



MOFFA  
P.O. Box 26102, Lansing, MI 48909  
248-262-6826  
moffaorganic@gmail.com  
www.moffa.net

## 2020 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

2020 marked our 28<sup>th</sup> year of existence 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 continues to be a group of active volunteer Board members and a paid administrative coordinator working with the support of members and sponsors to prioritize organic policy, practices and principles. The 2020 year was very different from past years because of the travel and meeting restrictions put in place early in the year due to the pandemic conditions related to COVID-19. Farmers and allied industry supporters all worked overtime to develop creative methods of safely producing and marketing health promoting food and products for our fellow community members.

### Board of Directors

The [Board of Directors](#) gained one new member while one resigned in order to trade positions with the administrative coordinator.

Julia Christianson, who served as our administrative coordinator since 2013, transitioned her job to Jessica Smith, previous chair of the Board, who then resigned her position on the board. (Our position management policy has the paid administrative coordinator as serving the Board and not a member of the Board.) Julia was then nominated and unanimously approved to join the board.



*Julia Christianson and Stacey Wilcox*

The new board member was Stacey Wilcox who began volunteering with MOFFA in the fall of 2019. She was later invited and unanimously approved to join the board.

Stacey brings with her valuable experience in marketing and has been very helpful in guiding our redesigning of our logo and the website. She has also recently completed a Graduate Certificate in Sustainable Food Systems.

Continuing members include: John Biernbaum (2009), Tony Browne (2019), John Edgerton (2017), John Hooper (2009), Kido Pielack (2019), Linda Purdy (2019), Dan Rossman (2015), and Dane Terrill (2012). The board continues to be the sustaining force of the organization.

Officers were John Biernbaum, Chair; Dane Terrill, Treasurer; and John Hooper, Secretary. Our goal for 2021 is to continue to attract more members in order to keep the Board at a minimum of 12 members and to improve the diversity and geographic representation of the board.

## **Board Meetings**

To facilitate involvement of members from across the state, the Board of Directors uses a combination of in person, conference call, and video meetings. We have established a schedule of eight meetings per year with three in person and five conference phone calls. Due to COVID, the Annual Meeting, which is usually held in person, was changed to a conference call. The July in-person meeting was delayed to early August so that we could safely hold an in person meeting at an outdoor location. We all welcomed the chance to experience Copper Ridge Inn and Market in Lawton, Michigan. In an effort to stay in touch with the times, the October meeting was held using Zoom. The [schedule of meetings](#) is established at the start of the year and the schedule for 2021 is available on our website. We invite members to join us for any meeting. Contact us for details. We already know that our 2021 annual meeting will be a Zoom call this year.

## **Policy Efforts**

MOFFA is active as a member of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). Jessica Smith is the Chair of the Policy Committee and is the primary contact who participates in the calls and keeps the Board informed of developments with the organization. MOFFA also supports the Real Organic Project, the National Organic Coalition, and other organizations which are working to hold the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) to its legislatively mandated function. You may be aware that in 2020 the Real Organic Project initiated a law suit to challenge the NOP certification of hydroponic production, a position that MOFFA supports.

As of the end of 2020, the Origin of Livestock Rule and the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices Rule were still awaiting adoption. Also in this year, the Strengthening Organic Enforcement Rule was introduced. This rule was designed to help prevent the introduction of products fraudulently marked as organic into the organic food processing chain. It is on track to be passed in the fall of 2021. A surprise in 2020 was the cutting of the federal organic certification cost share program. MOFFA is in support of returning to previous levels and will follow through with this priority in to 2021. While MOFFA sees ecologically sound agriculture as ever-evolving, we continue to support the use of the word “organic” and the organizations that work to maintain the integrity of organic agriculture principles.

## Organic Connections Newsletter

The quarterly [Michigan Organic Connections](#) newsletter continues to be a primary method of connecting and reaching our membership and many more organic supporters. Leah Smith continued to serve as Editor in 2020. She had more opportunity in 2020 to provide leadership in both the areas of content and delivery. In 2020 we used the four guiding principles of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) as the themes for the quarterly newsletter. These principles are ecology, health, fairness, and care. The year 2020 also included articles from guest authors Dave Chapman, David Klein, Laura B. DeLind, and Maynard Kaufman. We continue to request and prioritize contributions from members and others. Do you have an experience or idea from 2020 that you would like to share? The complete archive of the newsletter from 1992 through 2020 is available on our website and provides a legacy of MOFFA's contributions. At the end of the year, the newsletter was reaching over 1,750 email addresses, and is mailed on paper to members who do not have internet access.

## Website

The content of the [website](#) has continued to grow. It is 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. Have you visited the website recently?

## Publications

In the year 2020, we published an updated paper version of our Farm Guide. Though the Farm Guide is continually updated on our website, the paper version is a snapshot of the farms listed on May 11, 2020. At the end of the year, the Farm Guide listed 143 farms all over the state, 87 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 and provide a convenient source of information for consumers and growers new to organic practices.

## Education Programs

We started off the year 2020 with the sixth annual "Organic Intensives" (OI). The OI was modeled after the successful MOSES Organic University with the goal of allowing more in-depth presentation and discussion of a smaller range of topics. The 2020 [Organic Intensives](#) was held on January 11<sup>th</sup> at the Plant and Soil Sciences Building on the MSU campus. There was a total of 103 participants. Scholarships were made available thanks to George and Anne Bird.

