



# Organic Matters

## MOA Planning Major Eastside and Westside Events

Organic professionals across the region will be pleased to know that MOA is organizing two major events later this year, one on the eastside and one on the westside to make them convenient to attend.

The Glasgow Seminars, to be held at the Cottonwood Inn on October 9, 2010, is an event that will be "of particular interest for small dryland grain farmers in the eastern region,"

states Jim Lindquist, one of the Seminars' organizers. "We'll cover many topics of interest, such as what processors are looking for, as well as learning practical farming methods. This is also a great opportunity for Conference attendees to network and brainstorm ideas with like-minded folks."

The Seminars' theme is *Organic Grain - Field to Market* and will feature keynote speaker Dr. David Granatstein from Washington State University's Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources. Also presenting will be Karri Stroh from FARMS in North Dakota. FARMS, the Foundation for Agricultural and Rural Resources Management and Sustainability, is an internationally recognized program for education and research on organic topics that bring sustainability to rural communities. Speakers from the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) will also explain the organic provisions of the EQIP program and farmers enrolled in the program will discuss their experiences.

Other highlights include a grain buyers' panel with a discussion on the latest developments in the organic grain markets and a video from Herb Sand's organic farm in eastern Montana followed by an open discussion forum.

MOA's Eighth Annual Conference and Member Meeting will be held at the Holiday

Inn at the Park in Missoula on November 5-6, 2010. This year, we are excited to announce keynote speaker Maria Rodale from the Rodale Institute. Ms. Rodale's

latest book, *Organic Manifesto: How Organic Farming Can Heal Our Planet, Feed the World, and Keep Us Safe*, will be the focus of her keynote presentation.

Notable

highlights of this year's Conference include a panel discussion on *How Organic Agriculture Can Feed the World* with Maria Rodale and other qualified panelists and *What's New in Organic Certification* with presenters from MDA, OCIA, NOSB and IOIA. Other topics covered include: *Vegetable Varieties Adapted to Montana's Climate*; an MDA Update and Legislative Priorities with Ron de Yong; *Organic Tree Fruit Production*; *Reading Food Labels*; *Organic/Local: What are the Choices?*; *Crop Insurance for Farms of Any Scale*; and the MOA's Annual Members Meeting.

"This year's MOA Conference will draw organic professionals and consumers alike," says Lou Ann Crowley, Co-chair of the Conference. "There are so many great food options out there and we want to take this opportunity to explore what those options are and the benefits of each. This event is also about connecting consumers to their growers."

Mark your calendars and visit [www.montanaorganicassociation.org/conferences.htm](http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org/conferences.htm) for the latest event updates and registration scheduled for later this summer. If you would like to become a sponsor or advertiser, please visit the website or contact Jim Lindquist at [orgwheat@yahoo.com](mailto:orgwheat@yahoo.com) or (406) 583-7722.



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*Organic Matters* occasionally includes guest articles and opinions. While we review these for relevance to our mission, the opinions in these articles may not reflect the opinions or policy of the Montana Organic Association.

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## On the Farm by Matthew Johnson

Greetings from the Johnson Ranch, aka Northwinds! We are located 25 miles north of Hinsdale, between Glasgow and Malta in the Milk River valley. Our farmland and pasture are “up north” and we have irrigated hay land at Hinsdale where my parents live. Although we have barley/pea hay in our rotation, the irrigated alfalfa supplies a more consistent hay base to sustain our 150 head of cattle.

