

ORGANIC MATTERS

The Voice of Montana's Organic Community

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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

It is always challenging to gather together our far-flung and incredibly busy MOA Board of Directors and advisors. But we managed to do just that in March for a jam-packed productive weekend retreat. Perhaps the lure of the hot mineral baths in White Sulphur Springs encouraged our participation? But for me, the hook was the opportunity to interact with the wonderfully diverse group of producers, marketers, and other organic folks who comprise our Board. The enticement of an organic potluck never hurts my feelings either! Occasionally doing our work face-to-face really helps make our phone conferences vastly more productive.

We embarked on a very ambitious agenda beginning with a report on our tax status, and where we will go from here. (It's always good to get the "fun" stuff out of the way first.) Then we proceeded to a much needed discussion on MOA's development stages. From a whiz-bang precocious infancy, we have progressed to gangly pubescence. And as we all know, adolescents need a strong adult-type to keep them grounded. To that end, we have decided to contract an adult-type person as an administrator; Lise Rousseau, who has been pivotal in helping us with our incredibly successful conferences. In this capacity, Lise will help keep us on track, keep projects moving forward, consolidate paperwork, and be a resource for the myriad of contacts made to and from MOA each month. And, as a result, we now have our own, official address which is announced in this issue (with much appreciation to AERO for their past facilitation and continued input.)

We have some grants in the works thanks to our grant committee; Chaz Holt, Glen Babcock, and Jim Lindquist. If you have any ideas or skills in this area, don't hesitate to contact one of them to volunteer. We will be collaborating with NCAT, AERO and others for some of this work.

A lot of good brainstorming went into the upcoming annual conference in Missoula (Dec. 1-3). The agenda will have

something for everyone with some amazing speakers being lined up. Glen Babcock or Sandi Shanks are the contact people if you would like to help with the conference. And, it's never too early to be thinking of some fun auction donations.

Much discussion went into the subject of mentoring. We came to realize that although we have no formal program set up, many of us are doing it on an informal basis already. Matt Johnson is the person to talk to about mentoring. We also decided to co-sponsor some farm tours with AERO this summer.

It is really exciting for me to be working with such an active Board. MOA is fast moving toward adulthood, and welcomes membership input every step of the way. All Board meetings are open to members. If you would ever like to be included on a phone conference meeting, please feel free to contact a board member. We will let you know when and how to connect in.

Thanks for being a MOA member and supporting local organic agriculture right here in Montana. Here's hoping the sun shines and the clouds rain at all the right moments this year!

Judy Owsowitz, MOA Board Chair

The Organic Advantage:

Healthy Soils—Healthy Food—Healthy People

MOA's FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Dec. 1 - 3, Missoula

Join your organic neighbors—ranchers, farmers, consumers, and retailers—at MOA's fifth annual conference to be held December 1-3 in Missoula.

Learn about trends in organic agriculture. Hone a new skill. Eat Montana-grown organic foods. Touch bases with old friends. Make new acquaintances. Join MOA as we grow organic in Montana.

Our theme for this conference, "The Organic Advantage: Healthy Soils—Healthy Food—Healthy People," will explore

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-Albert, vineyard bird dog,
Missoula, Montana

Dog Photo: Elise Schemm

BOARD and COMMITTEE UPDATES

MOA Nonprofit Status

On February 22, 2006, the Internal Revenue Service approved the Montana Organic Association to be exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code, with effective date of exemption beginning June 7, 2004. A 501(c)(6) is generally an association of persons having some common business interest with the purpose of promoting that common interest, but not engaging in a regular business of a kind ordinarily conducted for profit.

Contributions/donations to a 501(c)(6) are not deductible under the Internal Revenue Code as charitable contributions on individuals' federal income tax returns. However, they may be deductible as trade or business expenses if ordinary and necessary in the conduct of the taxpayer's business.

To further MOA's educational and mentoring purposes as stated in its Mission Statement, on March 4, 2006 the Board established a committee to proceed with work to attach a 501(c)(3) tax deductible arm to the Association. This work is still in progress and will be accomplished as soon as practicable.

