PCO
CERTIFIED ORGANIC

Organic Matters

Semi-Annual Newsletter | Winter/Spring 2025

25 YEARS AND GROWING

Organically Speaking

Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul –
and sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all.
– Emily Dickinson

JOE DICKSON, BOARD PRESIDENT & INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I write this, I'm watching a black-capped chickadee perched on a narrow branch outside my window. There's currently over two feet of snow on the ground, but the little bird looks happy, chubby, and well-fed. I can't help but think of resilience, hope, and the coming spring – qualities that define both nature and our organic community.

As I step into the role of Interim Executive Director, I want to take a moment to recognize the dedicated team at PCO. Over the past few months, I've had the privilege of working more closely with our staff, and their passion, expertise, and commitment to organic integrity continue to inspire me. Their hard work ensures that PCO remains strong and well-positioned to serve our members and the broader organic community. As a 30-year veteran of organic agriculture and certification, I'm honored to roll up my sleeves and work alongside this unparalleled team.

Earlier this year, Diana Kobus transitioned out of her role as Executive Director, and I want to acknowledge her contributions to PCO and the organic movement. Her efforts helped shape PCO into the highly effective organization it is today, and we are grateful for her leadership.

The organic movement has always been about community – coming together to build a food system that supports people, the planet, and future generations. That collective commitment has never been more evident than in my time with PCO and the dedication, innovation, and grit of our clients, staff, and partners. Our strength as a community lies in our ability to collaborate, adapt, and innovate. We also choose hope – for the future of agriculture, for the resilience of our farmers, and for the health of our planet. By working together, we reaffirm our commitment to a sustainable and thriving food system for generations to come.

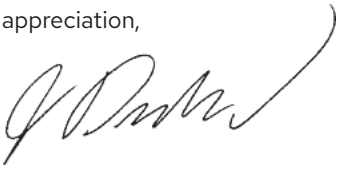
I also want to assure our members, certified operations, and partners that PCO is in a strong position – both financially and in our ability to serve the organic community. Our team remains committed to delivering high-quality certification services and resources while supporting the continued growth of organic agriculture. The demand for organic food is strong, and the future is bright. With so many dedicated farmers, processors, retailers, and advocates working together, we are well-prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

This issue of *Organic Matters* highlights stories of resilience, innovation, and collaboration – hallmarks of the organic community. As we look forward, let's continue to support one another, share knowledge, and strengthen the organic movement together.

The organic movement has always been about community – coming together to build a food system that supports people, the planet, and future generations.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible community. I look forward to working alongside you as we continue to grow and champion organic agriculture for generations to come. I also welcome your thoughts and feedback – drop me a line at jdickson@paorganic.org or give me a call at 802.491.7525.

With appreciation,



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Wren Frueh, Mentorship Program Coordinator

PCO's VISION
A world where agriculture systems prioritize health, ecological balance, fairness and care.

PCO's MISSION
To uphold and advance organic principles and practices through certification, advocacy, and technical support.

PCO's CORE VALUES
1. **People & Service** – Keep people at the center of every action, interaction, and decision
2. **Organic Spirit & Environment** – Promote restorative practices that improve the world for future generations
3. **Honesty & Integrity** – Embrace transparency and integrity in all our work.

Organic Matters

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FEATURES

COLUMNS

COVER PHOTO: Painterland Sisters

Farmer Profile: Painterland Sisters

ALISON GARBER, EXECUTIVE SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Alison Garber from PCO caught up with Hayley and Stephanie Painter, owners of Painterland Sisters. They discussed their journey in building a PCO-certified organic skyr yogurt brand.

THE PAINTERLAND SISTERS: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN FARMERS AND CONSUMERS

In the heart of Northern Pennsylvania, on a fourth-generation organic dairy and crop farm, two sisters are revolutionizing the way consumers connect with their food. Hayley and Stephanie Painter, co-founders of Painterland Sisters, have embarked on a mission not just to sustain their family farm but to change the narrative around organic dairy farming. Through their organic skyr yogurt brand, they are proving that organic farming and business can coexist with a greater purpose—keeping farmers farming while educating consumers on the value of organic agriculture.

FROM FARM TO SPOON: THE BIRTH OF PAINTERLAND SISTERS

Growing up on Painterland Farms in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, Hayley and Stephanie were immersed in the rhythms of farm life. Their family's farm has always embraced organic and regenerative agriculture, prioritizing sustainable practices that benefit the land, animals, and consumers alike. However, the instability of the dairy market posed a challenge. "We needed an outlet for our milk, and we needed to take control of our own destinies," Stephanie explained.

With this motivation, the sisters launched Painterland Sisters, an organic dairy brand focused on producing high-quality skyr yogurt sourced from their farm and their neighboring family-owned organic dairy farms in Pennsylvania and New York. Currently, they are supporting approximately 25 other farms. The brand is built on a foundation of transparency, sustainability, and the desire to bridge the growing gap between consumers and farmers.

ORGANIC FARMING: A FINANCIAL AND ETHICAL DECISION

Many assume that organic farming is purely a philosophical choice, but for the Painter family, it was also a financial one. Their transition to organic farming in the early 2000s was not just about environmental sustainability – it was also about economic viability. "We realized that organic was the best financial move for our farm. The cost of chemical fertilizers and pesticides was not only expensive, but it also didn't align with how we wanted to treat our land and animals," Hayley noted.

Organic certification ensures that dairy cows are raised according to the National Organic Standards and at Painterland Sisters, the cows graze on organically certified pasture, consuming a diet rich in natural forages rather than processed feeds. This practice results in milk with higher nutritional value and a more sustainable farming model. "Our cows live longer, the nutrients in our milk are higher, and we create a more holistic farming cycle that benefits everyone involved—from the farmer to the consumer," said Stephanie.

BEYOND BUSINESS: ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

For the Painterland Sisters, their brand is more than just yogurt; it is a platform for advocacy. They actively participate in initiatives such as the Pennsylvania Organic Center of

TOP: The Painter sisters, Stephanie (left) and Hayley.

"We realized that organic was the best financial move for our farm. The cost of chemical fertilizers and pesticides was not only expensive, but it also didn't align with how we wanted to treat our land and animals," Hayley noted.

Excellence and Pennsylvania's Preferred Organic Program, ensuring that organic dairy farming continues to grow within the state of Pennsylvania. "Fewer than 15% of people say they know a farmer"," Hayley pointed out. "We want to change that by connecting people directly to their food source."

One of the key ways they accomplish this is through consumer education. The Painterland Sisters brand can be seen at events and trade shows across the country and their skyr yogurt packaging itself tells a story—each cup features an inviting label with an interactive coloring page for children, designed to spark curiosity about farming from a young age. "If we can teach kids where their food comes from in a fun and engaging way, we're planting seeds of understanding that will grow with them," Stephanie added.

Moreover, the sisters work directly with other farmers to encourage organic transition. Through their partnership with Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) and the TOPP (Transition to Organic Partnership) program, they help farmers navigate certification processes and encourage them to take advantage of transition assistance programs. "Many farmers are already practicing organic methods without realizing it. We help them see that the switch is not as daunting as it seems," Hayley explained.

A NATIONWIDE IMPACT

Despite starting their company in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Painterland Sisters have managed to expand rapidly. Their yogurt is now available in over 4,000 stores across all 50 states, a feat that underscores the demand for high-quality organic dairy products. "Seeing Pennsylvania organic milk in stores nationwide is one of our proudest moments," said Stephanie. "It's proof that what we're doing matters."

The sisters also take pride in supporting fellow farmers who have joined their supply chain. "When we first started, even before we had a product on the shelves, farmers – both organic and conventional – were asking how they could be part of this movement. That kind of trust and belief in what we're building is incredibly motivating," Hayley said.

THE FUTURE OF PAINTERLAND SISTERS

Looking ahead, the Painterland Sisters are not slowing down. They are in the process of expanding their consumer outreach and engagement programs in a continued effort to reach communities across the country "We want to meet people where they are—whether that's at trade shows, community events, or through digital storytelling," said Hayley.

Additionally, they are continuously exploring new ways to educate and inspire. Their partnership with organizations like the Organic Trade Association ensures they can back up their marketing with credible, research-backed information on organic benefits. "Our goal is to make it easy for consumers to choose organic—not just because it's better for them, but

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Painterland Sisters yogurt is available in seven flavors and two sizes – 5.3 ounce cups and 24 ounce tubs.

Black Locust: A Tree Crop for Organic Farms

JOSEPH R. HECKMAN, PH.D., EXTENSION SPECIALIST — SOIL FERTILITY, COOK CAMPUS, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF PLANT BIOLOGY, RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NJ

Black Locust, *Robinia pseudoacacia*, is fast growing tree with many attributes that make it a valuable tree to grow as a crop. This species is well adapted to the Mid-Atlantic region. It is an especially valued for organic agriculture because it can serve so many useful ecological functions. In a silvopasture system it provides filtered shade and shelter. As a legume it adds nitrogen to soil. The flowers in spring provide nectar for bees and Locust Blossom Honey. When harvested as a mature tree the decay resistant wood is a natural alternative to pesticide treated wood for fence posts and other uses as durable lumber.

