominations is December 1. As part of your nomination, please describe the individual(s) you wish to nominate, your relationship, and how you feel the nominee embodies the spirit of this award through their outstanding contributions to the sustainable agriculture community. Please also include your contact information and the contact information for the person(s) you're nominating. If you have questions, contact Mike Laughlin, chair of the selection committee, at (740) 501-8227.

THE 37TH ANNUAL OEFFA CONFERENCE 2016

OHIO'S LARGEST SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND FARM CONFERENCE

(continued from front cover)



LINDSEY LUSHER SHUTE

Saturday Keynote Speaker

Lindsey Lusher Shute is the Executive Director and co-founder of the National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC), which represents, mobilizes, and engages young farmers to ensure their success. NYFC advocates for federal policy change, recently introducing legislation that would add full-time farmers to the public service loan forgiveness program.

Shute and her husband, Benjamin, raise two daughters and own and manage Hearty Roots Community Farm, a 70 acre farm in New York's Hudson River Valley. Shute grows about 25 acres of certified organic vegetables and cares for a flock of laying hens and a dozen pigs, which are marketed through a 900 member community support agriculture program.

In 2014, Shute was selected as a White House Future of American Agriculture Champion of Change.



JOHN IKERD

Sunday Keynote Speaker

John Ikerd is one of the nation's leading experts and speakers on agricultural economics and a well-known, passionate, and insightful sustainable agriculture advocate and speaker.

Raised on a small dairy farm in southwest Missouri, Ikerd received a B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Missouri. He spent

30 years in professorial positions at North Carolina State University, Oklahoma State University, the University of Georgia, and the University of Missouri. From 1989 to 2011, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, he provided state and national leadership for sustainable agriculture research and education programs.

Ikerd has authored six books along with book chapters, journal articles, magazine and trade publications, and conference proceedings on various aspects of the sustainable agriculture movement. In 2014, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations asked Ikerd to develop the North American report for the International Year of the Family Farm.

Conference registration will open in December. Learn more about the conference at www.oeffa.org/conference2016 or follow us on Facebook or @OEFFA for the latest updates!



COME ONE, COME ALL: SPONSOR OR TRADE IN OUR EXHIBIT HALL!

Meet our members, promote your brand, spread the good word, or let farmers know about resources available to them. We want your business, nonprofit, or institution to become a conference sponsor or exhibitor!

Sponsor and exhibitor registration forms and information are available at www.oeffa.org/conference2016. November 13 is the deadline to be included in all pre-conference publicity. The early bird exhibitor registration deadline is December 5. Exhibit space often sells out, so don't wait to reserve your spot!

GOT GENTLY USED BOOKS?

Do you have some books taking up shelf space? Donate them to OEFFA! Drop off your farm and food books in good condition at the OEFFA office or OEFFA's book table at the annual conference.

WE WANT U: ACADEMIC RESEARCHERS WANTED

Students, discuss your research findings with OEFFA's diverse membership during a poster session at the 2016 conference! Abstracts, 200 words or less, which include a title, three to five keywords, and names, affiliations, and author contact information, are due January 7.

For more information about sponsor and exhibitor opportunities, book donations, or the poster session, call (614) 421-2022 or email conference2016@oeffa.org.

Conference Raffle-Rama: Donations Wanted

Support OEFFA and get your products and services on display by donating to OEFFA's popular Saturday conference raffle! To donate, suggest someone who could, or to serve on the raffle committee, please contact Kristen Pool at (330) 527-3647 or blackdogacres@gmail.com.

BYOSTR: Bring Your Own Soil Test Results

Bring copies of your latest soil test results to the conference to enhance your workshop and exhibit hall experience. Workshop presenters and trade show exhibitors can use this information to help advise you on management and input strategies specific to your needs.

BYOS: Bring Your Own Seeds

We'll be hosting a community seed swap at the conference on Sunday. If you have extra seed, bring it along to share with your fellow gardeners. Bring a few stories with those seeds and help us keep the "culture" in agriculture.

Invite a Vet: Scholarships Available to Help Professionals Learn about Organic Livestock Care

Livestock farmers need professionals who have a clear understanding of organic livestock management systems. Ensure your veterinarian has this knowledge by inviting them to attend the OEFFA conference to gain insight and understanding. Full scholarships are available to practicing veterinarians and partial scholarships are available to nutritionists and consultants. Nominate your livestock health care providers by January 18 by contacting Eric Pawlowski at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 209 or eric@oeffa.org.

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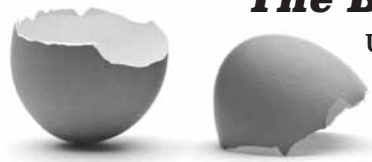
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The Breakeven Egg:

Understanding Your Costs
and Pricing for Profit

By Ami Gignac



The big box grocery store has a door buster sale on eggs this week. The hobby farm around the corner has their eggs priced even lower. Determining and defending your price for a dozen eggs can be frustrating, but it should be a simple exercise based on your expenses. Your prices shouldn't reflect what family and friends are willing to pay, what it takes to "cover the cost of feed," or what the local grocery store charges. This article will take you step by step through what it could cost to manage a flock of 300 certified organic free range laying hens and how to price one dozen eggs at market.

Startup Costs

The startup costs for each grower will vary. You might have the equipment hidden in a back barn, find a few great deals on Craigslist, or build feeders, coops, nest boxes, and roosts with recycled items from your barnyard. Whether you buy new, used, or recycle, these items do have a value and should be included in your calculations. If you're just starting out, here are a few things to consider: you'll need a primary coop for the production flock, a second coop for replacement hens, and a brooder for chicks. Also consider a third small coop in case you need to segregate sick hens or new additions to your flock. You'll need waterers, feeders, an egg processing station, and a farmers' market setup. This might include a refrigerator, coolers, ice packs, a tent, tables, banners, business cards, and brochures. And labor – don't forget the time invested in your initial setup! (See Table 1)

Fixed vs. Variable Expenses

A fixed expense is a flat cost that does not fluctuate with the number of laying hens or seasonal production rates. Fixed expenses may include: licensing, market fees, organic certification fees, and marketing. Check with your local health department, farmers' market, and certifying agent to determine your costs. A variable expense will depend on the size of the flock. Variable expenses include feed, water, bedding, packaging, and labor. The cost of your property should be included in your analysis and may be a startup, fixed, or variable expense depending on your situation.

Labor

Accounting for labor is tough and often overlooked, but is easily one of the most important things you must do to be a profitable grower. Track your labor for initial setup, feeding, watering, coop cleaning, flock health observations, egg processing, marketing, and selling. These activities take time—and this example will prove to you just how much time (and money) must be considered. For this exercise, a flat rate of \$10 per hour is used. (See Table 2)

Example Assumptions

- ♦ **Production Rate and Pricing** – There are studies and research that report production rates in "perfect conditions," but the egg production of free ranging hens will vary based on age, season, and stress level. For this example, an average of 60 percent is assumed for an entire year, or about 220 eggs per bird per year. In the first year, the chicks purchased will take approximately 6 months to start laying, so production and egg collection labor costs are half of what they will be in future years. This example prices one dozen eggs at \$5 the first two years with a \$0.25 increase each year after to cover startup costs and inflation. (See Table 3)
- ♦ **Startup Equipment** – This example assumes new feeders, waterers, and nest boxes for 300 laying hens and a used refrigerator. An estimated cost of \$2,000 is also included for two coops, a brooder, and a small segregation coop. (See Table 1)

- ◇ **Replacement Chicks** – Sales rely on a steady flow of product. In order to maintain production levels, a replacement flock must simultaneously be raised to make a seamless transition when an older flock is culled. This example assumes 300 new chicks every 2.5 years. (See Table 3)
- ◇ **Feed** – This cost will have a huge impact on your total costs and drive the price of your eggs. This example assumes \$22 for a 50 lb bag of certified organic feed and an average consumption of 2.5 ounces of feed per hen per day. (See Table 3)
- ◇ **Other Supplies** – This may include oyster shell, grit, bedding, and equipment replacement due to damage.
- ◇ **Packaging** – This example assumes \$0.50 per dozen for new cartons and labels. (See Table 3)
- ◇ **Marketing** – Never ignore the expenses associated with selling your product. There are many creative things that you can do for free, but be prepared to invest time and money in growing your business. This example assumes \$50 per month in the first year for website maintenance, sales, and marketing materials. (See Table 3)

In this scenario, it is not until the fifth year that the farm fully recoups the initial year's startup costs and losses, and achieves profitability—even at \$5 or more per dozen of eggs. But \$5.75 is too much to charge for eggs at your market, you say! Maybe, but if your calculations are telling you that you need to charge a price that's not reasonable, you may need to take a hard look at your spending and the efficiency of your operation to get your price down. As you can see, startup costs, labor, and feed are the highest costs of egg production, and therefore the most important costs for you to manage.