A Message from the Organic Advisory Council

The Montana Organic Commodity Advisory Council (MOCAC) was created in 2001 to give Montana's citizens a voice in the Montana Department of Agriculture's organic certification program. Volunteer members of MOCAC advise the Department on issues from the public and conduct a yearly program review. They are committed to keeping the state program connected to Montana's organic community and to continuing good services to the program's customers.

Currently MOCAC is assisting the state program to become accredited as an International Standards Organization certifier. Accreditation will make organic certification by the state acceptable to certain foreign markets such as the European Union, an important market for organic grains. Another issue is the lack of USDA funds to cost-share certification and inspection fees. MOCAC recommended that the department seek to restore these funds, and Director Peterson is pursuing all national and state avenues to accomplish this. MOCAC also plans to review the state's forms and record keeping requirements to make these as user friendly and non-burdensome as possible.

You are welcome to attend any meeting of MOCAC or to suggest items for the agenda. If you have suggestions, are interested in participating, or if you would like a meeting held in your community, please contact a Council member so they may assist you.

State law requires MOCAC membership to include a consumer from the general public and certified Montana organic farmers, ranchers, processors, and handlers. Members are appointed for two-year staggered terms and shall not serve more than two

consecutive terms. The terms of three members will expire in August 2006. If you are interested in serving on this Council, please contact any of its members. Current members and contacts are:

- Nancy K Peterson, Chair of MOCAC, Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture in Helena. Contact the Department at 406-444-3144 or email: agr@mt.gov
- Nancy Matheson, Vice-chair of MOCAC is a producer representative. Contact 406-227-9161 or email: nmatheson@imine.net
- John Hoffland, a consumer representative. Call (work) 406-443-5150 or email: produce@realfoodstore.com
- Andre' Giles, a handler representative. Call 406-622-5436 or email: 7mfg@ttc-cmc.net
- Steve Baril, a producer representative. Call 406-458-4981 or email: barils@ixi.net
- Mark Bruckner, a producer representative. Call 406-654-5584 or email: 7bruck5@ttc-cmc.net
- Laura Garber, a producer representative. Call 406-363-6627 or email: homesteadorganics@earthlink.net
- Mikel P Lund, a producer representative. Call 406-487-2828 or email: lundfrm@nemontel.net

Planning Underway for Summer Farm Tours

MOA is pleased to be a partner with the Alternative Energy Resources Organization in hosting tours of organic farms this summer. According to MOA's Steve Baril, the details are still sketchy, but three co-sponsored tours are in the works. Judy Owsowitz graciously offered a tour of her certified organic produce operation near Whitefish in mid-July. A tour of Clay McAlpine's certified organic hog and cattle ranch is tentatively scheduled in conjunction with a meeting of AERO's Agriculture Task Force after mid-July. A tour of a grassfed beef operation in Belgrade will be combined with a Chefs' Collaborative tour and meal. Dates, times and other details of these tours will be announced through press releases.

MOA's FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE...

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all aspects of organic agriculture from livestock to vegetables, soils to new crops, marketing to the business-side of farming. We will feature special sessions designed specifically for the organic consumer on health, the economics of organics, applying organic principles at home, and more.

Plans are in place for a fabulous affair on Friday night at the new Hilton Garden Inn and Conference Center to showcase the best that Montana's local organic producers have to offer. The conference will continue with its diverse educational workshops through Saturday, and half of Sunday, with an exhibitor trade show open for the duration of the conference.

It's not too early to reserve your place at this year's conference by calling Lise Rousseau, Conference Coordinator at (406) 887-2869 or by emailing: <moaconference@aol.com>

One of the greatest pieces of economic wisdom is to know what you do not know.

—John Kenneth Galbraith

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Letters to the Editor

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT: THE HARVEY COURT CASE AND RESULTING LEGISLATION

by MOA member, Pam Clevenger, Missoula

In 1992, a pressing issue facing the first National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), which advises the USDA, was to decide if the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) of 1990 required strict application of allowable synthetic materials, or if it was ambiguous and allowed for interpretation. Ultimately, the board decided that Congress did not intend to prohibit the use of materials like baking powder and pectin. Based on rigorous selection criteria in the OFPA and after much debate by the NOSB, in 12 years only 38 synthetic materials have been approved for use by organic processors.

