



Michigan Organic Connections

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A Message from the Chair

On the last Sunday in October, the board gathered for our meeting in Lansing to discuss and rewrite our Vision Statement. This was the culmination of two years of brainstorming and intermittent work from all board members, but especially rested on the shoulders of John Hooper and John Biernbaum.

We greatly appreciated Julia Darnton from MSUE traveling to the meeting to facilitate our discussion. We always enjoy the time we set aside for face to face discussion, as it allows real conversation to flow and connections to be reignited. There is never enough time for us to have all of the conversations we wish we could. We catch up on books we've read, crops we've been excited by or disappointed in, friends we have in common, and—of course—the weather.... This meeting was no different, except that we had someone keeping us on track and keeping us focused.

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 had a lively discussion concerning our definition of these words and more, including the word “organic” and its shifting political economy. It was a discussion that easily could have lasted several days, rather than several hours! Our meeting did not end with a vision statement, but the group was invigorated and focused and had a more coherent direction, which was the goal.

More discussion has followed and the words continue to evolve. The statement we have settled on remains, like much in life, both imperfect and fully functional. Will we revisit the discussion again in two, three, or five years? I hope so. It has energized our work and helped us articulate the meaning we feel for the work we do with MOFFA. 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.

We would love to grow our network in 2019. If our vision and our work resonates with you, please don't forget to [renew your membership](#) for the upcoming year (easy to do when you register for the [Organic Intensives](#)). And please be in touch if you are interested in being more involved by serving on the board, volunteering at an event, or hosting a Farm Tour. If you are attending the [Northern Michigan Small Farms Conference](#), [MIFFS' Family Farms Conference](#), or [Central Michigan Seed Swap](#), please stop by our booth and say hello!

Thank you so much for your support.

—Emily Nicholls

After managing CBI's Giving Tree Farm for seven years, Emily Nicholls changed gears this year to work on various agriculture-related consulting projects with MSU, MIFFS, and the USDA. She and her husband own Rust Belt Roastery, a certified organic coffee roasting company in Lansing, and chase around a 1 and a 3 year old. She was elected Chair of MOFFA's Board of Directors in April, 2018.

The Future of MOFFA

by Jessie Smith

There is always a need. Vibrant, evolving people are always ready for a teacher as they learn in many different ways and can be ready to learn at any time in their lives. Recently, my sister and I had an invitation to speak to a group of people about farm marketing. At first we found this request unusual as the group was already deeply involved in agriculture. What would we be able to tell them that would further their endeavors or businesses? It wasn't until we met with this group and found out that land prices and the pressures of population growth were forcing them to alter the way they made a living off the land that we understood. What we had to tell them was a perfect fit to the new situation they were finding themselves in.

For many of us, situations, priorities, or values can change. Situations can force us to adapt to something new. The people we meet, the ideas we hear, and the things we see can influence what we value and prioritize in our lives. However, they all lead in the same direction—to the search for

knowledge and like-minded people whom we can learn from and connect with. When it comes to the arena of local, organic agriculture, MOFFA has always been an organization that strives to fill this place for people interested in learning this style of agriculture in Michigan. This year as we approach the holiday season, we are all prompted to examine our lives and resolve to make improvements, either to our daily routine or our attitudes towards living. As an organization, MOFFA will have a resolution in the form of a new Vision Statement.

As the board has spent the last two years discussing the Vision Statement of MOFFA, many ideas have been exchanged on how we would describe the world we would like to see arise out of our work. Despite the many ways we discussed, the core feeling of being a place where information can be found and partnerships can be forged was always at the base. If you visit the MOFFA website, you will see the resources we have always provided are still there. A farm guide, available land, educational and

job opportunities, and grant and funding opportunities for those in every arena of organic agriculture. Published literature is there, too, to help consumers understand when they are buying organic. And our Organic Intensives and Farm Tours will always be days on which significant learning and networking can both be accomplished.

As more of us are prompted to find (or produce) food that is nutritionally sound for our bodies, ethically and economically beneficial to the producers, and in

concert with a nurturing environment, please remember that MOFFA is here to help. You never know, you may find your perfect fit with us.

