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## 2018 Annual Report

Each year the Chairperson of the Board of Directors prepares an annual report to share with the Board and membership. The purpose of this report is to document and review accomplishments and growth while providing inspiration for the next year of activity.

### Perspective and Context

2018 marked 26 years since the founding of the Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance as a 501(3)(c) non-profit, statewide, organization. We continued to build on our long-standing commitment to education and outreach in pursuit of our mission of *"Promoting organic agriculture and the development and support of food systems that revitalize and sustain local communities"*. MOFFA members can be very proud of their organization as a valuable contributor to the long term growth of healthy soils, healthy crops and livestock, and healthy people.

This was a year of looking inward, with significant time at several in-person and conference call meetings spent on discussing our collective values, priorities, and vision. We greatly appreciated Julia Darnton from MSUE traveling to the meeting to facilitate a long discussion, a culmination of two years of brainstorming and intermittent work from all board members. We came to a consensus on several key values that we all, as an organization and as individuals, hold dear to our hearts: **environment, community, cooperation, health, inclusiveness, and education**. Each of those values is intrinsic to our organization. We discussed these values and more, including the word "organic" and its continued shifting political economy. The statement we have settled on remains, like much in life, both imperfect and fully functional. It has been a reminder to all of us why we volunteer our time to discover, share, and promote an agricultural system we believe in.

### MOFFA's Vision:

**A vibrant and diverse community working together for healthy food that is available for everyone and for agricultural practices that support the long-term viability of our ecosystem.**

## Board of Directors

The [Board of Directors](#) maintained its core strength during 2018. Continuing members include: John Biernbaum (2009), Dan Bewersdorff (2015), John Edgerton (2017) John Hooper (2009), Amy Newday (2016), Emily Nicholls (2016), Dan Rossman (2015), Emily Shettler (2016), Jessie Smith (2017), Julia Studier (2014), Dane Terrill (2012). The board continues to be the sustaining force in the organization. The officers for 2018 were Emily Nicholls, Chair; Jessie Smith, Vice-Chair; Dane Terrill, Treasurer; and John Hooper, Secretary. Our goal is to keep the Board at a minimum of 12 to 15 members and to have improved representation from each of the geographic regions of Michigan.



*Emily Nicholls, John Biernbaum, Dan Rossman, Dane Terrill, Dan Bewersdorff, John Edgerton, John Hooper (back row); Emily Shettler, Amy Newday, and Jessie Smith (front row)*

At its Annual Meeting in April, the board adopted a document covering the position descriptions and responsibilities for board members, officers, committees, and administrative staff. The hope is that having a living document addressing the expectations for each role will make for smooth and effective functioning in the future. This document is available upon request to any member of MOFFA.

## Membership

Membership numbers fell slightly in 2018 to 118, eight members less than in 2017. The membership included 62 individual or family memberships (\$40 per year), 21 small business memberships (\$60), 7 larger business memberships (\$100), and three students or persons with limited resources (\$20). We added two more life members in 2018, for a total of seven. Total membership revenue was \$6,080 in dues with an additional \$480 in donations members included when paying their dues, for a total of \$6,560.

## Board Meetings

To facilitate involvement of members from across the state, the Board of Directors uses a combination of in person and conference call meetings. We have established a schedule of eight meetings per year with three in person and five conference phone calls. The Annual Meeting is held in the Lansing area during April. For the July in-person meeting we included a social component, enjoying a meal together in the afternoon. A [schedule of meetings](#) for 2019 is available on our website, and we invite members to join us for any meeting.

## Organic Connections Newsletter

The quarterly [Michigan Organic Connections](#) newsletter continues to be a core method of connecting and reaching our membership and many more organic supporters. Leah Smith became the editor beginning with the May issue, and has contributed many hours and much thought toward improving the newsletter's content and reach. In 2018 we continued and were relatively successful at attracting articles from experts and thinkers outside the MOFFA board. We continue to request contributions from members and others. The complete archive of the newsletter from 1992 through 2017 was made available on our website this year. At the end of the year, the newsletter was reaching 1,563 email addresses.

## Website

The [website](#) has continued to grow into a reliable source of information about organic farming and gardening, local food and business related events and announcements. Historical aspects including past newsletters and annual reports are available. Information about educational and employment opportunities and land available for organic production is maintained up to date for the community.