This example might not match your operation exactly, but the goal of this exercise is to encourage you to track and analyze your costs and labor, closely monitor your flock's production and feed consumption, and price a dozen eggs with confidence so that your small-scale operation will be sustainable (and one day profitable)!

Ami Gignac operates Breakneck Acres, an unconventional farm in northeast Ohio that is committed to environmental and land stewardship, sustainable and natural farming practices, the humane treatment of animals, and complete transparency. For more information, go to www.breakneckacres.com.

TABLE 1

Example Startup Costs	
Land Purchase	0
Chicks	\$860
Waterers	\$140
Feeders	\$200
Coop/Roosts	\$2,000
Nest Boxes	\$1,272
Refrigerator	\$200
Market Setup	\$655
Other/Misc.	\$200
Labor	\$400
	\$5,927

TABLE 2

Example Labor Costs at \$10/hour	Year 1	Year 2
Watering/Feeding 15 mins/day	\$913	\$913
Egg Collecting 20 mins/day	\$608	\$1,217
Coop Cleaning/Misc. 2 hrs/month	\$240	\$240
Processing/Packaging 5 mins/dozen	\$2,281	\$4,563
Sales/Marketing 5.5 hrs/week	\$2,860	\$2,860
	\$6,902	\$9,792

TABLE 3

Example Layer Budget	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
PRODUCTION SUMMARY					
Total Laying Hens	300	300	300	300	300
Estimated Production	60%	60%	60%	60%	60%
Total Eggs Per Year	32,850	65,700	65,700	65,700	65,700
TOTAL SALES VOLUME/DOZEN	2,738	5,475	5,475	5,475	5,475
Average Price/Dozen	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.25	\$5.50	\$5.75
TOTAL SALES	\$13,690	\$27,375	\$28,744	\$30,113	\$31,481
Variable Expenses					
Replacement Chicks	0	\$860	0	0	\$945
Feed-Layers	\$7,528	\$7,905	\$8,300	\$8,715	\$9,150
Feed-Replacements	0	\$3,952	0	0	\$4,575
Other Supplies/Misc.	\$612	\$643	\$675	\$708	\$744
Water	0	0	0	0	0
Packaging	\$1,369	\$1,437	\$1,509	\$1,584	\$1,664
Property Rental	0	0	0	0	0
Labor (See Table 2)	\$6,902	\$9,792	\$9,792	\$9,792	\$9,792
Fixed Expenses					
Local License	\$150	\$158	\$165	\$174	\$182
Market Fee	\$1,000	\$1,050	\$1,103	\$1,158	\$1,216
OEFFA Certification	\$1,200	\$1,224	\$1,248	\$1,273	\$1,299
Marketing	\$600	\$630	\$662	\$695	\$729
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$19,361	\$27,650	\$23,453	\$24,099	\$30,296
Annual Profit/Loss	\$(5,673)	\$(275)	\$5,291	\$6,014	\$1,185
Startup Costs (See Table 1)	\$(5,927)	0	0	0	0
PROFIT/LOSS OVERTIME	\$(11,600)	\$(11,875)	\$(6,585)	\$(571)	\$615

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NEWS BRIEFS



Factory Farms and Their Waste On the Rise

According to a new report by Food & Water Watch, *Factory Farm Nation: 2015 Edition*, factory farms have grown in size and number in the past 15 years. Analyzing U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) *Census of Agriculture* data from 1997 to 2012, the group found that the number of livestock on factory farms rose by 20 percent between 2002 and 2012. These factory

farmed livestock produced 369 million tons of manure in 2012, about 13 times more than the sewage produced by the entire U.S. population. In Mercer County, Ohio alone, there are more than 15 million laying hens which produce as much waste as the populations of the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Dayton metropolitan areas combined.

Adoption of GE Crops in Ohio is Widespread

The USDA Economic Research Service has released an updated data set that summarizes the adoption of genetically engineered (GE) crops by state in the U.S. from 2000 to 2015. According to the data, in 2015, 91 percent of all soybeans and 85 percent of all corn planted in Ohio were genetically engineered.



Cover Crop Survey Shows Expanding Acreage and Improved Yield

A national survey of more than 1,200 farmers conducted by the Conservation Technology Information Center has shown that cover crops improved 2014 corn yields by an average of 3.66 bushels per acre and soybean yields by an average of 2.19 bushels per acre. In addition to yield, farmers cited increased soil health and organic matter and reduced erosion as benefits of using cover crops. The survey also found that cover crop acreage per farm more than doubled in the past five years.

Study Finds Removing Wildlife Habitat Doesn't Improve Food Safety

Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley published a study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* showing that removing non-crop vegetation to reduce field contamination of fresh produce by disease-causing pathogens is not effective. The practice, which has led to extensive habitat loss, has been controversial, as habitat can support populations of pollinators and filter runoff. The researchers, who analyzed about 250,000 samples of produce, irrigation waters, and rodents from 295 farms in the United States, Mexico, and Chile, found that the removal of vegetation did not result in lower detection of pathogens. In fact, the growers who removed the most vegetation experienced the greatest increase in pathogenic *E. coli* and *Salmonella* in their vegetables over time.



Farm Storage Facility Loan Program Expanded

This summer, the USDA's Farm Service Agency expanded the Farm Storage Facility Loan program, which provides low interest financing to farmers to build or upgrade storage facilities. The program now includes produce, meat, dairy, eggs, flowers, hops, and rye. Commodities previously eligible for the loans include corn, rice, soybeans, oats, wheat, barley, hay, and honey. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/1M7TbG0>.

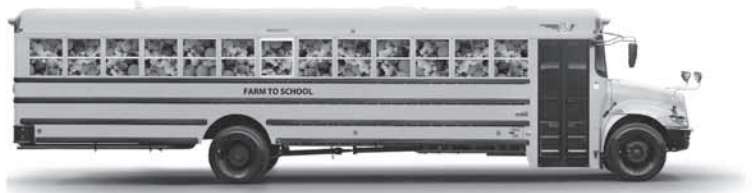
Conventional Ground Beef Contains More Superbugs

Consumer Reports recently tested 458 pounds of ground beef from across the nation, and found more than 80 percent contained at least two types of dangerous bacteria. Interestingly, 18 percent of the beef samples from conventionally raised cows contained superbugs resistant to three or more classes of antibiotics used to treat illness in humans compared with just 9 percent of organic, grassfed, or/or antibiotic-free beef samples.



USDA Deregulates GE Potato and 2,4-D-Tolerant GE Cotton

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has deregulated Dow's 2,4-D-tolerant GE cotton. The new GE cotton, which is resistant to 2,4-D choline, glufosinate, and glyphosate, was designed to replace the current generation of Roundup tolerant GE cotton as growers contend with glyphosate-resistant weeds. In September, the USDA also deregulated a GE potato variety engineered for late blight resistance, reduced black spot bruising, and lowered reducing sugars.