June generally consists of three major jobs—branding, summer fallowing and haying. I will go into these tasks in greater detail later. First,

I need to talk about one thing every farmer, and consumer for that matter, depends on—rain. We have had a great portion of this wonderful blessing this Spring. In fact, as I look back on my records, we have had 11 straight weeks of measurable precipitation, totaling close to nine inches—an almost unheard-of feat for our area. As a result of the moisture, our seeding projects lasted nearly 2 months from the GM (green manure) peas on April 10 to white millet on June 4 with wheat, Kamut, barley, bly/pea hay, crop peas and alfalfa and clover in between. I do like to see eyebrows raise when I tell people that I grow GM crops on my organic farm. I explain my entire yellow blossom and 1/3 of my peas are GM, which are green manure varieties. You see, I believe most organic farmers are the leaders in innovation and advances in agriculture. Those GM (genetically modified) proponents and their silly tales about feeding the world need to be categorized with the Dr. Seuss and Mother Goose fables of childhood—another subject for another time. So, back to rain and farming. As I look on the colored prairie and view many wildflowers I have never seen in my 36 years, I speculate this is what the settlers were welcomed to as they arrived some 100 years ago. Same land as 2006 and 2007, but what difference moisture makes.

Branding—neighbors helping neighbor—begins around mid-May and continues to mid-June. Every ranch chooses a day and supplies the meal. Cows are gathered in portable corrals and sorted off from the calves. Calves are roped and drug to two people, known as wrestlers, where they are branded, vaccinated and tended to in a variety of ways. At a typical branding, there are four to five ropers, six to eight sets of wrestlers, and everyone else fills in as needed. With the exception of propane torches replacing wood fires to heat the branding irons, I

reckon this job looks about like it did in the previous century.

Summer fallowing is a job reserved for both the younger and older generations, as my “slaves” (kids) and father can attest to. In our area, there are very little continuous crops. Most farms are 50% crop and 50% fallow. We have been growing crop peas on wheat stubble with some success. The wheat yields on pea stubble are about 15 to 20% less, but protein runs about 2% higher. As soon as seeding ends, we begin our first round of fallow. Half of our fallow is in green manure. We generally work this after our regular



MOA Stock Photo

fallow is done. I like to seed our GM peas about 80# so that we can get through everything with a toolbar instead of a disk. I do not like disking as it leaves the top too powdery and our surface rocks make disks a constant maintenance project. We have experimented with “shark fin” shovels on our toolbars. These 3” long fins are welded at a 35-degree angle back on the ends

of the shovel. They keep shallow and tap roots from siding off the shovels, especially in damp soil.

We will typically work our land three times a year (the cows get it once), but never in the same direction. We go around counter clockwise, diagonal and clockwise. The last two passes, we pull a rod behind our toolbars. Each creeping jenny patch is marked on a map and must be gone around and worked last and shanks cleaned off. This weed is our greatest enemy in our organic production. I like sweet clover and alfalfa best in our jenny fields. I pray someday we find a remedy for this weed, as it affects both organic and conventional farmers alike.

Our irrigated alfalfa is baled up. I like to have this job done by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend if possible. Once we get home, we concentrate on our dryland grass and alfalfa hay up north. After that, our bly/pea hay, then back to the river for the second and sometimes third alfalfa cutting. Up north, we generally double up our 21-foot windrows and make fast work of baling. But this year, I wonder if a single windrow will ever dry out or let alone pass through our baler—a nice problem to have.

The end of July generally brings our pea harvest and mid-August/September our grain harvest. I can't say enough how the Lord has blessed us not only through this rainy season, but always allowing us to plant, harvest and live in this great, yet challenging land year after year.

# NOSB Update

by Barry Flamm

In May, the NOSB welcomed Lisa Ahramjian as our new Executive Director, replacing Valerie Francis who was assigned to the important NOP Handbook project. We miss Valerie, but Lisa has jumped right in and is doing a great job. Lisa was most recently with the National Institute of Health Consensus Development Program and has a background in animal science and medical biotechnology.

It seems the Board's workload grows like weeds and the time between meetings to get it done is shorter! Already, the next NOSB official public meeting will be October 25- 28. Thankfully, an extra day has been added in order to receive all public comments without running into the wee hours as has been happening at recent meetings. This has certainly not been fair to those that have spent time and money to attend, only to present their views to a half-empty room and a comatose Board.