Black locust should be more widely grown as a crop because the USDA-NOP standards require that: "The producer must not use lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited materials" (NOP 7 CFR 205.206 (2015). Furthermore, because organic livestock production emphasizes pasture feeding, there is increasing need for perimeter fencing which can use locust fence posts. Thus, natural untreated locust wood products are highly valued for organic agriculture.

Currently some newly established organic pasture-based farms are reporting a short supply of available black locust wood post for fencing. Black locust wood is very decay resistant with an effective useful life as a fence post of 50 years or more.

Goats enjoy feeding on foliage provided from branches pruned in summer from black locust trees.

ABOVE: A grove of black locust trees at Rutgers New Jersey Agriculture Experiment Station in winter of 2023. These trees were planted in spring of 2011.

Black locust is a very fast-growing tree that casts only a light shade such that it functions well in silvopasture systems. The filtered sunlight along with biological N fixation supports the growth of pasture grasses. The tree is easy to establish. After only about ten years of growth on good sites, the trunks can be harvested as round fence posts. Within about twenty years they may be processed with a sawmill into lumber or squared fence posts. After harvest, the trees regenerate quickly from stump sprouts. Thus, once established, there is no

Natural untreated locust wood products are highly valued for organic agriculture.

need to replant this regenerative tree.

Locust wood makes an excellent fence post because it is very strong, durable, and decay resistant. Also, because there is very little swelling or shrinkage with changes in moisture, black locust wood is a good alternative to building with treated lumber.

The chemicals found in treated lumber may include mineral elements such as chromium, copper, and arsenic or toxic organic compounds associated with creosote. The chemicals found in treated lumber can leach out of the wood and pollute the soil. Also, during fence installation shavings from treated wood often litter the ground and contaminate the soil with toxic elements chromium and arsenic. Avoiding soil contamination is a big advantage of using natural wood products such as black locust.

Besides black locusts, Osage orange is another species worth considering for fence posts. An advantage of black locust is that this species grows relatively fast and straight to produce a usable log within a reasonable time.

Other agricultural uses spurring demand for locust posts are trellises for wine grapes, garden stakes, and tall structures for growing hops. Besides agriculture, black locust lumber is becoming an increasing popular wood for domestic outdoor uses such as decking, patios, and playground furniture.

As already mentioned, black locust wood is very hard and decay resistant. Because the wood is so hard, predrilling holes for nails, screws, or staples is often necessary. Usually, the sapwood on black locust is relatively thin but less decay resistant. The heartwood is the most decay resistant.

When sawmilled or processed into 6x6 inch, a post 8 ft. long may sell for $25. Round unprocessed posts may sell for $10 to $15, depending on size and quality. Longer poles for trellises may be worth several times that amount. Lumber from black locust may retail for $5 per board foot. Logs unsuitable for posts or lumber make excellent firewood which when seasoned may retail at $250 per cord.

Black locust, because it is a nitrogen fixing legume, can grow quickly on disturbed sites or other low organic matter content soils without added N fertilizer. Although locust is capable of re-vegetating poor field sites the soil must have good drainage.

Strongly acid soils, very sandy soils, and poorly drained soils are not suitable sites for growing black locust. It can be planted on poor sites to help to remediate gullies and soils with low organic matter content. However, it will grow much faster on good soils. Well drained sandy loams, loams, and silt loams with soil pH levels between 6 and 7 are good sites. On good soils, fast-growing black locust will produce usable wood within ten to twenty years.

New plantings can be established from seedlings purchased from a nursery or they may be propagated from collected seed. When collecting seed look for specimens that grow tall with a straight trunk.

When black locust trees are harvested, they do not need to be replanted. They will very quickly regrow sprouts from the stump. The second harvest will grow back even faster from stump spouts to reach commercial size logs. Stumps should be cut low to the ground. The multiple sprouts that are likely to emerge from each stump should be pruned to allow only a single stem to regrow into the new tree. Stump resprouts may regrow 5 to 10 ft in the first year after harvest. Logs should be harvested in the fall or winter months. Spring or summer harvests are not optimum for tree regrowth.

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LEFT: Installing black locust fence posts. A chainsaw can be used to make points for easier installation in hard ground. Unlike working with CCA treated wood, littering the land locust wood shavings will not contaminate the soil. *RIGHT:* Black locust fence post.

Black locust in flower.

A ten year old black locust tree at breast height has 7 inch diameter log.

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In a silvopasture system, when trees are young, they must be protected from livestock with some type of fencing. Although goats can safely consume locust foliage, the tree is regarded as toxic to equine. If the trees are pruned to remove side branches this produces a clear trunk with fewer knots in the wood. Pruned branches with leaves intact may be fed to goats.

Horses should not be allowed to consume black locust foliage or the bark from black locust. When the locust posts are used for horse pasture, the bark must be removed.

Locust trees tend to grow straight trunks. However, sometimes black locust is attacked by an insect known as the locust borer which damages the stem. Damaged trees typically recover but they are more likely to grow crooked. These trees might not be suitable for lumber, but regardless of tree shape locust makes excellent firewood.

The locust borer insect prefers to lay its eggs on tree trunks with exposure to sunlight. Cultural practices to shade the trunks is believed to reduce the amount of injury from locust borer. Close space plantings or integration with other forest tree species are strategies for producing more shade on the tree trunks.

In late summer, leaf miners may attack the foliage. In severe infestations, the foliage may turn brown but there is no easy way to control this pest.

One of the most serious pests of black locust, or any young tree, is attack from deer. Young trees have small thorns, but this is not enough protection from grazing. During the spring, deer especially like to graze on the young fresh shoots of black locust. This greatly sets back upright growth and repeated grazing can kill trees. In the fall, male deer rub on young trees and injure the bark. Some type of deer fencing, or deer repellent are necessary to prevent deer damage at sites with high deer populations.

Black locust will tolerate acidic low fertility soils but will grow faster when soil fertility is improved. Begin with a soil test. If the soil pH is less than 6.0 apply enough limestone to raise soil pH to 6.5. Growth may benefit from a broadcast application of compost before planting

Spring plantings of one or two-year dormant seedling trees that are about 1–2 ft typically transplant easily with a high survival rate. Planting in rows spaced 8 ft apart and 8 ft spacing within rows, creates a square grid pattern for a population of 680 trees per acre. This spacing allows for easy passage of a mower for weed management. A relatively close spacing is considered desirable for purposes of promoting upright straight growth and shading of tree trunks to minimize borer injury.

Young trees that fail to thrive or are not growing straight should be thinned from the grove in the second or third year after planting to reduce competition among trees. Some trees will naturally die off if the plantation is allowed to remain overcrowded. Black locust without too much competition among trees on a good site are capable producing a 6-to-8-inch logs in about ten to fifteen years.

A 1930, publication by the USDA Forest Service provides some older cultural advice on growing black locust (Web search for USDA Farmers Bulletin No. 1628).

Joseph Heckman, PhD is Rutgers University Professor of Soil Science and teaches courses in Soil Fertility and Organic Agriculture. For nine years he served on the board of Northeast Organic Farming Association–NJ. He currently serves on the board of the Raw Milk Institute. On the family farm in Ringoes, NJ he raises grassfed Jersey beef, black locust trees and USDA Organic Hay Certified by PCO.

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What's Happening with Organic Farming Research in Pennsylvania

BRIAN GEIER, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER,
ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Before diving into the importance and impact of organic research in Pennsylvania, let's start with some national context. Nationwide, certified organic produce now makes up more than 15% of total produce sales in the United States. Organic dairy and eggs now constitute more than 11% of the total market. And overall, organic sales have doubled over the last 10 years and in 2024 made up about 6% of the total US food market. By most measurements, organic food is trending upward. Most notably, **the growth of organic sales is consistently outpacing the growth of the overall food market**. To say it another way, we might be heading into a future that is more and more organic!

But will we get there?

Despite the growth of the organic sector, **organic agriculture research funding makes up less than 2% of the total research at the USDA**, and less than 1% at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). Additionally, much of the research focused on conventional agriculture relates to chemical applications or genetic traits—technologies that organic producers do not, and if certified, can not, use. To put it another way, organic research benefits all farmers, including conventional ones, but not the other way around.

In order to sustain the growth in organic acreage, producers, and products, it is crucial that more USDA funding be organic and applicable to all farmers. National policy priorities identified by the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) include:

- Increasing USDA's research funding for organic research through both competitive grant programs at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and intramural research at ARS to reflect its market share and growth trajectory.