Jessie Smith is the current MOFFA Vice-Chair and a Michigan State University alumna (B.S., Crop and Soil Sciences; M.S. Entomology). She has worked on Nodding Thistle, her family's farm, that has a history of organic gardening and farm marketing since 1984.

Caring, Sharing, and Food for Health

by John Biernbaum

I am just returned from the [8th Annual Soils and Nutrition Conference](#) in Southbridge, Massachusetts (Nov 30-Dec 2). This was my first time attending the conference. I heard that the attendance continued to increase by over 10% from last year with a total of nearly 500 participants. I know of at least 14 attendees from Michigan. The cost of registration, meals, lodging (about \$700), and travel by plane (about \$500) was definitely an investment.

I am glad that I went. I definitely got a full load of information and ideas. It has been a long time since I sat for six hours of presentations a day for three days in a row. I appreciate the chance to hear farmers, educators, consultants, consumers, and health professionals gathered in one place offering diverse ideas with the common goals of sharing,



A Michigander captured the artistic renderings of several of the conference presenters. John Kempf shared many of the key production practices that can improve soil, microbial and plant health.

caring, and food for health. New ideas? Yes. In-depth explanations and recommendations to consider and test? Yes. Talk in the hallways and at shared meals? Yes. Great farm food? Yes. People with products and services to sell? Yes. A very good conference.

I started at 8:30 am Friday with John Kempf. I was impressed to hear the quantity and quality of information shared by a young man who has learned primarily from experience, reading, and good mentors. His teachers and mentors, whom he gave credit and his thanks, should be proud of all that he has learned and assembled to share with farmers. He did a good job sharing plant physiology and nutrition concepts not commonly available at conferences but much appreciated by his audience.

It is one thing to say that with the correct production practices, plants can be insect and disease resistant or free. It is an even larger claim to note that the pest or disease is just on the other side of the fence taking down the neighbors crop. But can you make it happen consistently or even be able to propose an explanation for how it happens? John shared stories of when it happened and his perceptions of what was done to help it happen. He also offered how he explains the results based on his experience and knowledge base.

A simplified explanation of what John offered is the proposal that when a plant is growing with little or no moisture and fertility limits, and not over fertilized with nitrogen and potassium, the rate of growth can be increased to the point that photosynthesis increases. If done correctly, rather than bigger plants or more yield, there can be more beneficial carbon exudation from the roots. This increases the microbial activity in the root rhizosphere, improves the health of the plant, and contributes to building more soil organic matter. Another proposed result of more photosynthesis is that as long as there is not excess nitrogen available, with a healthy plant and more photosynthates, the plant makes more lipids (oils) that strengthen cell membranes and the plant cuticle (outer waxy coating). More photosynthesis can also result in the production of more secondary plant metabolites (complex compounds) like aroma,

flavor, and phytonutrient compounds. Consider the basic premise or proposal that plants that taste better for humans are less attractive to insects and diseases.

John also worked on helping the participants consider maintenance of the balance between vegetative and reproductive (flowering and fruiting) growth that is important for many specialty crops. He proposed how fertility limitations or emphasis on certain mineral elements can vary for vegetative versus reproductive growth.

I have 28 pages of handwritten notes from the day, so for now I can only encourage you to do some investigating on your own. John has been an emergent voice for ecological plant management for close to 10 years now. His business website is Advancing Eco Agriculture www.advancingecoag.com. His podcasts and webinars come highly recommended and there is information available at the website at no cost. You can also consider attending the Organic Intensives on January 12th with Dan Kittredge.

The second day started with details and evidence supporting the presence of a fourth phase of water. So not just gas, liquid, and ice, but another stage of ordered water labeled EZ water. For the 90-minute session we were presented with evidence about a previously unrecognized property or the EZ state of water that is being characterized under laboratory research conditions. Between the liquid state of bulk water and solid water (ice at freezing conditions), there is a small amount of structured and negative charged water or films of water that have the potential to hold energy and do work. Based on the evidence presented, the EZ water develops in response to light and short wave infrared radiant energy. We are constantly exposed to infrared radiant energy and being in a sauna might be just the winter time ticket when sunlight is lacking.