Farm to School Having Impact on Nation's Kids

According to a new USDA report, more than 40,300 schools have farm to school programs, impacting 23.5 million children. Through its Farm to School Grant Program, the USDA has awarded 221 grants over the past three years to projects that expand healthy menu options in the cafeteria, train food service staff, and engage students in nutrition education activities. School districts participating in farm to school programs purchased and served more than \$385 million in local food in school year 2011-2012.

USDA and EPA Set Nation's First Food Waste Reduction Goals

In September, the USDA and Environmental Protection Agency announced the United States' first-ever national food waste reduction goal, calling for a 50 percent reduction by 2030. As part of the effort, the federal government will lead a new partnership with charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, the private sector, and local, state, and tribal governments. Food loss and waste in the U.S. accounts for approximately 31 percent—or 133 billion pounds—of the overall food supply. Experts have projected that reducing food losses by just 15 percent would provide enough food for more than 25 million Americans every year.

SUCCESSFUL SMALL PLOT FARMING:

WHAT BEGINNING FARMERS CAN LEARN FROM OHIO GROWERS MAKING A LIVING ON FIVE ACRES OR LESS

BY GEMMA BUSH

Yes, you might have been met with cocked eyebrows and gaping jaws at your last high school reunion when you told your old friends you were going to try to support your family with three acres of farmland. But, you're not alone. Many growers have set out on a similar journey. I asked three Ohio farmers successfully growing on plots of five acres or less to tell me their secrets for making small plot farming profitable and fulfilling.

GET THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT



JOAN RICHMOND demonstrates a greens harvester during a summer farm tour.

For the beginning small plot farmer, getting your hands on the right equipment for your scale can be half the battle. You've outgrown home gardening tools, but you don't need a fleet of full-sized John Deere tractors.

For tilling and other work, a walking tractor (also called a walk-behind, two-wheel, or hand tractor) with a power take-off (PTO) for powering accessories can be a better investment for a small operation, than a costly four wheel tractor and its implements.

Joan and Reed Richmond of Meadow Rise Farm in Bellville, do own a full sized tractor, but find it is becoming less and less necessary for their 2.5 acre vegetable operation.

"We are starting to prefer our 749 BCS walk-behind tractor," says Joan, "because its size is appropriate for our raised bed system."

Other small plot farmers find that investing in raised beds and the tools appropriate for them allows for improved drainage and decreased soil compaction.

The farmers I spoke with also named greens harvesters, broad forks, hillers, and precision seeders, among other tools, as some of their most useful scale-appropriate equipment.

INVEST IN SOIL HEALTH

If you have healthy soil, the microbes will do the work for you. And if the farmers I talked to had to sum up soil management in three words, they would probably say "Know your soil."

Kate Cook, garden manager of Carriage House Farm's four acre market garden in southwest Ohio, certainly is farming by this mantra.

"We do once a year heavy amendments with compost that we produce here on the farm," Kate says. "We get our soil tested periodically to keep up with that trace mineral content, and we're finding that the use of our compost has been adequate for that. A lot of our property here is floodplain, so it's river bottom land. So, we're also going to get yearly deposits of tons of stuff from the floodplain, and we have to keep that in mind."

GET THE MOST OUT OF EVERY INCH



GEORGE REMINGTON utilizes raised beds, plastic mulch, and greenhouses to extend the growing season at his northeast Ohio farm.

Successful small plot farmers must make the most out of every inch of limited space they have.

As opposed to planting in traditional rows, crops can be planted in a hexagonal or triangular pattern to avoid letting space go unused. Well-planned companion planting and crop rotation can also be practiced while using garden space efficiently.

One of Kate's favorite examples of companion planting is a creative use of space, and also helps her keep pests at bay.

"I plant a bed of radish, let that germinate, and then I sow a plot of squash or cucumber seeds in the center of that bed. Those radish plants will help protect the young squash plants as they mature, masking them from pests," she says.

BE SMART ABOUT LABOR

Kate is a big supporter of note taking. "I write everything down," she says. "I take notes every day. What's working, what isn't working. What I do, what I see, what I notice."

And, she says, some of the most important notes to jot down are those on the work of your paid labor.

"Take notes on how efficiently your team is working, and you'll find that people have strengths in different places," she says. "Try to get them involved in tasks that are easily repeatable and easy to create specialization in, but balance that with giving them as comprehensive an understanding as possible of how your farm works and why it works that way. For example, they should know that you shouldn't be harvesting salad greens in the middle of the afternoon – little things like that."

Cut down on costs by making sure to only hire as much labor, and for as many hours, as you really need. Kate says, "I just try to schedule smart hour to hour, day to day. For example, if we're harvesting greens I'll have people in for the morning, but then they're all gone by 10:30 or 11."

MARKET, MARKET, MARKET

Your farm is a business. You need to think about your image, who your customers are, and what makes your product desirable.

According to George Remington of Morningside Farm, a five acre organic vegetable farm in Medina County, "First, you must have a quality product. If you are marketing your product, everything about your presentation must quickly and clearly help your customer understand, differentiate, and appreciate your product. Graphics and display hardware are essential and must be handled well, just as it is for any company."

You also need to know who you're selling to. Rather than lowering your prices in an effort to appeal to more people, a more successful strategy may be to seek out an audience that is willing to pay more for your product.

"We chose to serve customers who understand and appreciate our product. We offer fresh, safe, nutritious, whole foods. We sell to people who understand that and want this type of food," George says.

You can also use season extension, grow unique but marketable crops, become certified organic, or utilize other methods to justify charging premium prices. George tries to get certain crops to market early in the season, before anyone else, or be the last one of the season to still be offering them. He also tries to do some experimenting at market and discover which hard-to-find crops his customers enjoy but no one else is currently selling.

DON'T EXPECT IT TO BE EASY



Running a successful small farm takes an extraordinary amount of physical and mental energy, as well as excellence in a unique combination of skills: production, marketing, budgeting, labor management, attention to detail, and more.

According to George, "Unfortunately, most of the information about starting a small farm paints a picture that people who avoid effort are attracted to. They see a leisurely paced occupation with lots of life-style upside. Nothing could be further from the truth. The challenges are intellectually, socially, mathematically, emotionally, and physically incredible. The days are extremely long and lightning-fast paced."

In George's opinion, successful small-scale farmers need to be "smart, dedicated, personable, and inventive people with limitless energy."

It's important to enter farming with realistic expectations. Role models can provide essential guidance and information. Many growers recommend interning or apprenticing with an experienced farmer for several seasons, working in all aspects of the business, before starting out on your own.

When it comes to small plot farming, there is no silver bullet. Each farm is unique. The success of any farmer is really just a product of working hard and working smart. But if you build your soil, make sound investments, market yourself effectively, and are willing to put in the sweat equity, the Ohio farmers I spoke with show that you can make your small-scale farming dreams come true.

Gemma Bush was OEFFA's summer communications intern. She lives in Columbus and is majoring in Environmental Policy and Decision Making at The Ohio State University.

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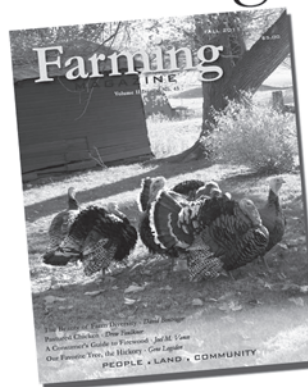
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Organic Farmers Challenge Whole Foods' New Rating System

This summer, Whole Foods Market announced the creation of a new "Responsibly Grown" grading system for produce and flowers where products are labeled "Unrated," "Good," "Better," or "Best." Growers are required to pay—up to \$20,000—to participate in the program, which determines grades based on answers to a long questionnaire. Because the system encompasses issues not addressed in the organic rules, like water conservation, energy use, and farm worker welfare, produce grown conventionally with synthetic fertilizers and pesticides can earn a higher rating than certified organic foods.