Research at Penn State evaluates the impacts of cover crop residues combined or not with wheat bran and molasses as a carbon source for ASD applications on lettuce. The project supports similar research being conducted at the University of Florida. Credit: Francesco DiGioia/Penn State.

- Fully funding the Organic Data Initiative to provide the necessary market analysis of a rapidly sophisticating sector.
- Expanding the accessibility and applicability of technical and financial assistance programs for organic farmers.

To learn more about this policy work that supports organic nationwide and in Pennsylvania, visit OFRF's advocacy page.

ORGANIC RESEARCH IN THE KEYSTONE STATE

Pennsylvania is a powerhouse of organic agriculture. It ranked 4th in the nation with over 100,000 certified acres and 1,200+ farms generating $1 billion in sales in 2021, according to the latest organic survey by the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

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Research at Penn State evaluates the impacts of cover crop residues combined or not with wheat bran and molasses as a carbon source for ASD applications on lettuce. The project supports similar research being conducted at the University of Florida. Credit: Francesco Di Gioia/Penn State.

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The USDA's NIFA has awarded over $28 million in grants to the state's research institutions for organic research. Penn State University has played a crucial role, investing $12 million. The ARS has historically funded 17 projects in the state researching organic topics, but currently has no active projects.

Organic farmers in the state and region have identified three key research concerns (according to the 2022 National Organic Research Agenda):

- Climate adaptation and resilience.
- Pest management.
- Soil health.

ACTIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Recent NIFA investments, through programs like the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) and the Organic Transitions Program (ORG), have provided nearly $12 million over the past four years to ongoing projects with an organic focus in Pennsylvania. Key projects at Penn State focus on intensifying production and improving resilience of organic grains, developing a nitrogen decision support tool, testing anaerobic soil disinfection (ASD) in fields and in high tunnels, tracking foraging patterns of organic bees, evaluating perennial crop rotations, and developing parasite resistance in dairy cattle. Another project looking at immersive experiential education of urban educators is underway at Drexel University.

OREI-funded research on organic grain production (led by Dr. John Wallace) builds on previous research on reduced and no-til strateies, including planting into high-residue cover crops. Credit: Penn State Weed Science.

Besides providing new knowledge to organic growers, each of these research projects have other direct and indirect benefits worth noting. The Economic Research Service estimates that every $1 spent on agricultural research generates an additional $20 in benefits to the economy. In Pennsylvania, that means the $28 million for organic research translates to $560 million in economic activity. This effect can be seen given the growth of the value in Pennsylvania's organic production between 2019 and 2021. In 2019, Pennsylvania had 1,039 organic farms with over $740 million in farmgate sales. In 2021, those numbers grew to 1,123 organic farms generating over $1 billion. Research provides real economic opportunities to farms looking to maximize both their economic return and their ecological impact.

Additionally, organic research provides professional training opportunities for undergraduates, graduates, and postdoctoral fellows on organic systems, and promotes symbiosis between up-and-coming researchers and the organic community. As Dr. Ajay Nair, newly appointed as the Department of Horticulture Chair at Iowa State University explained in a recent interview with OFRF, OREI "is the foundation for several of the organic projects that happen across the country. It serves as a good platform for us to reach out to organic growers and for organic growers to reach out to us and say, 'Hey, can we address this particular issue that is coming up?'" These OREI grants, he explains, are "actually helping to build our network...to help us build teams across the country."

HOW PENNSYLVANIA RESEARCH BENEFITS GROWERS ACROSS THE EASTERN US

Just as organic research can be applicable to all farmers, multi-state projects led in Pennsylvania are bringing new findings to organic farmers facing similar challenges across regions. For example, the OREI-funded project assessing ASD in field, led by Dr. Gioia at Penn State, includes similar research plots led by Dr. Xin Zhao at University of Florida. Results from Pennsylvania may provide insights for growers in the Northeast who face challenges managing soil borne diseases, while the plots in Florida reflect conditions faced by organic growers in the Southeast, but results from each region might inform

growers who face similar challenges to similar cropping systems. Growers interested in managing soil health with ASD in the Upper Midwest or the Southeast might find the eOrganic webinar from Dr. Zhao valuable. The webinar focuses on selecting the right carbon source for the organic practice of ASD, which includes insights from the trials on Pennsylvania farms. All growers who want to use ASD to support their transition period to organic farming may be interested in the additional grant awarded to Dr. Gioia and his team to assess the economic viability of using ASD during the transition to organic to control pests and weeds. Additionally, any grower using or considering using ASD can share their story and contribute to the project. "The survey," Dr. Gioia explains "is part of the bottom-up approach our team have been using to improve the ASD application method and make sure that our research is relevant to growers and meets their needs."

COMPLETED PROJECTS PROVIDE NEW RESOURCES FOR ORGANIC GROWERS

Aside from the *active* projects above, several NIFA-funded organic research projects have been *completed* in Pennsylvania. While they may be concluded, the benefits of these organic projects continue. The results of these studies are not limited to publication in academic scientific journals or relevant only to scientists. Researchers, farmers, and extension specialists often collaborate to share the results of studies in ways that are meaningful and applicable to farmers.

Take soil microbial management, for example. An OREI-funded study led by Dr. Jason Kaye at Penn State involved adding different sources of microbes (composts, forest soils, and other sources) to soils and measuring microbial populations. The project partnered with Pasa Sustainable Agriculture to collaborate with working farmers to conduct studies on working farms. While measurements of soil microbes may not be enough to provide specific recommendations to growers, the knowledge of how microbe populations change under management conditions and how they interact with plant crops can help farmers make better decisions.

Assuming soil microbes are fascinating to everyone with an interest in organic matters, let's digress here for a moment. There are a myriad of ways that microbes can help or hinder organic systems: Microbes called *biostimulants* can release hormones into the soil that can help increase plant growth, while others can degrade the stress chemicals that plants produce during drought, helping plants become more resilient. Some microbes called *biofertilizers* can unlock nutrients in soils that plants cannot access themselves, helping where there may be excess nutrients, while other biofertilizers exchange nutrients directly with the plants in exchange for carbon. And get this—some perform better than others. That is, some biofertilizers that exchange phosphorus for carbon, called arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF), offer plants more phosphorus in exchange for the same amount of carbon when compared with other AMFs.

When research-generated insights like these are made available and then accessed, farmers can make better-informed decisions for years to come. All of this fascinating information and more is available to farmers on eOrganic (see Management of Soil Microbes on Organic Farms and Soil Microbes in Organic Cropping Systems 101). Launched in 2009, eOrganic is a national, internet-based, interactive, user-driven, organic agriculture information system for farmers and agricultural professionals.

WANT TO KEEP UP WITH ORGANIC RESEARCH IN YOUR STATE OR NATIONALLY?

Aside from using eOrganic, growers and researchers can look forward to a new Organic Content Hub being developed by the OFRF, coming in early 2025. The Content Hub will be