Due to the stability provided by the rules and the consumer recognition of the USDA seal, the organic industry proceeded to grow by leaps and bounds. Enter Arthur Harvey, who, in 2002 sued the USDA arguing that the regulations were far more lax than the original organic legislation intended. In 2005 the appeals court agreed with Harvey on the issue of synthetic materials in processed food and how that food should be labeled.

This ruling, which stunned the organic industry, said that any product containing or using any of the 38 allowed ingredients in its processing could not be labeled organic or use the USDA seal. The court gave a 24 month deadline when all organic products would have to conform to the new rules, meaning they would either have to be reformulated or labels would have to be changed to read, "Made with organic ingredients," which only requires the product to contain 70% organic ingredients. This would have surely diminished the appeal of thousands of

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THE TOP 10 REASONS FOR BUYING ORGANIC FOODS

From *Health and Healing Wisdom: the Price-Pottenger Nutrition Foundation Journal*, Summer 2005 Issue

1. PROTECT FUTURE GENERATIONS

The average child receives four times more exposure than an adult to at least eight widely used cancer-causing pesticides in food.

2. PREVENT SOIL EROSION

Soil is eroding seven times faster than it is being built up naturally on U.S. crop lands. Organic farming regards rich, healthy soil as the foundation of the food chain, not just a medium for holding plants in a vertical position so they can be chemically fertilized.

3. PROTECT WATER QUALITY

The EPA estimates pesticides contaminate the ground water in 38 states, polluting the primary source of drinking water for more than half of the population.

4. SAVE ENERGY

Modern farming used more petroleum than any other single industry, and more energy is used to produce synthetic fertilizers than to cultivate and harvest crops. Organic farming relies on more labor-intensive practices and using green manures and cover crops to build up soil.

5. KEEP CHEMICALS OFF YOUR PLATE

Many pesticides were approved before research linked them to cancer and other diseases. A 1987 National Academy of Sciences report estimated that pesticides might cause an extra 1.4 million cancer cases among Americans.

6. PROTECT FARM WORKERS

A National Cancer Institute study found that farmers exposed to herbicides had a six-times greater risk than non-farmers of contracting cancer. In California, reported pesticide poisonings among farm workers have risen an average of 14% a year since 1973 and doubled between 1975 and 1985.

7. HELP SMALL FARMERS

Most organic farms are small, independently owned family farms of less than 100 acres. At the rate family farms are being lost, organic farms could be one of the few survival tactics left.

8. SUPPORT A TRUE ECONOMY

Conventional food prices do not reflect hidden costs born by taxpayers, including nearly \$74 billion in federal subsidies in 1988. Other hidden costs include regulation and testing, hazardous waste disposal and cleanup, and environmental damage.

9. PROMOTE BIODIVERSITY

Mono-cropping reduces diversity of plant life and strips the soil of minerals and nutrients, increasing the need for chemical fertilizers. Despite a ten-fold increase in the use of pesticides between 1947 and 1974, losses from insects doubled, partly due to genetic resistance to pesticides.

10. TASTE BETTER FLAVOR

More and more chefs are using organic foods in their recipes, because organics taste better!