Due to scheduling and booking problems, the meeting location has shifted several times, but it now appears that Madison, Wisconsin, has gotten the nod. The meeting agenda and the NOSB committee recommendations will be posted in the Federal Register on September 10. The information will also be posted on the NOSB website. The written public comment period closes on October 11. The sign-up to present comments at the meeting also closes on October 11. I encourage you, if at all possible, to attend the Board meeting and/or submit comments on agenda topics or other organic issues of concern to you.

The most important items on the Fall agenda so far are:

- Materials that will sunset (go off the National List) in 2012, involving recommendations from the crops, livestock and handling committees to delist or keep.
- Continued discussion on livestock stocking rates and discussion standards for animal handling, transit, and slaughter.
- A revised recommendation on nanotechnology in organics.
- Sunset review procedures and policy revision recommendation.

There may be other topics of more interest or concern to you, so please review the agenda and phone 406-883-2858 or email me at [barryexplorer@yahoo.com](mailto:barryexplorer@yahoo.com) for more information.

NOP is very busy on many fronts, making, in my opinion, very positive progress. For details, the NOP is posting an informative monthly report on their

website. In June, NOP further strengthened staffing as Melisa Bailey joined the team as Director of the Standards Division.

NOP continues work on a draft Strategic Plan for 2010-2012. The Plan offers a Vision and Mission Statement, describes key organizational success factors and five strategic goals. The strategic goals and objectives reflect the importance of both fulfilling current and future mission-critical needs, while developing the future capability and capacity of the organization so it continues to grow and develop. The NOP's proposed new vision statement is catchy: "Organic Integrity from Farm to Table, Consumers Trust the Organic Label."

*Editor's Note: Visit the MOA/NOSB website pages at [www.montanaorganicassociation.org/nosb.htm](http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org/nosb.htm) for web links and other contact information. We also post NOSB updates, news, and other timely information there.*

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*"You must get involved to have an impact. No one is impressed with the won-lost record of the referee."*

~Napoleon Hill, American Author, 1883-1970



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## Organic Trends in Retail

by Ed Tyanich, Produce Mgr., Real Food Market and Deli

The most positive trend I see in organic produce is the continued growth of producers obtaining organic certification. Organic produce was seeing a 10%- 30% annual growth rate throughout the U.S. over the past 7-8 years. This growth came to a sudden standstill last year with the recession and many industry insiders reported negative figures in 2009. 2010 has shown strong support in organics, both on a national scale as well as locally.

On a local level, we are seeing more producers certifying than in past years. This is the best of all worlds, certified organic and local.

Nationally, many of the larger conventional growers have diversified into organics and some have even made the switch to 100% organic. What this means for the consumer is a greater variety of organic produce available throughout the year and, of course, the benefits of better environmental health, greater nutrition and less exposure to toxic chemicals. As long as consumers continue to support organics with their dollars, this growth pattern will continue.

Another trend I have been seeing is renewed interest in organic fruits and vegetables that are also heirloom varieties. Heirlooms are plants that pre-date the rise of industrial agriculture following WWII, with some heirlooms going back centuries. Tomatoes are the most common of heirlooms, but apples, and even lettuce, can often be found. Heirlooms have, in many cases, superior flavor and are often quite distinctive looking. This summer, look for a Black Krim, Purple Russian or Green Zebra tomatoes to add delicious flavor to any salad or sandwich and come Fall, look for Winesap, Gravenstein or Macintosh apples.

Taste a part of history and help preserve the genetics of heirloom varieties by supporting the growers and markets that offer them.

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## David Buschena (1964-2010)

by Wes Henthorne, MOA Board Member

Agriculture in Montana, and organic agriculture in particular, lost a wonderful friend this Spring with the passing of Dr. Dave Buschena. Dave was one of the key people to introduce modern behavioral and psychological risk analysis to agricultural economics. His skills and input were crucial in developing practical and simple rules for risk management. He taught *Advanced Agricultural Marketing*, graduate-level *Micro-economic Theory*, and an interdisciplinary course focusing on the wheat and barley industries called *Follow the Grain*, at Montana State University. His research there focused on risk management, farm inputs and cropping systems. He had a deep interest in the economics of organic farming and the comparison of conventional and organic grain markets.