## Publications

MOFFA published an updated paper version of the online *Farm Guide* in 2018. At the end of the year, the guide listed 151 farms all over the state, 98 of which were certified organic. [The Organic Movement in Michigan](#), published by MOFFA in 2017, along with the paper version of the [Farm Guide](#), are available for purchase through the website, and royalties from these publications provide a small but consistent source of revenue. We continue to add to our collection of [fact sheets](#), which are available on the website free of charge.

## Conferences and Meetings Attended

Michigan is fortunate to have a diverse and distributed array of organizations that support ecological and local farming initiatives and development of beginning farmers. While distributed systems are a hallmark of sustainability, to be more effective the organizations also need to be networked and responsive to each other. To that end, a standing MOFFA goal has been to be a trusted collaborator and partner that encourages sharing of information. In 2018 we continued to participate in the diversity of educational activities in Michigan where we could share organic ethics and methods. These conferences include:

- Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference (January)
- Michigan Family Farms Conference (February)
- Organic Farmers of Michigan Field Day (September)
- Michigan Good Food Summit (October)

An important contribution of MOFFA at these conferences is providing friendly conversation and answers to questions about organic farming and gardening and certification methods. A wide range of books is also made available to stimulate learn-

ing and discussion. In 2018 book sales totaled \$2,290. Our thanks to Board member John Hooper who most often is the friendly face that conference participants greet at the MOFFA table.

## Education Programs

In 2015 the previously recognized “signature” Michigan Organic Conference event was reconfigured to the “Organic Intensives” (OI). The OI was modeled after the successful MOSES Organic University with the goal to allow more in-depth presentation and discussion of a smaller range of topics. In 2018 the fourth annual [Organic Intensives](#) was held on January 6<sup>th</sup> on the MSU campus. The topics included:

- Diverse Grain Options for Farms and Homesteads
- Organic Transplant Production: Secure a Stellar Season with Successful Starts
- Small to Medium Scale Livestock for the Integrated Farm

The OI is a project and event that most all of the Board of Directors work on together. It requires advance discussion and selection of topics and speakers. One goal has been to select a range of topics that will interest all of our members: — large scale



*Participants in the Transplants session at OI 2018*

farmers and businesses, medium scale diversified farmers, smaller scale urban and homesteading farmers, and gardeners and consumers of organic food. Participants provided overwhelmingly positive comments and reviews of the 2018 event and speakers.

## Farm Tours

In 2018 MOFFA organized three farm tours, in collaboration with the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Alliance, which currently lists over 30 tours in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Michigan in its annual brochure. Participants gathered at Westwind Milling in July (with a lovely farm lunch as part of the tour), Plymouth Orchards in August, and the Zilke Vegetable Farm in September. We plan to continue the farm tours in 2019 with four to six events in different parts of the state.

## Policy Efforts

MOFFA is active as a member of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). Julia Christianson (in her role as a MOFFA member and volunteer Chair of the Policy Committee) is the primary contact who participates in the calls and keeps the Board informed of developments with the organization.

The integrity of the organic label continues to be questioned, because of the reticence of the USDA National Organic Program to adopt the recommendations of the National Organic Standards Board, its lackadaisical enforcement of existing regulations, especially in the area of dairy and poultry operations and hydroponic production, and its failure to identify and reject large shipments of grain from overseas which are falsely labeled as organic. MOFFA supports the **Real Organic Project**, the **Organic Farmers Association**, and other organizations which are working to hold the NOP to its legislatively mandated function.

## Financials

In 2018 we began to consider our sponsors—previously focused solely on Organic Intensives—as contributing to the support of not just OI but all of our programs. We would like to recognize the support of the following organizations in 2018:

North Central SARE	George and Anne Bird	Ruesink Organic Farms
Bay Shore Sales	MSU CRFS	The Fertrell Co.
Herbruck's	GreenStone Farm Credit Services	USDA/NRCS
Blue River Hybrids	Crop Services International	Organic Valley
Everbest Organics	Growth Products	
SunOpta	Grice Farms	

Total revenue for the year was \$24,423 on a cash basis, which was 8% less than budgeted, largely because we were not able to do an educational event in Detroit in the fall, as we had hoped. Total expenditures were \$24,456 (18% below budget) resulting in a net loss of \$33 for the year.

## Emerging Priorities for 2019

Priorities for 2019 include:

- Continue the Organic Intensives program with a date of January 12, 2019 at the Plant and Soils Sciences Building at MSU
- Consider possible regional Organic Intensive type events on other dates and at other locations
- Maintain and increase membership and membership involvement
- Add at least three new members to the board of directors
- Four to six farm tours arranged and publicized in partnership with OEFFA

Respectfully Submitted by Emily Nicholls, Chair