Organic farmers and organizations charge the new rating system undermines organic certification (which relies on third-party verification, not self-reported questionnaire responses), devalues the ecological benefits of organic farming, and places an unfair financial burden on small farmers. In response, Whole Foods met with farmers and organic certifier California Certified Organic Farmers and agreed to make adjustments to the program, including in the scoring and presentation of organic products and to allow current organic vendors to suspend enrollment efforts until the end of this year.

NOSB to Meet in October

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) will hold its fall meeting October 26-29 in Stowe, Vermont, where it will vote on whether to renew or remove the large majority of crop, livestock, and handling inputs due to sunset from the National List in 2017. The deadline for oral, webinar, and written comments was October 8.

Organic Practices Improve Water Quality

A recent study published in *Sustainable Agriculture Research* has found that organic farming methods can be used to reduce water pollution. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Iowa State University analyzed three years of data to compare nitrate pollution from plots with organic and conventional crop rotations as well as organic pastureland. Nitrate loss in the

conventional cropping systems was twice as high as in the organic cropping system, with organic pastures losing the least amount of nitrate. The study suggests that organic farming practices, such as the application of composted animal manure and the use of forage legumes and green manures, can improve water quality.

New U.S., Swiss Organic Equivalency Agreement Reached

The U.S. and Switzerland signed a new organic equivalency arrangement, effective July 10, which allows organic products certified in the U.S. or Switzerland to be sold as organic in either country, eliminating the need for two sets of fees, inspections, and paperwork. The agreement includes critical variances regarding antibiotic use in livestock and wine production and labeling.

Per capita, the Swiss population consumes the most organic foods of any nation in the world. The signing builds on the 2009 equivalency agreement with Canada and 2012 agreement with the European Union—the two biggest trading partners for the U.S. organic sector—and follows equivalency arrangements with Japan in 2013 and Korea in 2014.

2014 Organic Survey Results Released

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service has released its 2014 Organic Survey, an inventory of all known U.S. organic producers who are certified, exempt from certification (producers grossing less than \$5,000 annually from organic sales), and those transitioning to organic production. According to the survey, the U.S. had 14,093 organic farms producing \$5.5 billion in organic products last year. There were 3.7 million acres of organic production in 2014; organic operations own approximately three-fifths of the land they farm, and rent the rest. Nationally, 78 percent of all organic sales in 2014 were to whole sale markets, 14 percent were to restaurants, retail markets, and institutions, and 8 percent of sales were direct to consumer. For more results, go to www.agcensus.usda.gov/publications/organic_survey.

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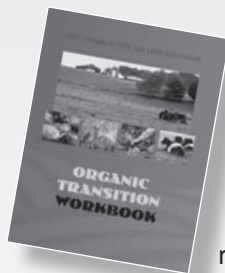
A series where OEFFA staff answers frequently asked questions and offers suggestions for working within the National Organic Program (NOP) regulations.

Interested in Transitioning to Organic Production? We Can Help!

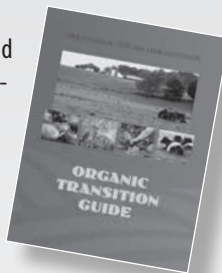
Transitioning to organic production can be both challenging and rewarding, and the decision of whether or not organic certification is right for you will depend upon your farm's unique goals and values. Organic certification requires a systems approach to farming and year-round recordkeeping, and transitioning farmers can find learning the standards and putting them into practice daunting. However, many producers find it's worth the work, as the benefits of organic certification can be substantial. Luckily, there are resources available to help you decide whether to go organic and to plan and prepare for transition!

Two new resources will be available this winter for both existing organic producers, and those interested in transitioning to organic production. In partnership with the National Organic Program (NOP), OEFFA has updated the **Organic Transition Guide** and **Organic Transition Workbook**, originally published in 2008 by the Ohio State University Organic Food and Farming Education and Research (OFFER) Program. These revised publications include updated research, resources, and more information about materials for use in organic production, transitioning livestock, and organic labeling.

The **Organic Transition Guide** focuses specifically on helping you understand key organic standards, by breaking down the regulatory language into everyday English. Knowing the standards and expectations in organic production and understanding how to meet them can help you determine if certification is a good fit for you, or if you might be interested in adding additional land or livestock to your existing organic operation.



The **Organic Transition Workbook** helps you assess your current operation, including its strengths and areas for improvement or change. After you've completed the assessment and written a goal, the workbook takes you step-by-step through writing an Organic System Plan (OSP), using the OEFFA OSP as a guide. At the end of the workbook you'll find plenty of recordkeeping sample templates to help you during your transition, since good recordkeeping is a requirement of the organic standards.



These resources are designed to help break down the barriers for transitioning farmers, but you don't have to work through this on your own. OEFFA staff is happy to help answer questions, and we're planning to attend various meetings and conferences this winter to answer your questions face-to-face.

Pending NOP approval, these guides will be available for use this winter, both online and in print, so watch for more information soon about how you can access these new resources.

If you're **interested in transitioning to organic production, transitioning new aspects of your operation to organic production**, or learning more about these guides, please contact Julia Barton at (614) 359-3180, or write to OEFFA Certification, c/o Julia Barton, 41 Crosswell Rd., Columbus, OH 43214.

OEFFA is grateful to the National Organic Program's Sound and Sensible Initiative for supporting this work.

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BIG FARMS, BIG SUBSIDIES: CROP INSURANCE CONCENTRATES AGRICULTURAL WEALTH IN THE U.S.

By Jazz Glastra

Originally designed as part of a critical safety net for American farmers, federal crop insurance has become a heavily subsidized paycheck for the country's oldest and largest commodity farms. Meanwhile, diversified farms which grow fresh, healthy produce have had trouble accessing insurance, and must tackle mountains of paperwork before they can even qualify.

Under this program, the federal government pays an average of 62 percent of the cost of a farm's insurance policy, known as a **premium subsidy**. The government also pays the insurance companies directly for their administrative and operating expenses. As a result, crop insurance is the single largest agricultural subsidy program in the federal budget, which allows 2.3 percent of U.S. farmers to rake in more than half of all premium subsidies.

One of the most troubling aspects of the current crop insurance program is its method of estimating expected yield. For established farms, historical production data are used to calculate the projected yield. This applies to the entire farm operation, even when new land is acquired. In contrast, new farmers can only be covered for up to 65 percent of the average yield for a particular crop in their area, regardless of their actual production capabilities, placing a disproportionate amount of risk on the most vulnerable farming operations. Even more concerning, in certain areas, growers of commodity crops, such as corn or cotton, can use a provision called Yield Exclusion to "exclude" up to 10 years of

production history from their record. This allows farmers to manipulate their historical yield and therefore receive better coverage and higher indemnity payments.

Crop insurance can be used to insure either projected yield or projected revenue. Unsurprisingly, most farmers choose revenue protection—which costs taxpayers up to twice as much—since it protects against losses from both yield and price volatility. Since yield calculations are based on the entire farm's historical production, even marginal land can be insured for a much higher yield than it could ever feasibly produce. As a result, large farms with cash on hand see little risk in buying up even more land because they are virtually guaranteed a profit. This drives up land prices and encourages farmers to take more risks.

Finally, crop insurance is only available for particular crops in particular counties where it is grown industrially. For instance, coverage is available for corn in every county in Ohio, while apples can be insured in only six counties. Because of these coverage gaps and because each crop had to be insured individually, this system favors large single commodity farms.