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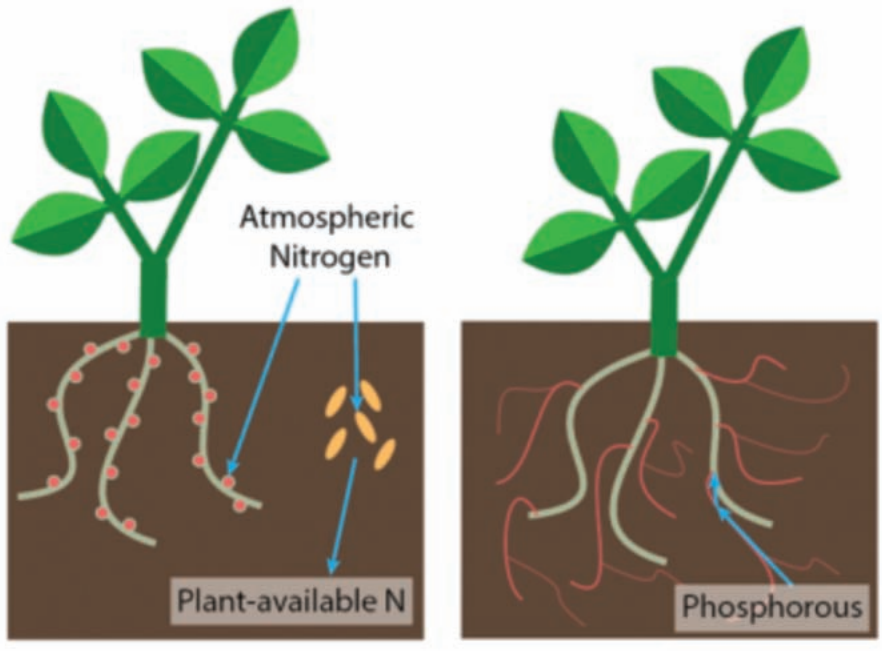
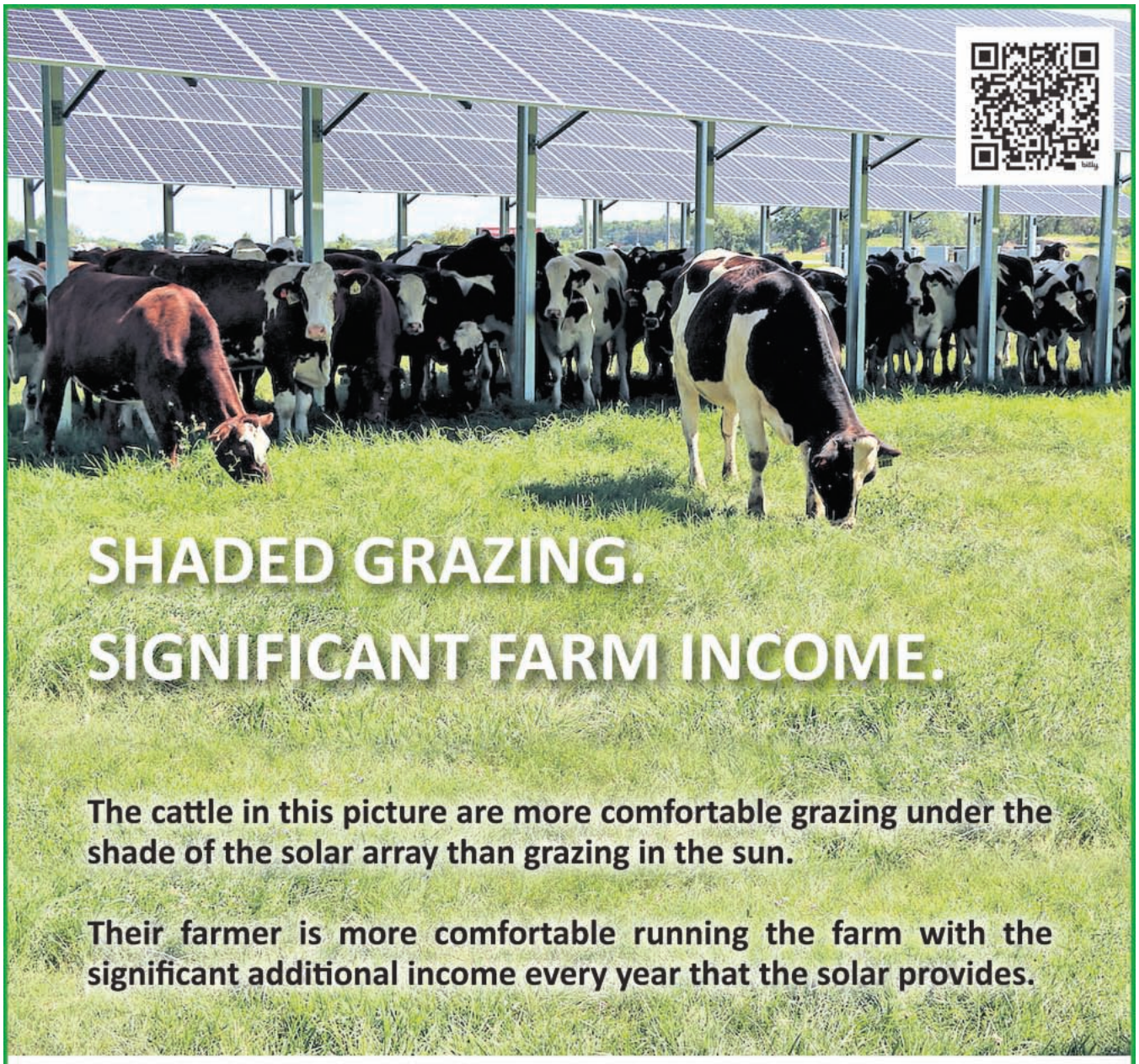


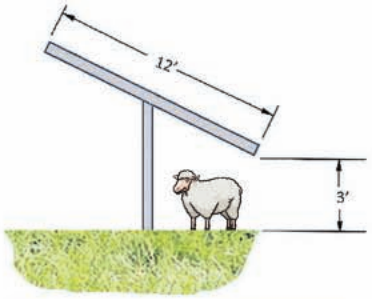
A figure developed by a graduate student (Laura Kaminsky) working on an OREI-funded project during 2019–23 at Penn State, illustrates examples of beneficial microbes. The left diagram shows nitrogen-fixing bacteria, housed either in nodules on legume roots or free-living in the soil. The right diagram illustrates arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) (pink) associated with plant roots. See Soil Microbes in Organic Cropping Systems 101.



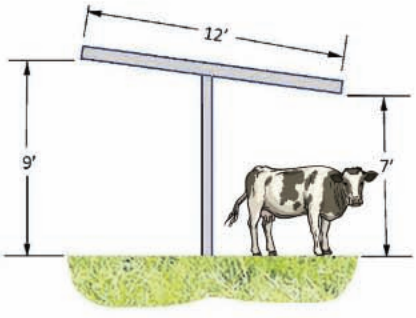
SHADED GRAZING.
SIGNIFICANT FARM INCOME.

The cattle in this picture are more comfortable grazing under the shade of the solar array than grazing in the sun.

Their farmer is more comfortable running the farm with the significant additional income every year that the solar provides.



Add as much as $3,000/acre/year to the farm's income for a sheep array



...or as much as $2,000/acre/year for a cattle array.

NO COST TO INSTALL

GreenWorks Development

SRE RENEWABLES

TO GET STARTED, contact Doug Neidich at dneidich@greenworksdev.com or call (717) 514-0751

FAMILY-FARM-SCALE SOLAR

Very Different From Large Utility-Scale Solar Farms

DOUG NEIDICH, CEO, GREENWORKS DEVELOPMENT

Pennsylvania has seen a tremendous amount of activity around the development of solar farms in the last few years, but not all solar farms are the same. Two fundamentally different approaches currently exist.

Utility scale solar farms are typically multi-hundred-acre-or-greater installations that are connected directly to high voltage transmission lines. Because of their size, these farms typically don't include integrated agricultural activity such as grazing or farming under the panels.

Net metered solar farms are constructed identically to utility scale solar farms, but are much smaller, and instead of connecting to transmission lines they're tied to three-phase distribution power lines. These solar farms are usually ten to thirty acres in size and are what I've come to call **solar on the scale of family farms**. At GreenWorks Development/SRE Renewables, we install family-farm-scale arrays in two different heights: a 3-foot minimum panel height array for grazing sheep, hogs, or chickens under the panels, and a 7-foot minimum height array for grazing cattle or growing bush crops under the solar canopy. Each farm-scale array is fully fenced, and the panels provide shade to livestock or farmers. For grazing applications, we build animal shelters that happen to generate electricity.

For grazing applications, we build animal shelters that happen to generate electricity.

The lease income to the farmer that results from solar installation is typically $2000 to $3000 per acre annually, depending on panel height, and this income supplements the agricultural income generated by the farming activity while the solar canopy enhances that farming activity. In several of our projects, that additional income has allowed the farm to stay in the family and not be sold to a building developer.

Credit: Jack's Solar Garden, Longmont, CO.

The panels that are typically used in solar development are bifacial panels, meaning that glass covers the panels on both their top and bottom sides. That not only allows ambient sunlight to be collected by the underside of the panel, but about 5% of the sunlight hitting the top of the panel shines directly through the top and bottom glass panes. That filtered sunlight, combined with sun that shines at an angle under the panels at different times of the day and times of the growing season creates an environment under the panels in which grass and many agricultural crops grow well. The shade of the panels helps to keep the ground moist, too. The rows of a farm-scale array are on 25-foot centers, and each row is 12 feet wide, so a 13-foot clear space exists between each solar row. I-beam posts are driven into the ground to support the array (similar to guardrail posts along the highway), and all wiring is done on the underside of the panels, away from livestock.

In several of our projects, the additional solar income has allowed the farm to stay in the family and not be sold to a building

It's easy to understand how utility-scale and family-farm-scale solar get confused, but the practical differences couldn't be more significant. Combining agriculture and clean energy production thoughtfully is a way to enhance farming practice, enable family farms to survive and thrive, and create a network of small (typically 3 to 9 MW, compared to a typical gas generating plant that is 500 to 800 MW in capacity) clean energy generating systems that can help to create a cleaner, more resilient electrical grid and a more sustainable future for both farmers and the community.

GreenWorks Development/SRE Renewables is the largest commercial solar developer in Pennsylvania, with over 450 projects completed since 2010. The company is headquartered in the Harrisburg area and does projects throughout Pennsylvania.