Dave was a presenter at MOA-sponsored Farm Tours in 2007 and prepared a marketing presentation for our Conference in 2008. He was always willing to share his thoughts at MOA events and, even as he was beginning an arduous course of treatment for cancer, he was passionate enough about his presentation at our Conference to prepare a farmer to deliver his material to the group in the event he was not able to. One of Dave's most impressive qualities was to fully engage in conversation and make the person or people he was talking to aware that he had nothing more important to do than communicate with them at that moment. This focus created an intensity of communication uncommon in today's frenzied world.

## MOA's Online Directory

by Tara Blyth, MOA Board Member/Communications Chair

MOA's new Online Directory is now up and running on the MOA website. Through the years, we have received numerous requests for MOA to provide a way for our members to promote their business to the MOA audience. This Online Directory is another way we can create value for our members and help connect growers, consumers manufacturers and retailers around the State. To receive this new benefit of MOA membership, you can pick one of two membership categories:

- "Farm/Ranch/Business Membership" (\$75) includes your contact information and a 40-word description of your operation in the listing.
- "Organic Business Membership" (\$250) a new MOA member category that includes your contact information, a 100-word description, your logo and a link to your website.

When you have a chance, go to [www.montanaorganicassociation.org](http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org) to check out this new feature. The "DIRECTORY" tab is located on the left hand side of the homepage and from there you can scroll down the page to view all the listings. Or, if you know specifically who you are looking for, you can search by letter at the top of the page as well.

The MOA website has also had many other updates and is an easily-accessible resource with lots of information relevant to anyone interested in organics.



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**Summer's** bounty is full of local, organic foods. Visit your local farmer's market, organic retailer or friend's garden for the freshest. Better still, if you don't have one yet, start planning your own organic garden!

### Flank Steak with Chimichurri Sauce

from [www.barristerbites.com](http://www.barristerbites.com)

<b>Steak</b> 1 lb flank steak 2 tablespoons vegetable oil 2 teaspoons sea salt 2 tablespoons coarsely cracked black peppercorns 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature	<b>Chimichurri Sauce</b> ½ cup chopped parsley 1/3 cup olive oil 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar 1 clove chopped garlic ½ teaspoon salt 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
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#### Preparation

Let steak rest at room temperature for 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.

Combine all of the sauce ingredients together in a blender or food processor. Blend until you have a nice puree.

Meanwhile, heat a large, well-seasoned cast iron skillet over high heat until very hot, 5 to 7 minutes.

Pat the steak dry with a paper towel and brush lightly with vegetable oil. Combine the sea salt and cracked pepper on a plate and roll the steak in the mixture, pressing lightly to evenly coat all sides.

When the skillet is ready, add the steak and sear them evenly on all sides for about 2 minutes per side. If your steak is thick enough to have sides, be sure to sear them too. If you have a thinner cut you only need to sear the top and bottom.

Top the steak with 2 tablespoons of butter divided into 1 tablespoon chunks, and place the skillet in the oven. Cook the steaks until they reach 120 degrees F for rare or 125 degrees F for medium-rare on an instant-read thermometer. (Approximately 10 minutes to reach medium.)

Remove the steaks to a serving platter, cover tightly with aluminum foil and allow to rest at room temperature for 10 minutes. After the steak has rested, slice against the grain to ensure a more tender cut. Serve hot with Chimichurri Sauce on top. Makes 2 servings.

### Wine Fruit Salad from Sandi Shanks

1/3 cup red wine ¼ cup orange juice	1 tablespoon lemon juice 2 tablespoons sugar
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#### Preparation

Prepare sauce and add your fruit of choice. Peaches, pears, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, sweet cherries, and in the Winter, bananas and frozen fruit are nice to use.