Meanwhile, diversified, small-scale fruit and vegetable farms—who often need a safety net the most—have been left to deal with the inherent uncertainties of farming on their own. Traditional crop insurance programs have allowed public funds to concentrate agricultural wealth in this country. Only 22 percent of American farmers use crop insurance, at a cost of \$58 billion to the American people over a 10 year period.

Now is the time to level the playing field and assure that the farm safety net serves all farmers, not a select few. If you would like to learn more about crop insurance subsidies and how we can bring greater accountability to the program, contact Amalie at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 208 or policy@oeffa.org.

Jazz Glastra is a former OEFFA intern and a graduate student at the Ohio State University.

OEFFA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service: Partners in Sustainability

The 2014 Farm Bill required the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to "establish a transparent means by which producers may initiate organic certification . . . while participating in a contract." In doing so, Congress recognized the importance of the National Organic Program (NOP) and organic certification in improving the quality and condition of our natural resources.

Although certified organic farmers are already implementing many conservation activities which would be eligible for financial and technical support, traversing the acronym-laden NRCS bureaucracy can be challenging.

OEFFA staff are available to help bridge this divide and assist organic and sustainable farmers in taking advantage of these opportunities, including:

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)— Administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), CRP pays farmers a yearly rental payment in exchange for removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and introducing conservation practices. Applications will be accepted through February 2016; 26,000 acres expired in June 2015 and are available for enrollment. In addition, the CRP Grasslands program, which bases payments on 75 percent of the county grazing value, has \$2

million available through national competition. The enrollment deadline is November 20. Four thousand acres are currently available through the Highly Erodible Lands Initiative, 7,000 acres are available through the Habitat Buffer for Upland Birds Initiative (CP33), and the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE/CP38) program makes an additional 9,000 acres of grassland and wetland, 30,000 acres of Monarch butterfly habitat, and 15,000 acres of quail habitat available for funding.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)— CREP is an off-shoot of the CRP and targets high-priority conservation issues, such as protecting the Lake Erie watershed from toxic algae caused, in part, by farm runoff. Up to 3,000 acres in Ohio's Scioto River watershed and 3,000 acres in the Upper Big Walnut Creek can be enrolled. In the Lake Erie area, 20,000 acres are available for enrollment. Applications will be accepted through February 26, 2016 and additional Ohio Department of Natural Resources incentives are available through June 2017. CREP participation requires a 15 year contract commitment.

To learn more about these opportunities, contact your FSA/NRCS local service center at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/oh/contact/local or contact Eric at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 209 or education@oeffa.org.

Are you interested in how NRCS programs align with organic practices? Check out the CSP–NOP Crosswalk at <http://1.usa.gov/1W0sAg5>.



ORGANIC CHECK-OFF PROPOSAL EXPECTED

A proposed federal program that would assess organic certificate holders to create a pot of money for organic research and promotion is expected to be released for public comment early next year.

In May, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) submitted a proposal to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) that would establish a federal organic research and promotion program (also known as a check-off). Since that time, AMS received additional input and is expected to publish some variation of the OTA proposal in the Federal Register. A public comment period will follow.

In June, OEFFA sent out an analysis of the OTA proposal and surveyed OEFFA-certified farms and businesses. The survey found 28 percent of respondents supported OTA's proposed program, 36 percent did not support the program, and 35 percent had no opinion (1 percent did not answer this question).

In response to AMS' call for partial organic proposals, OEFFA recommended that at least half of collected funds go toward organic research if a check-off is created. As currently proposed by OTA, only about \$6.25 million out of the \$30 million projected budget is slated for research.

OEFFA also recommended that regional producer slots on the organic check-off board—the entity that decides how the funds are spent—be open to organic farmers of any size. As proposed by OTA, those slots could only be filled by farmers earning \$250,000 or more in annual gross organic sales. Further, since farmers make up approximately 70 percent of the organic certificate holders, OEFFA recommended they should make up 70 percent of the board, rather than the proposed 50 percent.

The Federal Register announcement will reflect whether these and other comments have been incorporated into the OTA proposal. During the public comment period that will follow, you will have an opportunity to further shape this program, so stay tuned for more information and be prepared to submit your feedback to the USDA.

For more information, contact Renee Hunt at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 205 or renee@oeffa.org

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Organic Farmers: Weigh in on National Organic Survey

National policies, issues, and institutions affect organic farmers, so we need a strong presence to ensure that the certified organic farmers' viewpoint, needs, and concerns are represented in the national arena. To address this situation, several organic farming organizations, including OEFFA, have been discussing building a more effective and clear voice for certified organic farmers. We are proud of certified organic's growth and growing prominence in the marketplace, and believe now is the time that farmers, who are at the core of this success, establish a focused and strong voice.

To ensure we are going about this the right way, and to make certain this direction is desired by organic farmers and ranchers, we need YOUR feedback! Please complete this short 10 minute survey: <http://bit.ly/organicsurvey>. Tell us your thoughts about a national effort to organize organic farmers, and identify issues important to you. Please call Kate Mendenhall at (585) 944-2503 to request a paper survey.



FARM TO TABLE Tasting the Whole Farm in Every Bite

By Kitty Leatham

For the past 16 years, I have been a chef, caterer, restaurant owner, teacher, health coach, and event planner. I've been called to cook with local, tasty, and beautiful ingredients and to make it easy for people to eat food that is healthy for them and the planet. Since trading in a fast-paced life running a Pittsburgh restaurant and moving to Granville, Ohio, I started offering tastings at the local farmers' market and community supported agriculture (CSA) meals available by pick up. Serving up samples of dishes like Chocolate Beet Cake and Leek, Potato, and Fennel Frittata, people were nervous at first: "What's that? Will I like it? I hate beets; they taste like dirt!" But, people loved hearing the story behind the foods, and mostly they loved the tasting. The taste is what brought people back.

Taste has always been important to me, and I have become more keenly aware of how much better locally grown and organic foods taste over conventional foods. In search of flavor, I dug up my little back yard and planted a garden. I offered cooking classes to help others create a "delicious food consciousness" and discover the truly exceptional taste that's possible from pure, simple ingredients made from-scratch.

Someone who has greatly influenced me lately is Dan Barber, famous chef and author of *The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food*. In his search for the most delicious food, he had this to say: "Without restoring fertility to the soil, delicious food is not possible." Barber moves beyond farm to table, writing "Our job isn't just to support the farmer; it's really to support the land that supports the farmer." Good food can do a "pretty good job of translating the natural world," he writes. "A delicious carrot communicates the soil it was grown in, a grass-fed lamb the kind of grasses it was pastured on, and so forth. The experience of a well-prepared meal can make these connections clear in powerful ways." When you sit down to eat, every bite should taste of the whole farm.

Try the following simple, seasonal recipes using fresh, sustainable products from your local farm or farmers' market, and enjoy the powerful and transcendent taste of the land. Share the meal with a friend, and be part of defining a new food culture.

Squash and Root Vegetable Slaw with Granny Smith Apple Cider Vinaigrette



- Slaw -

- 1 ½ c. raw kabocha or butternut squash, shredded
- 1 ½ c. raw rutabaga, shredded
- 1 ½ c. raw sweet potato, shredded
- 1 ½ c. raw celery root, peeled and shredded
- 1 lemon
- 2 Fuji or other crisp apples, peeled, quartered, and cut into matchstick size pieces
- 1 c. flat leaf parsley, chopped
- ½ cup chives, chopped

Combine kabocha or butternut squash, rutabaga, and sweet potato in a large resealable plastic bag. Place celery root in a large bowl of water with a squeeze of fresh lemon juice to prevent browning. Cover. Chill vegetables overnight. The next day, drain the celery root and transfer all shredded vegetables to a large bowl. Stir in apples, parsley, and chives.