The hypothesized structure of the water would potentially allow storage of information or memories, much like the silicon matrix of binary computer memory as used in a memory stick. The nature of the atomic structure of oxygen reportedly would allow the storage of 5 times more information than binary systems. This is not a brand new idea since many peer-reviewed scientific articles and a book by our presenter Dr. Gerald Pollack from California are already published and available. The key take away was the importance of water and understanding water in all of our systems, including our bodies. We still have much to learn.

Next Dr. Zach Bush got us moving and thinking about how we do or don't care for and love ourselves (zachbushmd.com). He provided evidence concerning how our digestive tract and the cell-thick lining of our digestive system may be more important to managing our body than the grey matter in our skull. The body is more than just our cells and DNA. There are trillions of bacterial cells, tens of thousands of bacterial species, and miles of bacterial DNA that are all part of the symphony and dance that occurs within us in each moment of our lives. And unfortunately for us and our bacteria, we are being over exposed to antibiotics on a regular basis. In the presentation we were told that glyphosate was originally patented by Monsanto as an antibiotic and industrial pipe cleaner. Then they noticed that the pipe cleaner also killed the plants in the discharge pond. Needless to say, there were some connections proposed between general livestock and human health decline and glyphosate use.

These are three examples of speakers I had not heard before and who challenged participants to think about soil, water, microorganisms, food as health, and the future. There were also producer presenters you might recognize like Michael Phillips on soil fungi connections, Mark Shepard on Restoration Agriculture, Karl Hammer from Vermont Compost, Fred Kirschenmann and Mark Cohen on future agriculture systems, Bryan O'Hara on vegetables, and Jack Lazor and Vail Dixon on grazing systems.

There was also the chance to see several films. One that I watched, "The Food Cure" by Sarah Mabrouk, will not be released until next April. Six cancer patients were followed over five years to document the outcome of their diet-based cancer treatment as an alternative to radiation or chemotherapy. The challenges of rejecting traditional treatment that costs many times more than the nutritional option that could not be funded by insurance were explained.

Some of the most valuable information came in the form of 3 free back issues of The Natural Farmer, the publication of the Northeast Organic Farmer's Association (NOFA). An amazing collection of articles are available to you at no charge on the website: thenaturalfarmer.org. Issues with themes like fungal friendly farming, certification programs, and urban agriculture provide great information. I am reminded that most of the presentations from past Soils and Nutrition conferences are also available for free viewing here: bionutrient.org/site/library/soil-nutrition-conference-archive. The sessions I am

describing here were also recorded and will be available to you in the future.

I also attended a session with a focus on ancient Vedic tradition of agriculture from India that includes concepts from Yoga and personal health. Liz Taggart shared the story of her farm development and the high quality food that attracted customers to her farm. A larger view of farming as a key part of overall health was very obvious. Do you know any Vedic tradition farmers in Michigan?

There was information about the Real Food Campaign and the Real Organic Certification program. The much heralded “food quality” meter, affectionately referred to as the “bright shiny object,” was present at the show. Orders have been placed and the intent is for meters to be shipped early next year after a few more calibration tweaks. It appears to be in the very early stages, more a research and exploration tool. It is not yet a tool for consumers with the intended long-term goal of an identifier of food quality. But it is a “shiny object” that may help get people’s attention.



The Real Food Campaign was an integrating theme for the conference. The healthy food meter is pictured and several important questions are shared.

So can we make the conference connection to looking towards the future? The message appears to be, **there is hope**. We can shift the trend from producing large quantities of food that is not sustaining our health to producing food that can serve as medicine and honor our role in the partnership of life. The purpose of billions of years of evolution was not to produce humans. We are part of evolution, just as the 20,000 species of bacteria that can inhabit our body are part of evolution.

At the conference we were all reminded about soil, plants, water, bacteria, fungi, and microorganisms. Before the conference I had started an article about other “bigger” topics for a looking to the future theme. There are certainly several very large concerns regarding social justice, our environment, climate change, access to food, etc., that we must address. From where I see things at the moment,

progress and moving forward for all the large concerns starts with the basics of:

1. caring for ourselves, soil, water, plants, livestock, and microorganisms;
2. sharing what we know, when we can;
3. and recovering the primary tenet that food is health.