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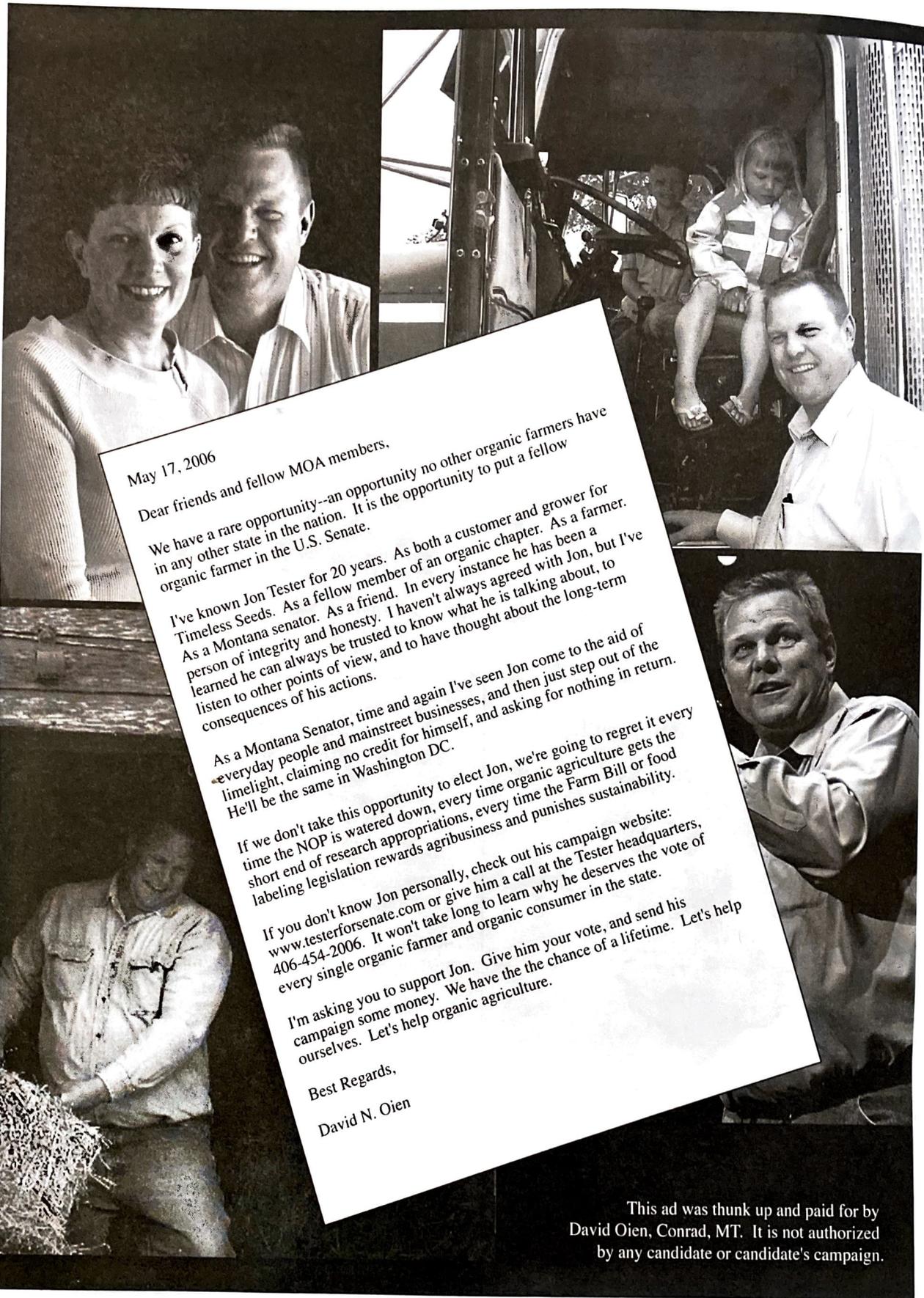
Donna Corrine Brown (78) of Bozeman, passed away at her home on January 29, 2006. She attained a journalism degree from the University of Missoula and traveled the country with her husband and two daughters, finally settling in Bozeman in 1966.

Although an accomplished businesswoman and journalist who earned many prestigious journalistic awards, she may be best remembered for her love of gardening, healthy eating, and the truck farm she operated for many years. She was a strong advocate for sustainable land management and organic farming practices and is remembered through a gift to the Montana Organic Association by these friends:

- William & Dorothy Hathaway, Bozeman
- Golda Lass, Bozeman
- Evelyn Aiken, Whitlash
- Wini Barnett, Whitlash
- Earl & Sunie Thompson, Whitlash
- Community Food Co-op, Bozeman

MOA SEEKING PERMANENT EDITOR OF ORGANIC MATTERS

If you have good organizational and writing skills or experience publishing newsletters, we'd like to talk to you. Please contact Steve Baril (406) 458-4981 <barils@ixi.net> or any MOA board member if you have an interest in this position.



May 17, 2006

Dear friends and fellow MOA members,

We have a rare opportunity--an opportunity no other organic farmers have in any other state in the nation. It is the opportunity to put a fellow organic farmer in the U.S. Senate.

I've known Jon Tester for 20 years. As both a customer and grower for Timeless Seeds. As a fellow member of an organic chapter. As a farmer. As a Montana senator. As a friend. In every instance he has been a person of integrity and honesty. I haven't always agreed with Jon, but I've learned he can always be trusted to know what he is talking about, to listen to other points of view, and to have thought about the long-term consequences of his actions.