NORTHEAST/MID-ATLANTIC TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (TOPP): A YEAR IN REVIEW

Getting to have [my mentor] come to our farm, to see our physical land and records and give her advice on how to make things more streamlined, or have her sign off on what we were already doing, was such a joy. She has so much experience and it was a gift to be able to have her come see us. Similarly, getting to go to her farm and see how they manage their organic certification – especially record keeping – was incredibly beneficial to us, as well as being one of the highlights of our season. It's always a treat to get to visit other farms during the season, and the mentorship made us make that time. – TOPP Mentee Michaela, New York

In its first fully operational year, the TOPP program has aided 629 farmers across the northeast through mentorship and technical assistance programs. Together, the mentorship and technical assistance programs have helped to certify 1,382 acres in 2024. In addition, TOPP partners hosted 275 events about the processes and practices of organic certification for over 11,700 attendees. In short, TOPP's first fully operational year has been nothing short of an overwhelming success.

SUPPORTING FARMERS SUPPORTING FARMERS

The most intensive part of the TOPP program is the mentorship program, which pays experienced organic farmers to mentor farmers who are pursuing their organic certification. These year-long mentorships are customized to the needs, schedules, and interests of the participating farmers. When asked about their experience, mentees report that having another farmer to turn to with difficult questions, someone who understands their perspective and experience, makes navigating the complex process of certification easier.

Moment of panic. With little warning I lost 2100 seedling in my grow house. With my limited experience, I called Jason and explained what had happened and a tentative plan to recover from this possible season ending event. [My mentor] reviewed and agreed with my plan and referred me to a friend of his to purchase super soil to help recover my season. Within 30 days we not only recovered but we had established 3500 seedlings. Saving our plant sale and still having enough product for our production business. This event could have forced me to close the business end of the farm. – TOPP Mentee Galen, Maine

To date, our stellar team of mentors has helped 155 mentees navigate the certification process. We on the TOPP team cannot praise them enough.

EVENTS

Our team of over 40 regional and cross-regional partners have organized 275 events and attended another 234 this year. Events range from intimate 'paperwork parties' to help farmers navigate paperwork together in West Virginia to workshops on season-extending using high tunnels and greenhouses in New Hampshire. TOPP events are always free and open to anyone who is interested in learning.

Wren Frueh speaking at the 2025 Virginia Biological Farming Conference.

To find upcoming events near you, visit www.organictransition.org/events/

LOOKING FORWARD

As we step over the threshold into 2025, TOPP has no plans to slow down. Our mentorship program continues to grow and our partners are planning another packed calendar of events. There has never been a more important time to support organic farmers and we intend to outdo ourselves in 2025.

PENN STATE REPORTS PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM REDUCED TILLAGE EXPERIMENT

ABBE HAMILTON, RESEARCH PROJECT MANAGER, WALLACE WEED LAB DEPARTMENT OF PLANT SCIENCE, THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

How do you reduce tillage in an organic grain rotation? And why would you want to? Penn State researchers are exploring the tradeoffs of tillage frequency and intensity on grain yields, soil health, soil fertility, and weed and pest pressure as they analyze the results of their most recent organic cropping systems experiment, which ran from 2020 to 2024.

The project expanded on reduced tillage research conducted at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center in Centre County, PA over the previous decade. The latest three-year systems experiment sought to compare three corn-soy-wheat rotations: one which minimized tillage in the cover crop phase of the rotation using relay cropping practices, one that minimized tillage in the cash crop phase using a rotational no-till soybean sequence, and one that employed shallow, non-inversion primary tillage with a compact, high-speed disk prior to cash and cover crops *(see figure below)*. The study measured the different tillage regimes' impacts on yield and income, weed and pest pressure, and soil health. The research team, led by Mary Barbercheck and John Wallace, investigates reduced tillage practices in organic systems due to the potential for improved soil health and labor savings. Here are a few key findings.

Many organic producers are interested in the use of a compact high-speed disk to incorporate residues, control weeds, and prepare seed beds. Our results indicate that use of the high-speed disk as the primary tillage tool led to a compaction layer 2–4 inches below the soil surface and heavier weed pressure compared to other systems. Corn yields in this system underperformed due to these factors, as well as partly due to a lower-biomass pre-corn cover crop (oat/winter pea/radish) that was chosen to ensure the high speed disk could terminate it. In the other treatments, a moldboard plow was used to incorporate a red clover/cereal rye cover crop prior to corn. Looking forward, the high speed disk may have a good fit as the primary tillage tool for establishing cover crops or small grains.

A ryegrass, crimson clover and radish cover crop mix interseeded into grain corn at its last cultivation. Photo credit John Wallace.

No-till soybean (rotational no-till, achieved by no-till plant-

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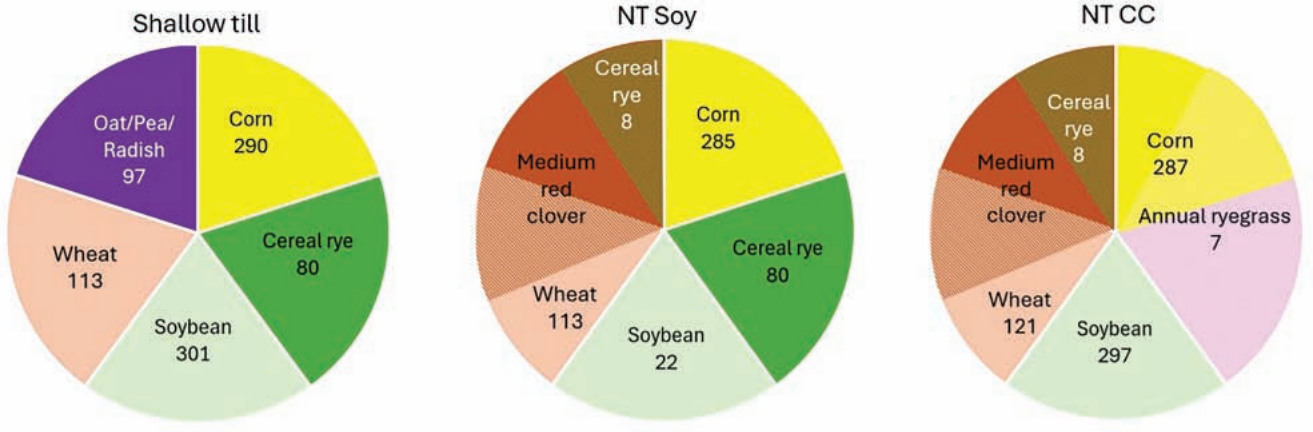
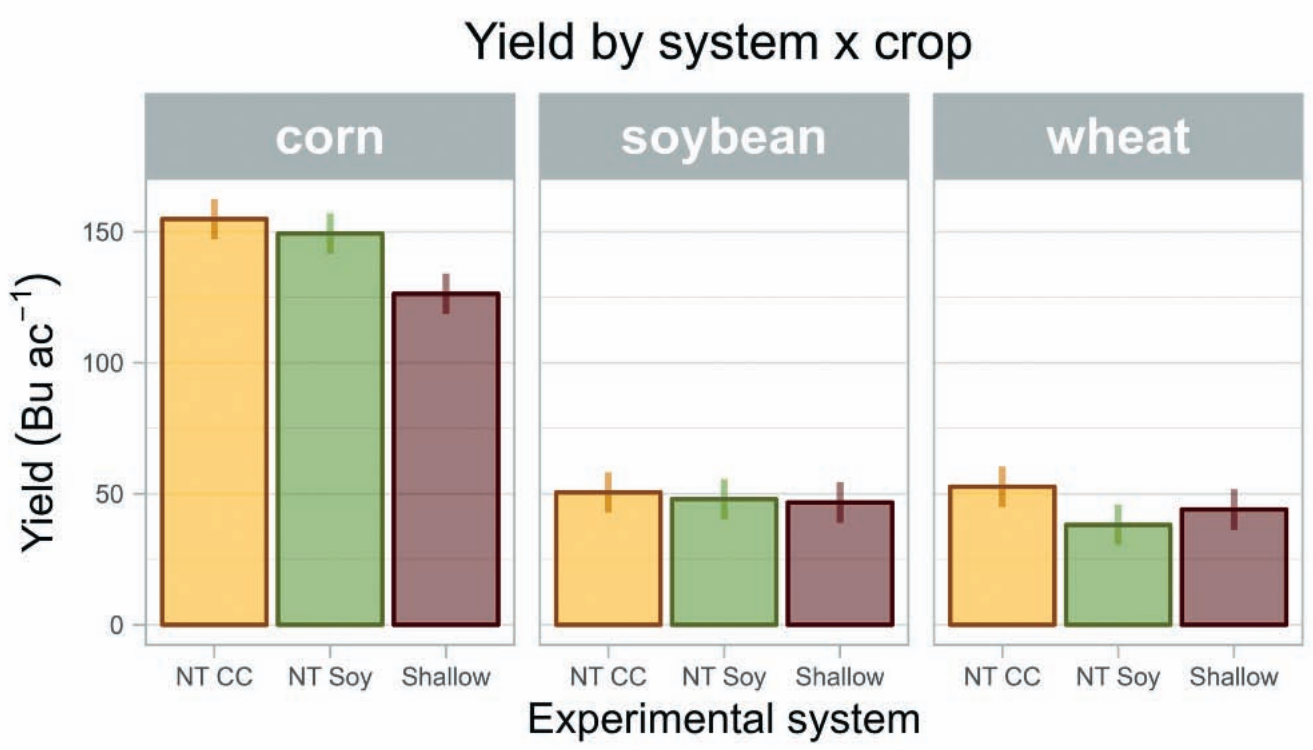


The three corn-soy-wheat rotations trialed, with some overlapping cover crops displayed as blended colors. The numbers below the crop indicate the STIR value, a metric of tillage intensity for that segment of the rotation.