The topics and presenters included:

- Successful Biological Orcharding presented by Michael Phillips
- Organic No-Till Farming presented by Andrew Mefferd
- Local Organic Herbs for Health presented by Jim McDonald

The OI is a project and event that all of the Board of Directors work on together. It requires advance discussion and selection of topics and speakers, working with the



*Andrew Mefferd presenting on No-Till Farming*

speakers on content and supplemental materials, and coordinating the myriad details necessary to produce this kind of event. One goal has been to select a range of topics that will interest all of our members—large scale farmers and businesses, medium scale diversified farmers, smaller scale urban and homesteading farmers, and gardeners and consumers of organic food. Despite weather conditions that limited travel from some parts of the state, the 2020 OI was well attended and participants provided positive comments and

reviews of the event and speakers. Participants who were unable to attend due to the weather, received their course materials through the mail.

## Farm Tours

The Farm Tours were canceled for 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are tentatively planning a farm tour schedule for August and September of 2021, but need to first gauge farmers' willingness to host visitors. If you are interested in hosting a farm tour, [please contact us](#).

## Conferences and Meetings Attended

MOFFA typically attends about six conferences a year hosted by similar organizations that encourage ecological and local farming initiatives and the development of beginning farmers. We support these organizations through sponsorship and or by attending and setting up a table to display our literature and a wide range of agricultural books. Our thanks to Board member John Hooper who most



*John Hooper with the books at Organic Intensives*

often is the friendly face that conference participants greet at the MOFFA table. One of our activities for 2020 was preparing additional Board members to assume that role in the future when we gather again at conferences.

## Membership

For the year 2020 we set a goal of 200 memberships and in view of the effects of the pandemic were very pleased to finish out the year with 152 members. The membership included 102 individual or family memberships (\$40 per year), 21 small business memberships (\$60), 9 larger business memberships (\$100), and two students or persons with limited resources (\$20). We held steady at nine life members and nine sponsor members. The total of 2020 memberships was \$6,260 in dues with an additional \$530 in donations members included when paying their dues, for a total of \$6,790.

The importance of your participation as a financial supporting MOFFA member deserves to be emphasized. Your continued support each year is a reflection of how you value the benefits of organic farming as it contributes to your business and or life. Those of us benefiting from the organic tradition and the decades of hard work of those who built awareness of organic farming, can show our gratitude by continuing the tradition. Our contributions support educational and policy activities that insure the integrity of organic farming and nurture future organic farmers and organic food supporters.

## Sponsorships

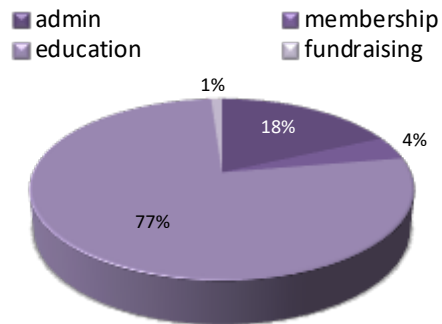
We would like to recognize the support of the following organizations in 2020. These organizations are committed to the success of MOFFA and organic farming for the long term.

Whole Foods	OnMark Certification	Ruesink Organic Farms
North Central SARE	Services	The Fertrell Co
Morgan Composting	GreenStone Farm Credit	
Blue River Hybrids	Services	
	Plymouth Orchards	

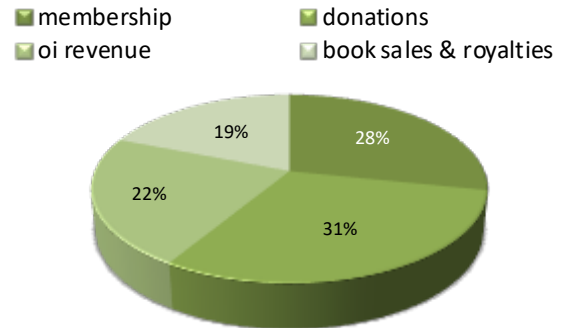
## Financials

Total revenue for the year was \$17,170 on a cash basis, almost \$9,000 less than budgeted. The shortfall is almost entirely due to the effects of the pandemic, primarily the fact that we had to cancel Organic Intensives for 2021, so the \$4,000 in registration fees budgeted to occur in 2020 did not materialize. Sponsorships and donations were also down, at \$2,800 less than budgeted. We had planned to experience a deficit of \$9,000 for 2020, largely due to the financial support from Whole Foods in 2019 which allowed us to invest in hosting nationally recognized speakers for the 2020 Organic Intensives while not increasing registration costs for participants.

### Expenses by Class, 2020



### Sources of Revenue, 2020



Total expenditures were \$33,290, approximately \$15,490 less than budgeted, for a net loss of \$16,120.

### Emerging Priorities for 2021

Priorities for 2021 include:

- Add three or four new members to the board of directors. This is a critical objective. The current Board consists of both newer members and a group of long term Board members that have served for many years. The importance of organic food and farming continues to grow. The time is right for those who benefit from the hard work of others who built and cultivated organic farming to step forward and take a turn at nurturing the tradition and culture. Are you ready?
- Continue the Organic Intensives program with a date in January 2022, at the Plant and Soils Sciences Building at MSU. It is time to identify presenter priorities as we return to in person education events.
- The increased interest and activity of a new generation of gardeners spurred on by the pandemic conditions and the desire to be healthy is obvious. We see the need for organic gardening based educational materials to support new gardeners that will become long term organic food supporters. We are getting started in looking at how we can best contribute to the movement.
- Maintain and increase membership and member involvement with a continued goal of 200 active memberships.
- Host farm tours in a safe manner in late summer if conditions allow.
- Improve the website's visibility and ease of use and continue to add valuable content.

*Respectfully Submitted by John Biernbaum, Chair*