As a Montana Senator, time and again I've seen Jon come to the aid of everyday people and mainstreet businesses, and then just step out of the limelight, claiming no credit for himself, and asking for nothing in return. He'll be the same in Washington DC.

If we don't take this opportunity to elect Jon, we're going to regret it every time the NOP is watered down, every time organic agriculture gets the short end of research appropriations, every time the Farm Bill or food labeling legislation rewards agribusiness and punishes sustainability.

If you don't know Jon personally, check out his campaign website: www.testersenate.com or give him a call at the Tester headquarters, 406-454-2006. It won't take long to learn why he deserves the vote of every single organic farmer and organic consumer in the state.

I'm asking you to support Jon. Give him your vote, and send his campaign some money. We have the the chance of a lifetime. Let's help ourselves. Let's help organic agriculture.

Best Regards,

David N. Oien

This ad was thunk up and paid for by David Oien, Conrad, MT. It is not authorized by any candidate or candidate's campaign.

The Top 10 – of a thousand – Reasons We need Jon Tester in the U.S. Senate

- 1. Jon's one of us** – Grandson of a homesteader, MOA member, 20 years an organic farmer, AERO Sustainable Ag Award winner
- 2. Jon knows the alphabet** – MOA, AERO, NOP, NOSB, OCIA, QAI, TILTH, MOCAC, IFOAM, JAS, CSP, NRCS. Try those on any other candidate!
- 3. Jon doesn't know Jack** – Abramoff, that is.
- 4. Jon's got guts.** He played 3rd base in a men's softball league. And he won't be afraid to stand his ground in the US Senate or with USDA for organics and sustainable family farmers.
- 5. Jon doesn't have bad hair days** – Jon actually has it cut that way by a barber he's been using for 15 years--by a family barber who's been in business 40 years. It's about loyalty to the locals.
- 6. Jon knows bullshit when he sees it.** He'd never, ever be part of fraudulent wars, secret prisons on foreign soil, illegal wiretaps, \$150,000 political payoffs, extramarital affairs.
- 7. Jon's not afraid of the "O" word.** Jon sponsored the enabling legislation for the MT Organic Certification Program, & sponsored the GMO Liability bill.
- 8. Jon doesn't cut wind.** In the Montana Senate he sponsored SB115 (equitable taxation for wind generation) & SB415 (Green Power for the grid).
- 9. Jon walks the talk** – Dedicated father and husband, former teacher, FSA committee chair, school board chair, executive committee positions w/ OCIA International, MSU Outstanding Ag Leader 2005 award, President of MT Senate.
- 10. Jon has Montana values** – He's a hard working honest individual who cares about rural communities and the land.

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Organic Livestock Producer Co-op Being Formed

Certified organic livestock producers from across the state gathered in Great Falls on Tuesday, May 16 to discuss options and next steps necessary to form an organic producer co-op primarily for marketing pasture raised and grass fed livestock. The group met with Brian Gion of the Montana Cooperative Development Center, and with MCDC's lawyer, Jim Kacy of Havre.

Among the issues discussed were alternative business structures, responsibility of members, financing, management, benefits, and drawbacks. "The co-op is very beneficial to agricultural producers because its "one person, one vote" structure allows producers to join together and share information for marketing purposes without violating anti-trust laws. The Capper-Volstead Act protects producers engaging in these activities," said Brian Gion of MCDC.

The group has already nearly completed a feasibility study and is forming a steering committee to work out details to present to potential members for a vote. Production output is being collected, and a list of potential buyers is being developed. "We're hoping to develop a co-op which is flexible and agile enough to take advantage of marketing opportunities as they develop," said Karalee Bancroft, who is currently spearheading the project. "We hope to be able to implement procedures which will give producers much needed information on the quality aspects of the livestock they're producing which will help them with their herd management practices and procedures." Membership will be limited to certified organic producers, but may include members from adjoining states as well.