- Apple Cider Vinaigrette -



- 2 Granny Smith apples, chopped
- ½ c. raw, unfiltered apple cider vinegar
- 2 Tbs. lime juice
- 2 Tbs. shallot, minced
- 2 tsp. sugar
- ¾ c. olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Puree apples, vinegar, and lime juice until smooth. Strain mixture through a fine mesh sieve and discard solids. Whisk in shallot and sugar. Whisk in olive oil until well blended. Season with salt and pepper. Toss ¾ cup of the vinaigrette with the slaw before serving.

Collard Green Gratin

- 4 oz country ham or prosciutto, thinly sliced
- 1 c. coarse bread crumbs or Panko crumbs
- 4 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme, chopped
- 1 c. freshly grated parmesan cheese
- 2 bunches collard greens (about 1 lb.), center ribs and stems removed
- 1 lg. onion, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 2 Tbs. all-purpose flour
- 2 c. whole milk
- ¼ tsp finely grated nutmeg
- ½ tsp hot pepper flakes (optional)

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Place ham on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake until crisp, about 20 minutes. Let cool and break into pieces or chop with a knife. Set aside.

Collard Green Gratin (cont.)

For the topping, combine bread crumbs with 2 Tbs. oil in a skillet (for extra flavor, you can use butter instead of oil). Toast over medium heat, tossing occasionally, until golden brown and crisp. Remove from the heat and add thyme and ¼ cup Parmesan. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Mix in ham and set aside.

Chop the collards (curly or Tuscan kale could be used instead, if desired). Add them to a large pot of boiling, salted water until tender and bright green, about 4 minutes. Drain and transfer to a bowl of ice water, and let cool. Drain and squeeze dry. Place greens in a large bowl.

Heat the remaining oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and cook, stirring often, until soft and golden, about 15-20 minutes. Transfer to the bowl of greens and set aside. Reserve sauce pan. Increase oven temperature to 400 degrees.

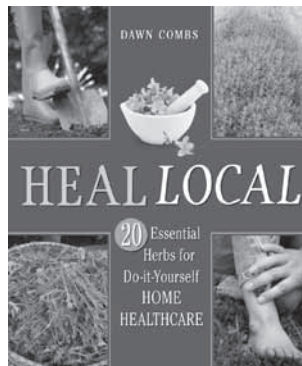
For the béchamel (or cream sauce), melt butter in reserved pan over medium heat. Add flour and cook, whisking until mixture is smooth and pale brown, about 4 minutes. Gradually add in milk. Add nutmeg and optional pepper flakes. Bring to a gentle boil, reduce heat, and simmer, whisking often, until thickened. Whisk in remaining Parmesan.

Add béchamel to collard greens mixture, season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer mixture to a 10" iron skillet or a 9" pie dish and top with bread crumb mixture. Place on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake until gratin is bubbly, about 15 to 20 minutes. Let cool slightly before serving warm or at room temperature.

Chef Kitty Leatham is the owner and operator of Green Chef Meals CSA, which provides weekly or bi-weekly meals for pick up. For more information, email kitty.leatham@gmail.com.

NEW RELEASES

OEFFA Member Releases New Book, *Heal Local*



The latest book from OEFFA member and farmer Dawn Combs, *Heal Local: 20 Essential Herbs for Do-it-Yourself Home Healthcare*, was published this summer by New Society Publishers. In the book's forward, Joel Salatin of Polyface Farms writes, "[Dawn Combs'] compelling case for re-informing ourselves with ancient healing arts re-connects us to the sheer abundance and provision of our ecological nest. This book will walk you through the process, from initial interest to a home apothecary. Rather than a sanctimonious attitude, Dawn exhibits an

appreciative can-do spirit that uplifts the individual initiative and respects the awesomeness of natural healing." The book is a "Books for Wiser Living" selection by *Mother Earth News* magazine.

Dawn Combs is a homestead herbalist and ethnobotanist with more than 20 years experience in women's health issues. She is a beekeeper, educator, and co-owner of the medicinal herb and honey farm Mockingbird Meadows and its Eclectic Herbal Institute. Her family was recently recognized by *Mother Earth News* as one of their 2013 Homesteaders of the Year. Combs is also the author of *Conceiving Healthy Babies*.

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Tools You Can Use:

New Calculator Tool Can Help You Predict Soil Organic Matter Content

By Rafiq Islam

Would you like to easily be able to calculate and predict how your management practices are affecting your farm's soil organic matter (SOM) content and soil health? Researchers at the Ohio State University have developed the SOM Calculator, a new spreadsheet tool that predicts long-term SOM content in a field in response to organic farming practices, cropping systems, tillage practices, manure and soil amendments, soil erosion and surface runoff, cover crops, and the removal of the leaves and stalks of field crops, known as stover.

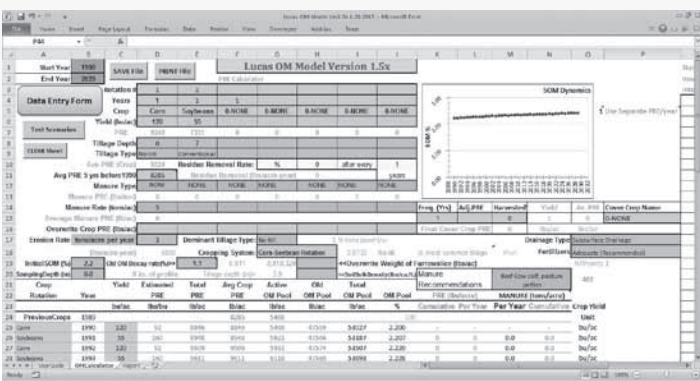
The SOM calculator can help farmers, crop consultants, Extension agents, researchers, and others:

- ◇ Visualize the impact of their current and future farming on SOM content;
- ◇ Predict the long-term trends of organic farming and conservation practices on SOM content and soil health over the next 1-50 years;
- ◇ Estimate the economics of farming practices and stover removal;
- ◇ Optimize stover removal rates, such that the SOM is not adversely affected over time;
- ◇ Choose alternatives to mitigate or offset the negative effects of stover removal;
- ◇ Design a farm management plan in order to reach a certain goal of carbon sequestration;
- ◇ Print a detailed report of SOM scenarios with charts; and
- ◇ Estimate the nutrient status of the soil, along with carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions from the field.

To utilize the calculator, users must be located in Ohio, Michigan, or a surrounding state; have access to a computer with Microsoft Excel (2010 or later), and develop a field inventory which includes crop rotation, yields, tillage type, tillage depth, erosion rate, cover crops, and an initial SOM level.

To request a copy of this free calculator, go to www.southcenters.osu.edu/soil or www.goo.gl/UN82Pz.

Rafiq Islam is the Soil, Water, and Bioenergy Program Director at the Ohio State University South Centers. He may be reached at (740) 289-2071, islam.27@osu.edu, or by writing to 1864 Shyville Rd., Piketon, OH 45661.



Testing the Soil Balancing Approach in Organic Production

In collaboration with OEFFA, a team of Ohio State University investigators are examining soil balancing in agronomic and specialty crop production by working with organic farmers to understand and more effectively apply soil balancing approaches. Support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative has allowed the team to start experiments on more than a dozen Ohio farms and at two Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) sites.

Soil balancing, based on Base Cation Saturation Ratios, is an approach to maintaining soil and crop health and limiting weed and pest pressure. Proponents of this method believe that soils are ideally "balanced" when roughly 70 percent, 10 percent, and 5 percent of the exchangeable sites are occupied by calcium, magnesium, and potassium, respectively. Farmers apply gypsum, lime, and other soil additives to achieve these desired ratios. Despite the popularity of soil balancing, little research-based information is available on its effectiveness, benefits, and drawbacks. This project is designed to integrate scientific and on-farm expertise in order to develop a shared, practical understanding of the economic and production consequences of soil balancing.

We are currently seeking more farms to participate in this collaborative on-farm research, to help us learn how soils, crops, weeds, farm economics, and other outcomes are influenced by soil balancing approaches.

