

Date: March 17, 2014
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-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

Organic Grain Marketing Opportunities Abound in Pennsylvania

Ag professionals and industry representatives come together to aid interested farmers in organic transition process

It's no surprise that demand for organic products has been steadily growing. Consumers have been driving demand for specialty food products such as organic for years. But recently we have seen a more localized phenomenon in heightened demand for organic products, especially organic milk and organic feed grains.

Organic grain mills are actively seeking feed grain producers who are interested in transitioning to organic production. The organic grain market in Pennsylvania is driven by the organic poultry and dairy industries, and marketers of these grains are interested in sourcing more organic grain from US farms, especially Pennsylvania farms.

"The lion's share of organic grain fed to organic livestock in the US is sourced from overseas, as there are just not enough organic acres in the US to keep up with domestic demand," notes Steve Smelter, Organic Sales and Nutritional Services representative for Kreamer Feed in Kreamer, PA, which markets Nature's Best Organic Feed.

Mills are getting some pretty strong market signals to source as much organic grain domestically as they can. Processors such as Bell & Evans, Kreamer Feed, and Perdue AgriBusiness are actively asking producers to grow organic grains and Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) is helping these businesses by assisting farmers in making the transition.

There have been several informational meetings around the state where farmers were invited to consider transitioning to organic production and learned about marketing incentives and organic production practices, as well as the organic certification process. PCO has been present to demystify the process and offer resources to assist producers in making the transition. PCO offers educational resources, farm visits, as well as a mentor program where interested producers can get on the phone with an experienced organic farmer to have some of their questions answered.

During one such all-day meeting, hosted by Kreamer Feed on March 4 in Lewisburg, PA, Jeff Moyer, Farm Director at the Rodale Institute, and Lee Rinehart, PCO's Director of Education and Outreach, provided presentations on organic production and certification for the 45 attendees. The presentations were highlighted by questions and comments by farmers and informational discussions with representatives from Seedway, LLC; Blue River Hybrids; Lancaster Agriculture Products and The Fertrell Company. The industry really came together to offer resources so farmers can make an informed decision on transitioning to organic.

For more information on organic grain production, organic certification and marketing, or to find out about PCO's Organic Mentor Program, contact Lee Rinehart at 814-470-9734 or lee@paorganic.org.

To learn more about PCO or to apply for organic certification, contact Heather Donald at 814-422-0251, or heather@paorganic.org or visit www.paorganic.org.

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Pennsylvania Certified Organic is a non-profit organization that educates and certifies organic growers and handlers in Pennsylvania and the surrounding region. PCO certifies more than 600 farming and food production operations, including produce, field crops, herbs, wild crops, dairy products, poultry products, value-added products, livestock, mushrooms, maple, snack foods, coffee, tea, cosmetics, and more.

PCO is accredited by the USDA and offers certification to the USDA, Canadian and European Union organic programs.

To learn more about PCO or to apply for organic certification, call 814-422-0251 or visit our website at www.paorganic.org.

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Photo Caption: Rodale's Jeff Moyer addresses farmers and discusses cover cropping in organic production systems.