If you are interested in learning more about this co-op, contact Karalee Bancroft, Caroline Ranch, PO Box 632, Boulder, MT 59632, (406) 225-4280 or email <carolineranch@earthlink.net>

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New Study Confirms The Ecological Virtues Of Organic Farming

(3/7/06 – Stanford University)

Organic farming has long been touted as an environmentally friendly alternative to conventional agriculture. A new study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)* provides strong evidence to support that claim. Stanford University graduate student Sasha Kramer and her colleagues found that fertilizing apple trees with synthetic chemicals produced more adverse environmental effects than feeding them with organic manure or alfalfa.

"The intensification of agricultural production over the past 60 years and the subsequent increase in global nitrogen inputs have resulted in substantial nitrogen pollution and ecological damage," Kramer and her colleagues write. "The primary source of nitrogen pollution comes from nitrogen-based agricultural fertilizers, whose use is forecasted to double or almost triple by 2050."

Nitrogen compounds from fertilizer can enter the atmosphere and contribute to global warming, adds Harold A. Mooney, the Paul S. Achilles Professor of Environmental Biology at Stanford and co-author of the study. "Nitrogen compounds also enter our watersheds and have effects quite distant from the fields in which they are applied, as for example in contaminating water tables and causing biological dead zones at the mouths of major rivers," he says. "This study shows that the use of organic versus chemical fertilizers can play a role in reducing these adverse effects."

Nitrogen treatments

The *PNAS* study was conducted in an established apple orchard on a 4-acre site in the Yakima Valley of central Washington, one of the premiere apple-growing regions in the United States. Some trees used in the experiment had been raised with conventional synthetic fertilizers. Others were grown organically without pesticides, herbicides or artificial fertilization. A third group was raised by a method called integrated farming, which combines organic and conventional agricultural techniques. "Conventional agriculture has made tremendous improvements in crop yield but at large costs to the environment," the authors write.

During the year long experiment, organically grown trees were fed either composted chicken manure or alfalfa meal, while conventionally raised plants were given calcium nitrate, a synthetic fertilizer widely used by commercial apple growers. Trees raised using the integrated system were given a blend of equal parts chicken manure and calcium nitrate. Each tree was fertilized twice, in October and May, and given the same amount of nitrogen at both feedings no matter what the source.

Ground water contamination

One goal of the *PNAS* experiment was to compare how much excess nitrogen leached into the soil using the four fertilizer treatments—one conventional, two organic (manure and alfalfa) and one integrated. When applied to the soil, nitrogen fertilizers release or break down into nitrates—chemical compounds that plants need to build proteins.

However, excess nitrates can percolate through the soil and contaminate surface and ground water supplies. High nitrate levels in drinking water can cause serious illness in humans, particularly small children. Nearly one in 10 domestic wells in the United States sampled had nitrate concentrations that exceeded the EPA's drinking water standards.

During the experiment, water was collected in resin bags buried about 40 inches below the trees and then analyzed in the laboratory. The results were dramatic. "We measured nitrate leaching and found that it was 4.4 to 5.6 times higher in the conventional treatment than in the two organic treatments, with the integrated treatment in between," says co-author John B. Reganold, the Regents Professor of Soil Science at Washington State University.

Nitrogen gas emissions

They also compared the amount of nitrogen gas that was released into the atmosphere by the four treatments. Air samples collected in the orchard after the fall and spring fertilizations revealed that organic and integrated soils emitted larger quantities of an environmentally benign gas called dinitrogen (N₂) than soils treated with conventional synthetic fertilizer. One explanation for this disparity is that the organic and integrated soils contained active concentrations of denitrifying bacteria—naturally occurring microbes that convert excess nitrates in the soil into N₂ gas. However, denitrifier microbial communities were much smaller and far less active and efficient in conventionally treated soils.

The research team also measured emissions of nitrous oxide (N₂O)—a potent greenhouse gas that is 300 times more effective at heating the atmosphere than carbon dioxide gas, the leading cause of global warming. Nitrous oxide emissions were similar among the four treatments. "We found that higher gas emissions from organic and integrated soils do not result in increased production of harmful nitrous oxide but rather enhanced emission of non-detrimental dinitrogen," Reganold says. "These results demonstrate that organic and integrated fertilization practices support more active and efficient denitrifier microbial communities, which may shift some of the potential nitrate leaching losses in the soil into harmless dinitrogen gas losses in the atmosphere."