Yields in bushels per acre for each treatment and each crop in the study. Yellow bars are the no-till cover crop rotation, green bars are the no-till soybean rotation, and brown bars are the shallow till, high speed disk-dominated rotation.

continued from previous page

ing soybean into roll-crimp cereal rye, and cultivating as-needed with a high residue cultivator) delivered similar yields to the other treatments, with substantially lower soil disturbance and labor costs. However, peak weed pressure was significantly higher than soybean tilled with a moldboard plow. The no-till soybean also required a later harvest and a later planting of winter wheat than its tilled counterparts, which led to a lower-yielding, weedier wheat crop in the following year. Identifying economically viable cash crops that can follow no-till soybean will be a critical step for more widespread adoption of rotational no-till soybean.

The rotation that minimized tillage in its cover crop phases did so by interseeding an annual ryegrass/crimson clover/-radish mix at the last corn cultivation and frost-seeding medium red clover into wheat and drill seeding cereal rye into red clover in late fall. This system had the lowest weed pressure of all three experimal systems, the highest yields across the rotation, but did not increase profits relative to other systems.

The research team will present results from this study at the PASA conference on Feb 5, and provide further content via Penn State Extension as they continue their analysis. Stay tuned for results comparing the long-term impacts of continuous annual crops with up to three years of a perennial (alfalfa/orchardgrass hay) crop.

The project was funded by a federal OREI grant.

Organic Farming Research

continued from page 9

searchable by topic, crop, and region, and will provide users with the most current research relevant to organic farming. (Follow OFRF on social media and sign up for our newsletter to get updates on the Content Hub, organic research updates, new organic resources, and more.)

MOVING FORWARD WITH ORGANIC RESEARCH

Organic farming research is generating economic activity in Pennsylvania, providing professional development to researchers and students across the east, forming regional networks between researchers and growers, and producing publications being used by organic growers across the country. One might say that the current state of research in Pennsylvania is healthy and humming!

Looking to the future, it is critical that federal funding keeps up with the growth of the organic movement nationally and in the state. OFRF and partners work daily to bolster and protect this funding, and we are always looking for farmer and researcher partners in this work. If you are an organic farmer or researcher and are willing to share your story, your experiences can be some of the best fodder for advocating for or directing future organic research in Pennsylvania.

New Faces

JANA CASTEEL

Jana was born and raised in the small, rural west Texas town of Seymour (pop. 3,500), where we spent our time riding our bikes along country roads for miles, swimming anywhere there was a body of water, playing pickup games of basketball in the high school gym as often as we could, roller skating in the church gymnasium every Saturday afternoon, and watching movies at the local drive-in movie theater.

Jana currently resides in Tontitown, Arkansas, with her Shih Tzu (Gypsy). She holds a bachelor's degree in Community Health Education from the University of Central Arkansas and a master's degree in health services administration from the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. She has worked in healthcare finance in various capacities for 23+ years.

Her passions are spending time with her family and friends, traveling to warm and sunny places, and cheering on the Arkansas Razorbacks in any and all things. Woo Pig Sooie!

WADE COLLINS

Wade holds a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Minnesota. As a student, he spent two field seasons in Copan Ruinas, Honduras, excavating its Hieroglyphic Stairway while a member of the Copan Mosaics Project. He has (unintentionally) swum with sharks, and can be seen acting, as an extra, alongside Nichols Cage in 'The Weather Man'. Before joining PCO, Wade worked for four years at OMRI as a Product Review Coordinator. He and his family currently live in Minnesota, where they share a house with their rescued pets.

Advertise in *Organic Matters*

Organic Matters is the semi-annually newsletter of Pennsylvania Certified Organic, a non-profit organization serving growers, processors and handlers of organic products. Issues contain articles on the latest news and research in the organic industry, often highlighting our certified members. Approximately 1,500 copies of each publication are distributed directly to members and those requesting information about organic agriculture, and made available to the public at conferences, exhibits and educational programs in the Mid–Atlantic region.

For more information,
please contact agarber@paorganic.org
or call the PCO Office at 814-422-0251

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Standards & Policy Update

Kyla Smith, Certification Policy Advisor
NOSB Chair, USDA Accredited
Certifying Agent Seat, 2021–2026

■ ORGANIC LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY STANDARDS (OLPS) FINAL RULE IMPLEMENTATION REMINDER

The OLPS final rule had an implementation date of January 2, 2025 for most previsions. Some requirements pertaining to poultry indoor and outdoor space requirements have a later implementation date of January 2, 2029.

In order to assess your operation's compliance with the new requirements, PCO sent applicable operation's the relevant forms to be updated and submitted to PCO by March 1, 2025. If you have questions, regarding the new requirements and how they apply to your operation or specific questions on the update forms, please contact your Certification Specialist.

Additionally, please keep in mind PCO's OLPS webpage (https://paorganic.org/certification/organic-livestock-and-poultry-standards/), which contains useful resources and training information.

■ MARKET DEVELOPMENT FINAL RULE (AKA "MUSHROOM AND PET FOOD RULE") UPDATE

On December 23, 2024, the National Organic Program published the Market Development Final Rule which amends the organic regulations to promote a fairer market for all mushroom and pet food producers and encourage growth in these sectors. The rule will provide increased certainty to support conditions necessary for growth in the organic mushroom and pet food markets and markets for related inputs (*e.g.*, organic production by-products) by ensuring that USDA-certified organic products are produced to the same consistent standard.

In general, the rule will:

- Clarify which crop production standards mushroom producers should use, and which new requirements should be followed for mushroom substrate and spawn used in mushroom production.
- Standardize existing practices in organic pet food handling by applying the regulations for organic processed products to pet food.
- Allow the synthetic amino acid taurine to be used in organic pet food.

Establishing clear and uniform standards will give organic mushroom and pet food producers the confidence and certainty to know they are operating in a fair and competitive market.

The USDA issued a delay in the effective date of this rule in response to the President's January 20th memo, which placed a regulatory freeze on newly published regulations to allow for further review (this is a common practice for all rules in this type of scenario).

The effective date is delayed until March 21, 2025 and the implementation/compliance date is set to March 22, 2207, a 30-day delay for both dates.

In the meantime you may read the final rule at www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/12/23/2024-30211/national-organic-program-market-development-for-mushrooms-and-pet-food. If you would like a hard copy sent to you, please contact Kyla Smith (kyla@paorgnic.org; 814-422-0251 x216).

■ PCO POLICY UPDATE REMINDER

Included in your Annual Update packet was a Policy Update letter that informed client's of some changes to PCO policy that may impact your operation. These included:

1. Treated Wood: PCO Policy Update

PCO has revised our policy on Treated Wood to be more in line with other certifiers regarding allowed barriers used to prevent contact of organic crops, land and/or animals with treated wood. Effective March 1, 2025, PCO will no longer allow paint as a barrier. Previous installations that used paint as a barrier prior to 3/1/2025 are allowed.

The organic regulations prohibit treated wood from being in direct contact with crops, soil and/or animals. An operation may use an alternative to treated wood or if treated wood is used then an approved barrier must be used. The following are allowed as alternatives or may be used as a barrier. This is not an exhaustive list:

- Rot resistant wood (such as white oak, black locust, western red cedar, or osage orange)
- Sealants
- Metal
- Plastic (e.g. plastic sleeves, which are shrink-wrapped on)
- Vinyl (prohibited for use as a weed barrier/mulch - 205.601(b)(2)(ii))
- Established buffer
- Electric wire

After March 1, 2025 one of the above may be used as an alternative or as a barrier. Paint may not be used as a barrier for any new or replacement treated wood scenarios on your organic operation. You may also not repaint treated wood already in use. You will need to choose a different barrier (see above list) to prevent contact of organic crops, land and/or animals with the treated wood.

