



Michigan Organic Food & Farm Alliance

Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance
Annual Report 1998

27427 M-60
Cassopolis, MI 49031

(616) 445-8769 Tel

(616) 445-8987 Fax

Annual Meeting: March 10, 1998, 3:30 p.m.

Crop and Soil Science Research Center
<http://macatawa.org/org/ogm/ogm.html>

Mt Hope and Beaumont Roads

East Lansing, MI

Board of Directors

Merrill Clark, Chair
Cassopolis, Michigan

Maynard Kaufman, Secretary
Bangor, Michigan

Pat Whetham, Vice Chair
Flushing, Michigan

Betty L. Edmunds, Treasurer
Administrative Director
Hartland, Michigan

April Allison
mOC Editor
Lyons, Michigan

Laura B. DeLind
Graphic Designs
Mason, Michigan

Jane Bush
Charlotte, Michigan

Sharon Renier
Grass Lake, Michigan

Gita Posselt
Milan, Michigan

Advisory Board

Barbara Geisler
Bangor, Michigan

Grey Larison
Grant, Michigan

Lynn Blahnik
Findley, Ohio

Al Conner
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Kenneth Dahlberg
Kalamazoo, MI

Susan Houghton
Bristol, Indiana

JoAnn Fogg
Leslie, Michigan

Chuck Benham
Grand Rapids, Michigan

The year of 1997 provided more opportunities for Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance to respond successfully to new challenges and take part in completely new ventures. It is clear that all of MOFFA's activities enhance its strength and creative genius.

MOFFA's involvement in ANR Week Organic Days in March proved to be another remarkable experience for many, many people interested in "A Sense of Place". Jack Kloppenburg from the University of Wisconsin spoke on the need to decentralize the country's food system, and Brian Donahue, community farms organizer, spoke on reclaiming "the commons". Thanks again to Laura DeLind for her organizational skills and other workshop leaders who expanded on the subject of "place".

The *Eating Organically Directory* (96-97) continued being sold to those people who wish to find local sources for organic foods, shops, supplies and restaurants. Although we lost our distribution organizer and the sales were not as brisk as expected, we did make 500 copies available to the Michigan Department of Agriculture for distribution to people within the Department (Chuck Cabbage) and many others went out with the MSU Extension ANR Educator (Susan Smalley).

We cemented a closer relationship with **Citizens Against Chemical Contamination (CACC)** by holding our May Board Meeting at the site of the Backyard ECO Conference, a major environmental event held every year in Michigan. As a member of the **Michigan Environmental Council**, MOFFA receives many important action alerts and information pieces on which members can act while MEC works to support the work and policies of organic grower organizations. MOFFA Chair Merrill Clark also put on a workshop on the Food Quality Protection Act and other problems with pesticides in agriculture.

MOFFA promotes the development of food systems that rely on organic methods of food production and that revitalize and sustain local communities.

This year saw a major new and important connection between MOFFA and MSU-Extension, as well as the Michigan Department of Agriculture. Susan Smalley (MSU-Extension) and Christine Leitzau (MDA Agriculture Development) are newly appointed members of MOFFA's Advisory Board, and both associations helped to fund this year's Harvest Festival.

In addition, Chris and Jean Lipe (MDA) were especially useful members of the Festival Planning Committee, providing invaluable logistics know-how and printing services. We believe the association with MSU-Extension and MDA is a healthy one and can't help but further the goals of MOFFA and the organic community in Michigan.

Merrill Clark again chaired the coordinating committee for the '97 Harvest Festival held at the Ingham County Fairgrounds in Mason. The appearance of noted organic grower Eliot Coleman from Maine drew a very large crowd on September 20 and the night before the all-organic buffet was filled to capacity. Speakers Kathy Altman, Indiana state agriculture specialist and Carmen Fernholz, University of Minnesota, spoke of their experiences. MDA Deputy Director Keith Creagh read a letter of appreciation for organic agriculture from MDA Director Dan Wyant who stated the department's "pledge of commitment to the development and enhancement of the organic food and fiber industry". MOFFA has also become the newest member of the Michigan Commodity Council, with participation in the GREEN Program.

Exhibitors and food booths saw a lot of activity all day Saturday. Betty Edmunds, Pat Whetham, Sharon Renier, Susan Houghton, Carol Osborne, Jean Lipe and Joann and Bob Fogg filled out the planning committee, but dozens of other MOFFA members helped in many capacities.

The **Michigan Organic Connections** newsletter, ably edited by April Allison, continues to expand its features, involving writings by many organic growers and supporters in and outside the state. It is a vital "connection" to all within the organic community, and subscriptions continue to go up.

Initiated in 1997 and continuing into 1998 are several SARE and other grants and/or requests for grants submitted by MOFFA or MSU with MOFFA as the grantee. The organization will receive yearly funding to assist in the grantee activity in two major organic networking and soil quality grants, with total funding coming to approximately \$70,000 each. Laura DeLind with participants from two other states received a grant to research CAS opportunities, with MOFFA again as the grantee. Board members Susan Houghton and Pat Whetham are each approaching possible grants in the areas of organic food catering and farmer mentoring program.

Members continued to dovetail into other sustainable/organic agriculture activities, including the MIFFS Agri-Food Education Roundtable, MAES Great Lakes Fruit and Vegetable Systems

Center, Ann Arbor Flower and Garden Show exhibit and on-going response to the USDA's proposed organic rule based on the 1990 Organic Food Production Act. MOFFA has prepared and distributed a FACT SHEET on the rule, including a sampling of certain proposals that conflict with the statute and the recommendations of the National Organic Standards Board.

As we move into 1998, additional work is expected on the USDA proposed rule. We expect to work even more closely with the MDA on addressing the needs of organic farmers with respect to this federal rule, as well as researching the possibilities of establishing an Organic Advisory Committee within the MDA and of looking into some state enabling legislation on organic inspection, certification and marketing.

The attention of the media on organic agriculture and organic products increases yearly, as more acres become certified organic and more products are made available to organic food consumers, one would expect that attention to increase as well. I believe it is one of MOFFA's jobs to make sure the "soul of organic agriculture" (Roger Blobaum) is not lost in the frenzy of bandwagon jumping and retail merging.

Merrill Clark, Chair

3/10/98