Sustainable agriculture

Washington state produces more than half of the nation's apples. In 2004, the state crop was worth about \$963 million, with organically grown apples representing between 5 and 10 percent of the total value. But the results of the *PNAS* study may apply to other high-value crops as well, according to the authors.

The study was funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Science Foundation, the Land Institute and the Teresa Heinz Environmental Science and Policy Fellowship Program.

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Letters to the Editor

continued from page 4

products to consumers, and it would have created a loophole or void for up to 30% non-organically grown ingredients, reducing the demand for organic ingredients, eventually impacting organic farmers. Beyond multi-ingredient products, it would have affected items such as sugar, bananas, many whole grains, and milk, which is supplemented with vitamin D. All organic standards in the world, including the European Union and Canada include allowances for similar lists of synthetic ingredients in organic products.

The board members of the Organic Trade Association (OTA), none of whom are Dean Foods or Wal-Mart, unanimously approved a plan to return to the US Congress and seek to have the original OFPA amended to bring it in line with the organic practices and standards established by a long term public process since 1990, guided by the NOSB. There was much inflammatory language characterizing the OTA's decision as reflecting a takeover by big corporate interests. The fact is that virtually 50% of the OTA's members generate \$50,000 or less in annual sales. This was not a back door, behind-the-scenes decision, as has been portrayed. Some complain that little time was given for debate and the building of consensus within the organic community, and this is a justified criticism (one that formed the basis of MOA's objection, I believe). However, while time constraints imposed by the courts were severe, OTA did make efforts to meet with those groups expressing concerns. They also allowed for discussions and questions at their meetings which were open to the public and held on-line chat groups to air differing opinions.

Contrary to previous statements in this newsletter, the allowed list of synthetic ingredients still remains at 38. Food contact substances are not ingredients, but a category that includes items such as sanitizers, packing material, even processing surfaces and containers. This category has not been reviewed by the NOSB since 2002, and the amendment did not change it. Most certifiers interpret the rules requiring protection of organic integrity by insisting that processors protect products from sanitizer residues on equipment surfaces, and having the NOSB spend its time reviewing each of these materials, which are already scrutinized by the FDA, would be pointless.

Despite alarmist rhetoric about a sneak attack on organic food standards, Congress accepted that it was simply ratifying the recommendations of the NOSB, which had been adopted by the USDA. The amendment presented by the OTA to restore OFPA to pre-Harvey status does not weaken organic standards. Most notably the statute contains a sunset provision that requires the NOSB to review every material that has been on the allowed synthetics list for five years to determine if it can or should be removed, based on newer research or development of organic sources. Finally, there is the requirement that all certified organic operations demonstrate movement to continually improve their practices that diminish organic quality of the final products, whether a farmer or a processor.

The bottom line is that more than a decade of work by the NOSB was challenged by one individual and thrown out by one judge. Through OTA's leadership it has now been restored.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Jun. 10:** Gardening with Nature tour, Stevensville MT, (406) 777-3723 <atthowe@montana.com>
- Jun. 22:** Central Ag Research Center Field Days, Moccasin MT, (406) 423-5421
- Jul. 6:** Southern Ag Research Center Field Days, Huntley MT, (406) 994-3681
- Jul. 8:** Sustainability Fair, Livingston MT, (406) 222-0730 <www.northrock.org>
- Jul. 12:** Northwestern Ag Research Center Field Days, Kalispell MT, (406) 755-4303
- Jul. 14:** Northern Ag Research Center Field Days, Havre MT, (406) 265-6115
- Jul. 14-16:** NNFA Natural Products Convention & Trade Show, Las Vegas NV <www.nnfa.org>
- Jul. 20:** Eastern Ag Research Center Field Days, Sidney MT, (406) 433-2208
- Jul. 20-21:** Eastern Ag Research Center Summer Convention, Sidney MT, (406) 433-2208
- Jul. 22-23:** Fiberfest, Lincoln MT <www.fiberfesteureka.org>
- Aug. 23-25:** IFOAM conference on organic livestock, St. Paul MN <www.ifoam.org>
- Aug. 24:** NCAT 30th Anniversary, Butte MT, (406) 494-4572 <www.ncat.org>
- Sep. 3:** Conservation Farming Research tour, Stevensville MT, (406) 777-3723 <atthowe@montana.com>
- Sep. 23 - Oct. 7:** Permaculture Design Course, Hot Springs MT, (406) 741-2283 email: <alamedas@hotspringsmt.net>
- Fall 2006** (date and location TBD): Governor's Montana Food & Agriculture Summit
- Oct. 4-7:** Natural Products Expo East, Baltimore MD <www.expoeast.com>
- Oct. 7-11:** Community Food Security Council's 10th Annual Conference, Vancouver BC <www.foodsecurity.org>
- Oct. 27-29:** AERO Annual Meeting, Ft. Benton MT, (406) 443-7272 <www.aeromt.org>
- Dec. 1-3:** MOA Conference, Holiday Inn Garden, Missoula MT, (406) 887-2869 <moaconference@aol.com>