To date, farmers and researchers have collected data by sampling soil for weed seed banks and soil fertility, recording plant and leaf measurements to track plant growth and nutrients, and documenting growth rates through photographs. Additional data will be collected at harvest, including total and marketable yields and quality. Participating farmers will receive their personal results confidentially, but collective results will be reported anonymously.

Learn more about this soil balancing project and other collaborative organic research projects at the Organic Farming Research Network website: www.organicfarmingresearchnetwork.org.ohio-state.edu. If you're interested in having your farm participate in this research, contact Eric Pawlowski at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 209 or eric@oeffa.org.

Need Advice? Ask a Farmer!

OEFFA's Farmer Information Network connects individuals with specific questions about sustainable and organic food production and marketing with experienced farmers who have the answers. To ask a question of a fellow farmer, or to volunteer to be a part of the network, call (614) 421-2022 Ext. 209 or email eric@oeffa.org.

Don't Toss That Survey!

Help the USDA Understand How Food Safety Rules Will Affect You

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (USDA ERS) is researching how the produce industry will fare under the Food Safety Modernization Act. To estimate the impact, the National Agricultural Statistics Service is asking growers questions about their current food safety practices and costs in the last half of their 2015 and 2016 Chemical Use Surveys. Surveys will be sent to nearly 11,000 produce growers in the next two years. Don't be put off by the "Chemical Use Survey" title: these food safety statistics are relevant to organic and sustainable farmers, and we encourage all farmers to participate! For more information, call (202) 694-5244 or write to Linda Calvin, USDA ERS, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Mail Stop 1800, Washington, DC 20250.



RESOURCES

Beginning Farmer Resource Guide—The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Iowa State University Extension have developed a new publication, *A Resource Guide for Beginning Farmers*. The 48 page guide covers production practices, post-harvest handling, business planning, and farm finances.

 <http://bit.ly/1Lh4TNW>

Farm Employment Legal Guide—Farm Commons has released *Farm Employment Law: A Guide to Rules and Regulations Across the United States*, detailing farm employment laws and regulations.

 <http://bit.ly/1ihCpbi>

Farm Webinars—The National Good Food Network has more than 50 archived webinars on topics including food hubs, business, finance, funding, and farm to school.

 <http://bit.ly/1NxAgE9>

Forage Field Guide—This November, Purdue University will release the third edition of its *Forage Field Guide*, designed to help producers improve the productivity and efficiency of their forage enterprise.

 <https://ag.purdue.edu/agry/dtc/Pages/ForageFieldGuide.aspx>

NCR-SARE Grant—The North-Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) program is currently accepting proposals for several grant programs. The Partnership Grant program funds cooperative on-farm research, demonstration, and education activities; proposals are due by October 29. The Youth Educator Grant program supports projects that provide opportunities for youth to learn about sustainable agriculture; proposals are due by November 12. The Farmer Rancher Grant program assists producers in exploring sustainable agriculture solutions to problems they face on the farm or ranch; proposals are due December 3.

 <http://bit.ly/1W3CVIG>

 <http://bit.ly/1En3oHf>

 <http://bit.ly/1UWERO>

Want to learn more? OEFFA's online Resources section includes links to dozens of websites, publications, and organizations on a wide-range of topics including organic production, food safety, livestock, soil fertility, and more. Go to www.oeffa.org/resources.

FDA Releases Final Preventive Controls Rule

Congress passed the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) more than five years ago. Two rules established by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under FSMA are likely to have the greatest impact on OEFFA member farmers and businesses: the Produce Rule and the Preventive Controls Rule.

The FDA released the final Preventive Controls Rule (PCR) in September. This rule establishes regulations for entities that are required to register with the FDA as food facilities. The Preventive Controls rule has two main parts:

- ◇ New requirements for hazard analysis and risk-based preventive controls, and
- ◇ Updates to existing Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) requirements.

Who is required to comply with the Preventive Controls Rule?

If you manufacture, process, pack, or hold food for consumption in the U.S. you are a food facility and are required to register with the FDA and comply with the PCR. Some farms that meet this definition are exempt from registering as "retail food establishments."

The devil is in the details in how this rule applies and to whom it applies. For a detailed analysis of this rule, go to <http://sustainableagriculture.net/category/food-safety>. Visit OEFFA's food safety webpage at <http://policy.oeffa.org/foodsafety> for updates on this and the Produce Rule which is expected to be released in late October.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

For a complete calendar of events go to www.oeffa.org/events

Fermenting Veggies Made Easy!

Thursday, October 22—6:30 p.m.

City Folks Farm Shop • Columbus, OH

Join Andy Reed of Krazy Kraut to learn how to make raw fermented krauts. Leave with one quart of kraut ready-to-ferment to take home. Cost: \$45. For more information, call (614) 946-5553 or email michelle@cityfolksfarmshop.com.

Finding Your Niche: Aligning Products, Markets, and Your Interests for Maximum Productivity, Profit, and Satisfaction



Saturday, October 24—2-5 p.m.

The Refugee Response at Ohio City Farm • Cleveland, OH

Urban homesteader Rachel Tayse Baillieu will share how she identifies trends and researches competition when making product decisions, and evaluates potential sales outlets. Cost: \$20, includes the presentation, tour, and light refreshments. For more information, call (614) 421-2022 or go to www.oeffa.org/q/niche.

Foundations of Lacto-Fermented Beverages

Wednesday, October 28—6:30 p.m.

City Folks Farm Shop • Columbus, OH

Join Jen Kindrick of Lost Skills Pantry to learn the benefits of kombucha, jun, water kefir (tibicos), milk kefir, ginger beer, and lacto-fermented soda including detailed instructions on culture care, brewing, and troubleshooting. Cost: \$25. For more information, call (614) 946-5553 or email michelle@cityfolksfarmshop.com.

Homemade Pasta 101

Saturday, November 7—6-8:30 p.m.

Gorman Heritage Farm • Cincinnati, OH

Learn how to make fresh pasta dough by hand and the basics of kneading, rolling, and cutting fresh pasta. Cost: \$40-50. For more information, call (513) 563-6663 or go to www.gormanfarm.org.

Franklin County Local Food Council Meeting

Tuesday, November 17 and Tuesday, December 15—4:30-7:30 p.m.

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission • Columbus, OH

The Franklin County Local Food Council seeks to promote a resilient local food system in Central Ohio. Meetings are open to the public. For more information, email fcalfc@gmail.com.

Hops Field Tours

Friday, November 6 and Friday, December 4—10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Wooster and Piketon, OH

The OSU Hops Research program offers free monthly tours to educate farmers about getting started in hops production. For more information, call (740) 289-2071 or email mcglothlin.4@osu.edu.

Canning and Food Preservation Safety



Monday, November 16—7-9 p.m.

Alexandria Public Library • Alexandria, OH

Join OEFFA's Heart of Ohio Chapter and Jeannie Seabrook of Glass Rooster Cannery for a discussion of food preservation and a short business meeting. Free and open to the public. For more information, call (740) 877-8738 or email sunbeamfamilyfarm@gmail.com.

Christmas Wreaths

Saturday, December 5—1-3 p.m.

Sunny Meadows Flower Farm • Columbus, OH

Learn how to create a beautiful, festive wreath that will add a touch of color to your home. Cost: \$95. For more information, go to www.sunnymeadowsflowerfarm.com.

Local Food Seminar



Sunday, January 31, 2016—1:45 p.m.

St. George Catholic Church • Georgetown, OH

Join OEFFA's OK River Valley Chapter and the Catholic Rural Life Conference for their annual Local Food Seminar, featuring workshops, speakers, and other activities. For more information, call (937) 392-1543 or email jkparsnip@yahoo.com.