2. Outside of Scope Materials: NEW PCO Policy

PCO has created a new policy called Outside of Scope Materials. The purpose of this policy is to outline when materials are considered "outside of scope" and are not reviewed by the Materials Review Team (MRT). This applies only to materials used per the organic regulations (i.e. NOP materials) and does not include materials used for other regulatory schemes (e.g. OPT Grass-fed). Operations do not need to include the following materials on their Materials Used Form:

Facility (General):

- Hand soaps, hand sanitizers, and hand dips*
- Maintenance Materials*
  - Caulking or insulation
  - Greasing equipment (no direct contact with organic products)
  - Painting, whitewashing or coating of facilities
- Freezer floor walk grips or deicers*
- Construction materials such as asphalt, concrete, epoxies, floor sealants, paints, silicones, pipe cleaners and glues, and galvanized metal used as building material or nails*
  - Does not include paint, stains, and other wood sealants that may contact soil, crops or livestock.
- Packaging and storage container materials
  - With fumigants, preservatives or fungicides*
  - Without fumigants, preservatives or fungicides
- Mechanical pest control devices such as traps (including common food items used for bait such as peanut butter)
- Cleaners/sanitizers in the following locations*:
  - Non-processing area cleaning inputs (e.g. bathrooms, offices)
  - In organic production area but with no product contact (e.g. Floor, window, and drain cleaners and sanitizers, Sewage line cleaners, deodorizers, and sanitizers)
- Testing equipment/tools (e.g. pH, ammonia, quat test strips)
- Employee/visitor human footbaths for sanitation* (excluding quats)

Crop:

- Untreated seeds
- Grafting equipment, such as clips, grafting tape (including parafilm), and bands
- Blast media for utility exploration
- Pots and other nonbiodegradable poly materials (e.g. woven pots), including repurposed materials such as rain gutters that pose no threat of contamination to the organic product
- Silage bags and covers
- Tomato cages; galvanized are acceptable too.
- Polyester mesh bags for washing greens

Livestock:

- Medical devices/tools such as surgical tools (thread, sutures, needles, medical tape), magnets, teat dilators, cow slips/boots, CMT mastitis test kits, and adhesives
- Marking paint and back tags, including glue used for identification is allowed
- Eye patches, including glue (for pinkeye treatment)
- Hoof blocks, including glue
- Lubricants (for medicine boluses, vet care, artificial insemination, etc.)
- Antisuck rings – non-piercing plastic rings to prevent calf sucking

Processing:

- Marking Ink on Food
- Reverse Osmosis (RO) Technology
- Hard plastic or metal molds used as casing
- Filters (food-grade filters that only act as a physical barrier)
- Desiccants (e.g. silica gel packets, absorbent pads)
- Packaging
- Cheese wax (if removed prior to consumption)

If any material identified with an asterisk (*) above is used, the operation must ensure compliance with §205.272 of the organic regulations to prevent contamination with organic products. For example if using hand soaps or sanitizers ensure soap is washed or hand sanitizer is dry on hands prior to touching organic products.

PCO is in the process of updating our Materials Used Form with the above policy information. The version you receive may not completely align with the above.

3. Manure – Off-Farm Sources: PCO Policy Update

PCO has revised our policy on off-farm manure sources to clarify the following points:

- Any substances added to the manure (e.g. microbial pit additives, odor control products, lime) by the certified operator, supplier and/or source must be reviewed for compliance by PCO prior to use.
- Verification that prohibited materials were not directly applied to off-farm manure may include the PCO Off-Farm Manure Affidavit or other documentation containing the same information.
  - This verification is required to be provided by the source farm.
  - Additionally, PCO may also require additional documentation from the transporter and/or distributor to verify that no prohibited substances were added while the manure was in their possession (i.e. the transporter collects manure and the stores for a period of time prior to selling to organic operations).

If you obtain manure from an off-farm source such as a transporter/hauler/distributor that sources from various farm sources, it is not adequate for the Off-Farm Manure Affidavit (OFMA) to only be completed by the transporter/hauler/distributor. PCO requires the OFMA to be completed by the farms the transporter/hauler/distributor sourced the manure from.

Please contact Kyla Smith, PCO Certification Policy Advisor, with questions pertaining to the above PCO policy updates via email at kyla@paorgnic.org or phone at 814-422-0251 x216.

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paorganic.org
PHONE:
814.422.0251

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Certification Update

Happy New Year!

Our team is returning refreshed and rejuvenated from time spent with friends and family. We hope this new year greets you well.

Our focus over the next two quarters is getting all of our client partners smoothly through the annual renewal process. You should have already received your Annual Update forms or the link to our new online renewal option! Every client is asked to annually complete these forms to ensure we're updated on any changes to your business.

Key reminders:

- Annual Update paperwork is **due back to PCO by March 1, 2025.**
- If your operation is subject to the new Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) rule, additional forms are required to be completed and submitted to PCO by **March 1, 2025 to maintain your certification**.

PCO has over 1,600 certified operations all working within these deadlines. We've mapped out a careful plan and efficient procedures for supporting processing and review of all these forms. We kindly request your adherence to these deadlines to ensure you receive the best customer service, the most efficient (and cost effective) inspection coordination, and avoid compounding late fees.

Please let us know if you need assistance or have any questions about these requirements. We're here to help!

Legislative Update

Alison Garber
Executive Support and
Communications Manager

FEDERAL FARM BILL CALL TO ACTION

February 4, 2025

In a last-minute effort to avoid a government shutdown, Congress passed a spending package in December of 2024 that extends the U.S. Farm Bill for another year. However, this legislation leaves out critical funding for key organic programs, including the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP). Despite its relatively small cost—just over $10 million annually for all USDA Certified Organic producers nationwide—OCCSP and other vital organic initiatives were omitted from the $500-billion Farm Bill. This decision jeopardizes the future of organic farming, leaving thousands of farmers and businesses in a precarious position.

The USDA's Organic Cost Share Program has long been a lifeline for organic producers, covering up to 75% of certification costs (up to $750 per category). Since its inception in 2002, this program has supported countless PCO-certified organic farmers. However, recent years have seen funding cuts, rising certification costs, and now, the complete defunding of the program, creating an uncertain future for many in the organic industry.

For months, organic farmers and advocates have urged Congress to secure funding for three essential programs critical to the organic industry's success:

1. The Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP): ***Now defunded***, this program helped offset certification costs for farms and businesses. Without it, producers face rising certification expenses in 2025, which could lead some operations to abandon certification altogether.

2. The Organic Data Initiative (ODI): This program provides vital data to support organic agriculture, helping businesses meet the growing demand for organic products. Its absence will deprive producers of critical insights needed to remain competitive.

3. The Organic Certification Trade and Tracking Program (OCTT): A lack of resources for technology infrastructure will severely impact the USDA's ability to enforce organic regulations and combat fraud. These cuts are especially ill-timed, as the USDA begins implementing new Strengthening Organic Enforcement rules requiring import certificates to address fraudulent imports.

Failing to fund these programs threatens the integrity and growth of the organic sector. PCO stands alongside organizations such as OTA and NOC in urging Congress to address this oversight and restore essential funding. Farmers and processors are also urged to contact their legislators and advocate for the reinstatement of these vital programs. The future of organic farming depends on swift action.

Take action by going to this link:
https://secure.everyaction.com/5axv1XYP2UqU9K4dMpbWpw2

Painterland Sisters Yogurt

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because they understand the bigger picture of what it means for farmers and the planet," Stephanie emphasized.

A MISSION-DRIVEN BUSINESS

The Painterland Sisters are not just business owners; they are changemakers in the organic dairy industry. By combining their deep-rooted farming values with a modern, consumer-focused brand, they have created a model that benefits both ends of the food chain.

"We're storytellers, we're educators, and we're farmers at heart," Hayley concluded. "And if we can inspire more people to support family-owned organic farms and sustainable agriculture, then we've done our job."

With passion, perseverance, and a clear mission, the Painterland Sisters are paving the way for a more connected, sustainable food system—one spoonful of skyr yogurt at a time.

New Members

PCO Welcomes 3rd and 4th Quarter 2024 New Members!