Letters to the Editor

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This has been a difficult and complex debate. My hope is that we can repair this rift in our community and speak with a unified voice again, while still respecting different views. We are a rowdy and independent lot – outspoken and opinionated. In fact, it's kind of amazing that it took this long for us to have it out in public! And in the words of Bob Quinn, "we need to stay united as an industry so we have as much power as possible to go against the big foes like GMO crops which WE ALL oppose, rather than become divided and fight amongst ourselves over the definitions of organic, which will never be completely agreed upon. The definition of organic has been in the past and should be in the future a moving target, always improving as we continue to improve organic methods and know-how, both on the farm and throughout the processing and delivery chain."

Pam Clevenger is Grocery Manager at the Good Food Store, Missoula, and a local Montana orchardist. The complete version of the above abridged opinion is available by emailing <pam@goodfoodstore.com>

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In the News

Big Fork Eagle features MOA Cherry Growers

MOA members Albert Silva and Lise Rousseau were recently featured in an article appearing in the Big Fork Eagle. The following is an excerpt:

Whether in pies, wine, or simply as a snack straight off the tree, Flathead Lake cherries are a popular fruit in Montana and beyond. As the grandeur of generations-old orchards dotting Flathead Lake's east shore remains constant, some Flathead Lake cherry growers are moving away from conventional growing methods into organic cherry production.

"It's not impossible to grow an organic cherry," Lise Rousseau said, "but it does take a little more effort." Rousseau and her husband Albert Silva have been growing organic cherries on their 15-acre Finley Point orchard for three years. Tending to 700 trees, Rousseau and Silva have one of only two USDA certified organic cherry orchards on Flathead Lake.

Nominations Sought for the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)

Positions are open for Organic Handler, Scientist, Consumer Public Interest, and Environmental Specialist (one position in each category). Nominations must be postmarked by July 14, 2006. Individuals desiring to be appointed must have the following qualifications:

- Handler – an owner or operator of a certified organic handling operation;
- Environmentalist – expertise in environmental protection and resource conservation;
- Scientist – expertise in toxicology, ecology, or biochemistry;
- Consumer Public Interest – individual who represents public

or consumer interest group(s).

For more information, contact Katherine Benham, (202) 205-7806, or email <Katherine.benham@usda.gov>

Governor Plans Montana Food and Agriculture Summit

"By eating locally produced food, we shift power from the international food system," said Tom Elliott, keynote speaker at the "Food, Farms, and People Conference" in Helena on March 22 – 23, 2006. A key objective of this conference was to bring together thinkers representing diverse sectors to prepare for the Governor's Montana Food and Agriculture Summit scheduled for the Fall of 2006.

MOA was among about 50 groups represented at the conference along with other participants from agriculture, food processing and distribution, hunger and nutrition programs, economic development, low-income groups, conservation, and government. Participants were challenged to think freely in describing the intersections between food production and food security and to discard assumptions in describing opportunities and issues for the upcoming Summit.

Today, Montana farmers and ranchers produce about 4 percent of the food that is distributed in Montana. According to data from the Montana Food Bank Network, 47,000 Montana families have difficulty with enough food to feed their families. One of Food Bank Network's many solutions is to increase access to affordable, healthy, locally grown food. Hank Hudson from the Department of Public Health and Human Services said, "Everyone would benefit but perhaps the poorest Montanans really stand to gain the most" in describing the attributes of a food system utilizing food that is locally grown and consumed.

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