OEFFA's 37th Annual Conference: Growing Right by Nature



Friday, February 12-Sunday, February 14, 2016

Granville Middle and High Schools • Granville, OH

Save the date! Ohio's largest sustainable agriculture conference will feature keynote speakers John Ikerd and Lindsey Lusher Shute, approximately 100 workshops, local and organic meals, full-day pre-conference events, a kids' conference, childcare, a trade show, Saturday evening entertainment, and more. Registration will open in December. For more information, call (614) 421-2022 or go to www.oeffa.org/conference2016.



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WELCOME NEW OEFFA STAFF!



OEFFA Certification welcomed **Casey Brooks** as a new Certification Specialist in June. Casey holds a B.S. in Biology-Ecology from the University of Akron and an M.S. in Sustainable Systems from Slippery Rock University. Most recently, he managed the Sustainable Agriculture Program at Zane State College. Prior to this, he worked at The Wilds, serving as the Sustainable Agriculture Project Manager and Lead Conservation Educator.

In August, OEFFA Certification also welcomed **Becky Pelishek** as Administrative Assistant. Becky studied Environmental Policy and Decision Making as well as Professional Writing at The Ohio State University. Welcome to the OEFFA staff, Casey and Becky!

CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

HEART OF OHIO CHAPTER

OEFFA's Heart of Ohio Chapter has announced their meeting and event schedule for the 2015-2016 season. All events begin with a short business meeting, which usually features farm policy updates, and include a discussion geared toward both urban and rural gardeners and farmers. Meetings are free and open to the public and will be held from 7-9 p.m. at the Alexandria Public Library at 10 Maple Dr. in Alexandria, Ohio unless otherwise noted. The schedule includes "Organic Certification and Non-GMO Issues" with Eric Pawlowski of OEFFA and Daniel Masters of Highland Farms on October 19, "Canning and Food Preservation Safety" with Jeannie Seabrook of Glass Rooster Cannery on November 16, a question and answer farmer panel on January 19, a weed control discussion on March 21, "Growing Strawberries" with Ron Meyer of Strawberry Hill Farms on April 18, and a farm visit on May 16.

MOON CHAPTER

OEFFA's MOON chapter has organized several programs this year. On March 28, Dan and Margo Royer-Miller spoke about Biointensive gardening as part of the chapter's annual "Let's Get Growing" program. In June, Alex Zomchek and the Butler County Beekeepers Club joined the chapter at the Miami University apiary for a honey bee presentation and demonstration. In late July, the chapter visited Stoney Hedgerow Farm in Camden, the family farm of Sharon and Craig Harkrider. In September, the chapter held its 9th Harvest MOON Festival in Oxford, featuring information booths, farmers' market vendors, music, children's activities, cooking demonstrations, short talks, food, and more.

OK RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER

In September, the OK River Valley Chapter participated in Brown County Fair week with a booth and a parade float—complete with a puppet show written and performed by members. The chapter is currently organizing its annual Local Food Seminar with the Catholic Rural Life Conference. The seminar will be held on January 31 at 1:45 p.m. at St. George Catholic Church in Georgetown. To volunteer, or to suggest a workshop or speaker, contact chapter president Julie Kline.

For more information about OEFFA's chapters, see pg. 2 or go to www.oeffa.org/chapter.

UN-CLASSIFIED ADS

WANTED Other senior farmers for networking and support group. Topics could range from farm succession to creaky knees. Contact Patricia and James in Licking Co. at (740) 928-2286 or pjamesmatthews@yahoo.com.

FOR SALE Certified organic German Red seed garlic. Samples sent to Cornell Lab to test for bloat nematodes. \$14/lb., including shipping in the U.S. Quantity pricing over 10 lbs. Call Mark in MI at (989) 654-4031 or (989) 205-2119.

FOR SALE 7 acre mini farm in Beavercreek Township. 4 BR/2 BA mid-1800's farmhouse. 2 car garage, 2 out buildings. Chemical and herbicide-free for 18+ years. See listing at <http://bit.ly/1NBxIMt>.

FOR RENT CSA farm with 2 acre produce field and it's own well. High tunnel, cold frame, heated greenhouse, barn with kitchen, walk-in cooler, and office. Has been in operation as CSA farm for 8 years. Owner retiring. Contact Kathy in Geauga Co. at (440) 669-4013 or rockvalleyrun@yahoo.com.

Un-classified ads are free for members and \$5 for non-members. Submissions no longer than 30 words are due by December 15 for the winter issue. Call (614) 421-2022 Ext. 203 or email newsletter@oeffa.org.

WELCOME NEW OEFFA MEMBERS

June 9-September 17, 2015

FAMILY FARM

Jacob and Jessica Anstead
Ron Ford and Cynthia Hayes, *Ford Farm*
Felicia and Darren Krock, *Triangle K Ranch*
Katherine Lane and Molly Wharton, *Hand Hewn Farm*
Justin Miller and Christian Ramsburg, *Harmon Creek Farm*
Sarah Taylor, *The Appropriate Farm*

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Elizabeth Doshi, *Enright Ridge Urban Ecovillage*

FAMILY

Robert and Divina Koonce
Scott and Angie Mack
Bonnie and Mickey Wilkinson
Cornelius Williams

INDIVIDUAL

Anthony Belmonte
Kevin Dickey
Brian Doyle
Anna Haas
Angela Huffman
Sally Kerwood
Lara Lashutka Crotty
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Sarah Petty
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Christina Tonges

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TELL THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: NO NEW PIPELINES IN OHIO!

Two major pipeline projects are working their way through the approval process at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Television commercials and paid advertisements often depict natural gas as a safe, job-creating solution to our nation's energy needs, but the production of natural gas has led to numerous "fraccidents" including fires, explosions, earthquakes, and injection well leaks. New pipeline infrastructure not only reinforces a long-term commitment to fracking and its associated risks to water quality, public health, and food production; it also adds a new layer of risk—hundreds of miles of new pipeline and infrastructure.

THE PROBLEM WITH PIPELINES

There have been numerous large pipeline failures in recent years resulting in damage and loss of life. A natural gas pipeline explosion in California killed eight people in 2010. A report by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* found that hundreds of miles of pipelines have already been installed with no construction standards, safety checks, inspections, or monitoring in Pennsylvania. This may be due to the fact that the agency charged with oversight, the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration, has trouble retaining qualified inspectors.

New pipeline infrastructure will also contribute to climate change. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas emitted as natural gas is produced AND transported. Far from being a "bridge" until non-carbon energy sources can be more widely implemented, according to the Environmental Health and Policy Institute, "methane is 72 times more potent at capturing heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide over the first 20 years after release. Methane gradually converts to carbon dioxide, so it's worst in the short term."

TWO COMPANIES, TWO PIPELINE PROJECTS

The 380 mile ET Rover pipeline would cross 18 Ohio counties and require the construction of five compressor stations. Spectra Energy's Nexus pipeline project would be 250 miles long, impact 11 Ohio counties, and include four compressor stations.

In total, these two projects will affect 25 counties and include 630 miles of pipeline with the potential to impact waterways, farmland, forests, cultural resources, and rural and suburban communities. Should the projects move forward, a 100 foot exclusion zone around the pipeline would prohibit trees, buildings, or other structures, additionally impacting farmland and habitat. Two projects represent unnecessary duplication, do not contribute to a sustainable energy future, and pose more risk than benefit.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can have an impact on whether these pipelines are built.

Contact the FERC today and let them know:

- ◇ We don't need two separate pipelines that follow almost the same route.
- ◇ Transporting fracked gas into Canada does not promote U.S. energy independence and puts Ohio communities at risk.
- ◇ We do not support the climate changing impacts of natural gas production and transmission.

SUBMIT YOUR COMMENT ONLINE:

www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/ecomment.asp

OR MAIL TO:

Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE, Room 1A
Washington, DC 20426