City Distilling LLC
Philadelphia, PA

Universal Specialty Foods, Inc.
Los Angeles, CA

Andrew Mast
Fredonia, PA

John Schwartz
Clyde, NY

Select Juice LLC
Lancaster, PA

Carl Brandt, Inc.
Fairfield, CT

Jonas Raber
Sugarcreek, OH

Jacob Light
Fredericksburg, PA

Neal Zimmerman
Tiro, OH

Ancient Foods, LLC
Washington, DC

Atlantic Coast Freezers
Vineland, NJ

Brenda Balmer
Fredericksburg, PA

Leon Zimmerman
Mount Joy, PA

Reuben Stoltzfus
Sugarcreek, OH

Allen Weaver
Fredericksburg, PA

Maersk Warehousing & Distribution Services USA LLC
Wilmington, NC

Maersk Warehousing & Distribution Services USA, LLC
Ridgeville, SC

Passero's Coffee Roasters Inc.
Philadelphia, PA

Jeff Saunders
Killbuck, OH

Cropland Harvesting LLC
Fredericksburg, PA

Mciver Family Farms, Inc.
Killbuck, OH

4Up Farm, LLC
Killbuck, OH

Joy Winningham
New York, NY

Dragonfly Hill Farm and Kitchen LLC
Hellertown, PA

David B. Stoltzfus
Peach Bottom, PA

Jason Zimmerman Farm
Lititz, PA

Warehime Enterprise Inc.
New Oxford, PA

Travis Bresett
Heuvelton, NY

John and Elise Lefever
Peach Bottom, PA

Dusty Gossett
Cave City, KY

Red Sol Farm, LLC
Fogelsville, PA

Casablanca Foods, LLC
New York , NY

Peter Graber
Licking, MO

Nutsola, LLC
Livingston, NJ

Maersk Warehousing & Distribution Services USA, LLC – Baytown
Baytown, TX

STAY CONNECTED, VISIT:
paorganic.org

Event Calendar

All times listed are Eastern Time Zone unless otherwise indicated.
* Notes a TOPP Core Partner Regional Event

MARCH

Vegetable and Berry Growers Association
March 5
ORGANIC FOCUS– What's new in organic strawberries
Burlington, VT
https://vvbga.org/

Farm to Institution Networking Day
March 10
PASA Sustainable Agriculture
Pittsburgh, PA
https://web.cvent.com/event/bcb1a6e0-ceb4-46f6-8812-85c5e90000f0/regPage:bb775e23-5fa1-42da-926c-4a2472e0160b

Garden Machine Maintenance
March 11
Grow Pittsburgh
Braddock, PA
www.eventbrite.com/e/garden-machine-maintenance-tickets-1247551061809

OSP Support online
March 12
NOFA NH
ONLINE
https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/iA1Wulu_W0PT2tWcmyrtPw

Grain Growers Conference
March 12
Northern Grain Growers Collaborative
Fairfield, ME
www.northerngraingrowers.org/

Vegetable and Berry Growers Association
March 12th
ORGANIC FOCUS– Planning cover crop sequences for pollinators and grower experiences
Burlington, VT
https://vvbga.org/

Organic Talk Round Table
March 18
NOFA NH
ONLINE
https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/iA1Wulu_W0PT2tWcmyrtPw

Buyer Perspectives On Livestock
March 19
Rodale Institute
ONLINE
https://rodaleinstitute.org/events/webinar-buyer-perspectives-on-livestock/

Scaling Maine's Organic Grain Industry
March 19
Maine Grain Alliance
Lisbon Falls, ME
https://kneadingconference.com/events-workshops/

Vegetable and Berry Growers Association
March 19
ORGANIC FOCUS – What's new in Colorado potato beetle control
Burlington, VT
https://vvbga.org/

Advanced Vegetable Growers Discussion
March 20
PASA Sustainable Agriculture
ONLINE
https://pasa.tfaforms.net/1519

Ask Me Anything: Organic Markets for Livestock Farmers
March 26
Rodale Institute
ONLINE
https://rodaleinstitute.org/events/ask-me-anything-organic-markets-for-livestock-farmers/

Balancing Productivity and Soil Health on Certified Organic Vegetable Farm: Field Day at Sassafras Creek Farm
March 26
Future Harvest
Leonardtown, MD
https://futureharvest.org/programs/field-school/upcoming-events/

OSP Support online
March 26
NOFA NH
ONLINE
https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/iA1Wulu_W0PT2tWcmyrtPw

Farm Financial Foundations Series
Part 1: March 31
Part 2: April 7
Part 3: April 14
Part 4: April 21
PASA Sustainable Agriculture and Good Roots
ONLINE
https://web.cvent.com/event/0191ffe3-3d24-494b-935b-85305cf0a392/regPage:bb775e23-5fa1-42da-926c-4a2472e0160b

APRIL

Vegetable and Berry Growers Association
April 2
ORGANIC FOCUS– New machinery for cover cropping
ONLINE
https://vvbga.org/

Planning Your Herbal Garden
April 5
Grow Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA
www.eventbrite.com/e/planning-your-herbal-tea-garden-tickets-1247565404709

Webinar: Markets ROI of Organic Transition for Dairy Farmers
April 9
Rodale Institute
ONLINE
https://rodaleinstitute.org/events/webinar-markets-roi-of-organic-transition-for-dairy-farmers/

Organic Grain & Seed Summit
April 11-12
Maine Grain Alliance
Fairfield, ME
https://kneadingconference.com/events-workshops/

Webinar: Buyer Perspectives on Organic Dairy Sourcing
April 16
Rodale Institute
ONLINE
https://rodaleinstitute.org/events/webinar-buyer-perspectives-on-organic-dairy-sourcing/

Ask Me Anything: Organic Markets for Dairy Farmers
April 23
Rodale Institute
ONLINE
https://rodaleinstitute.org/events/ask-me-anything-organic-markets-for-dairy-farmers/

OSP Support online
April 23
NOFA NH
ONLINE
https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/iA1Wulu_W0PT2tWcmyrtPw

MAY

Open-to-all Chainsaw Safety
May 17
MOFGA
Unity, ME
www.mofga.org/event-calendar/open-to-all-chainsaw-safety/

JULY

The 2025 Kneading Conference
July 24-25
Maine Grain Alliance
Skowhegan, ME
https://kneadingconference.com/events-workshops/

RECURRING EVENTS

Organic Office Hours – technical assistance
PCO
Online – February 26, March 5, March 12, March 20 and March 26
https://paorganic.org/topp/organic-office-hours/

Weekly Technical Assistance Open Hours
NOFA NJ
Online – Recurring Every Wednesday at 9AM
https://nofanj.org/event/weekly-technical-assistance-open-hour-5/

What is PA Preferred Organic™?

The PA Department of Agriculture is leading Preferred Organic™ by:

- Administering the Organic Certification Cost-Share Program (OCCSP) to offset a portion of annual organic certification costs.
- Sponsoring free or low-cost technical assistance for farmers and processors to start or transition to USDA certified organic operations.

- Supporting networking opportunities between organic farmers.
- Funding PA-specific organic research on a variety of topics.

- Establishing the first-of-its-kind Organic Center of Excellence to empower and support organic farmers and businesses.

Check for the Check

When you see the PA Preferred® logo on a product, you can be confident that the main ingredients were sourced from a Pennsylvania farm.

- Creating resources and educational events for farmers and agricultural professionals.
- Providing state-wide branding and grant opportunities through the PA Preferred program.

Support PA Farms!

Scan the QR code for more information on the PA Preferred Organic Initiative

PA Preferred®

For more information, please contact:

Kristen Markley
Program Manager
717-787-6006
kmarkley@pa.gov

PCO
106 School Street, Suite 201
Spring Mills, PA 16875

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STATE COLLEGE, PA
PERMIT NO. 21

Foliar N Application

A Quality Source of Organically Acceptable Nitrogen!

EXPLORER Liquid 10-0-0

EFFICIENT, PLANT-DERIVED AMINO ACIDS

BENEFITS OF EXPLORER™ LIQUID 10-0-0:

- Does not volatilize
- High carbon content makes excellent food source for soil biology
- Carbon based and contains plant derived amino acids
- Natural product with no negative enviromental impact
- Beneficial use in conditions of biotic and abiotic stress

ANIMAL BASED NITROGEN VS. EXPLORER™ LIQUID 10-0-0	Animal - Based Nitrogen	Explorer™ Liquid 10-0-0
Nitrogen Availability	Slow Release, requires bio-decomposition	100% - Immediately
Solubility	Not fully soluble	100%
Application Restrictions	Foliar Applications not recommended	None
Ease of Use	Smell, mixing procedure	None
Origin	Chicken/Fish/Manure	Non- GMO, soy protein hydrolysate
Amino Acid Profile	Inconsistent to None	98.6%/60.9%Iq Amino Profile
Stability	Adulterated for insuring some stability	Complete and lifetime

Conversion Recommendations from HNI:
Explorer 10-0-0

Excellent Conditions:
High Organic N *(with Manure)*
2 Quarts = 60 lbs. Nitrogen
Low Organic N *(without Manure)*
2 Quarts = 30 lbs. Nitrogen

Challenging Conditions:
High Organic N *(with Manure)*
3 Quarts = 60 lbs. Nitrogen
Low Organic N *(without Manure)*
3 Quarts = 30 lbs. Nitrogen

Ferticell®

Available through:
Homestead Nutrition

494 W. Broad Street
New Holland, PA 17557
(888) 336-7878
www.homesteadnutritioninc.com