## To Your Health

by Sandi Shanks, MOA Board Member

It has been a beautiful, rainy Spring in the Northwest corner of Montana. Summer has begun and I've already had salads from local gardens. What could be healthier than eating local, organic food? When I say local, I tend to consider the entire region. We are a large State in the area we cover, but not so in many other ways. To me, eating organic grass-fed beef from Big Timber and organic grain from the Golden Triangle is just as local as eating melt-in-your-mouth spinach from the Eureka organic farm or my Mom's backyard. When I drive the beautiful 50 miles each way to my job, it is hard for me to draw lines across the State I have spent most of my life in and determine what is local and what is not. Montana is my home and my backyard and it is all local. Try all these delightful recipes with local, organic ingredients.

### Shenzhen Cucumbers from Elizabeth Wimpey

2 English or Japanese cucumbers ½ cup rice vinegar ¼ cup toasted sesame oil	Crushed garlic to taste Crushed pepper flakes to taste 1 tablespoon soy sauce
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#### Preparation

Mix all and pour over sliced cucumbers. Refrigerate one hour and serve chilled.



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# Notice of Director Elections

by Steve Baril, MOA Board of Directors

Do you want to be involved in promoting organic food? Are you interested in helping organize MOA's Annual Conference or farm tours? Maybe you have other skills and ideas that will help MOA fulfill its mission. We are looking for you.

MOA will fill four positions on the Board of Directors at the members' business meeting on November 6, 2010 in Missoula at the Holiday Inn at the Park. Check MOA's website in September for the names of persons nominated to fill these positions. In the meantime, if you are interested in volunteering for the Board or would like to know more, please contact Steve Baril (406-458-4981 or barils@mt.net) or Judy Owsowitz (406-862-6362 or terrapin@aboutmontana.net).

Board members serve three-year terms and generally serve on one or more committees. The Board of Directors usually meets in person two times and by conference call several times each year.

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## A View from the Chair

by Ole Norgaard

Wow, what a Spring – cold and wet! It seems as if “global warming” took a break here in Montana, and the jet stream brought a loop of heavy rains into this part of the world for most of the season. Things have been green, greener and the greenest, and a lot of farmers are being blessed with some amazing crops. Some of the warm season crops are a bit behind but will probably catch up with some blue sky and sunshine. To make matters even more interesting, some farms were hit with severe storms that took tolls on their crops. Our good thoughts go out to them with the hope that only rain falls from the sky in the future.

Spring has turned into Summer and life on the farm is busy, birds are singing, bees are buzzing, crops and animals are growing and farmers’ markets are happening all over the State. Hay is being put up and it will not be long before combines are rolling across the fields again. In this busy season, we should take the time to observe nature at play and look at how we interact with her in our daily tasks. We need to observe our crops and livestock to learn what they are teaching us so we can become better farmers and keep improving the world we are living in. Part of the fine art of being a farmer is to be able to observe and learn, then put that knowledge to work.

We seem to be constantly reminded what happens when we don’t respect and learn from nature and always try to

jump where the fence is lowest. The recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the RR-alfalfa case that was heard in the Supreme Court are prime examples—it takes a lot for some people to learn how things are done in an honest and respectful way.

Another aspect of the fine art of farming is to keep up with the latest developments in the world of organics. MOA Board members and other volunteers have been organizing upcoming MOA events in Glasgow and Missoula. The Glasgow Seminars event on October 9 is primarily for organic grain farmers and will feature David Granatstein of Washington State University as the keynote speaker. MOA’s annual Conference in Missoula will be on November 5-6 at the Holiday Inn at the Park, and will feature Maria Rodale from the Rodale Institute as keynote. Both events will offer many more interesting and thought-provoking sessions and speakers from which we all can learn, offering us the opportunity to put more tools in our toolboxes. (See feature article on the front page for more eastside / westside event information.)

On behalf of the MOA Board of Directors, we hope to see you there.

Enjoy the summer and may the grain bins be full and overflowing.