These are things that I can do. Things that I am good at. What about you? One of the most universal cultural guides is to do unto others as we would have them do unto ourselves (or want done to ourselves). The present and the future starts with taking care of yourself and loving yourself. The rest follows simply and naturally—caring and sharing and approaching food as health for us and for all the microbial partners we support and benefit from each day. Just as plants photosynthesize both to grow and to feed their symbiotic microbial partners in the soil, we can eat to both grow ourselves and to grow and feed our symbiotic microbial partners in our bodies. If you are not already, start eating like the microorganisms in you matter because they clearly do.

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The importance of caring and sharing are also big parts of what came from the process of developing a MOFFA vision statement over the last two years. The MOFFA board members are all about learning and working together in service for everyone. We need your help, in whatever way you can. You are the future.

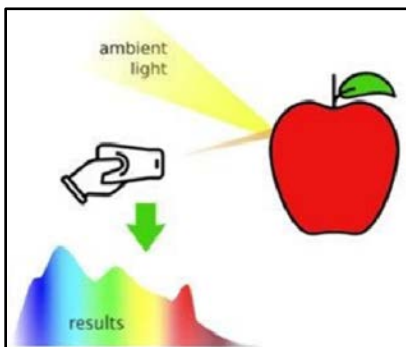
Dr. John Biernbaum is Professor of Horticulture at MSU, was instrumental in the founding and growth of the Student Organic Farm at MSU, has been a member of MOFFA for over 15 years, and served as MOFFA’s Chair 2015-2018.

Article Update: Handheld Meter to Measure Food Quality

by Dane Terrill

In the last issue of [Michigan Organic Connections](#), which focused on nutrient density, I wrote about the status of a handheld meter that is capable of measuring food quality. Dan Kittredge, founder of the [Bionutrient Food Association](#) (BFA) and driving force behind the creation of this tool, sees it as a natural part of the progression in the BFA's mission of "increasing quality in the food supply" by helping to answer the basic question of what determines quality and how do we measure it.

In 2017, the Bionutrient Food Association's 7th Annual Soil and Nutrition Conference titled "Growing the Food Movement Around Food Quality" saw not only the initiation of the Real Food Campaign but the



unveiling of the handheld meter prototype. To elaborate on the tool itself, this meter, aptly named the BioNutrient Meter, uses light reflectance (technically called

spectroscopy) to measure nutrient density of a crop with results in real time. This technology is small enough to be integrated on a cell phone but currently the focus is collecting data on specific crops and building a database of nutrient levels to define relative quality. Currently the data collection

includes measurements for nutrients, vitamins, and antioxidants. Future data collection may include additional metrics like flavonoids (flavor) and essential oils (aroma).

The Real Food Campaign Lab located here in Michigan has assayed thousands of samples of crops and the soil they were grown in to define nutrient density and demonstrate the connections between crop quality and management practices. The data collection is being established on an open platform, meaning this is intended to be a collaborative process. The BFA has partnered with Cornell University, the University of Montana, Penn State University, Ohio State University, Washington State University, the Health Research Institute, and an advisory board loaded with Ph.D.s to validate the findings and ensure success. According to the website, the BFA anticipates the Bionutrient Meter will be available at the 2018 conference.

For more information, please visit the Bionutrient Food Association's website <http://bionutrient.org>. To register for the 2019 MOFFA [Organic Intensive](#) on Advanced Organic Soil Management, which is being presented by Dan Kittredge, please click [here](#).

Dane Terrill is Director of Sales and Marketing at Crop Services International and Flowerfield Enterprises. He has served on the MOFFA Board of Directors since 2012 and has served as Treasurer since December, 2015.

Global Warming and Migrations: a Vision for the Future

by Maynard Kaufman

We live in a time that seems plagued by migrations of people. One way of trying to cope with this is to seal our borders, as our President is trying to do. While migrants leave their homes for many reasons, many migrants have come from Syria, which has suffered a severe drought which is attributed to global warming. As this warming becomes more intense and glaciers melt and ocean levels rise, more people will be forced to leave cities on the sea shore. Some of these migrations will be from within our country and, as global warming causes more damage elsewhere, migrations from other countries

will increase. People head to the United States because it is rich and seems to offer opportunities. But each American citizen contributes vastly more to global warming than others in the world. We create a large share of the problem even though it is suffered more by others who are less insulated by wealth.

The wealth of America is temporary, largely based on the exploitation of fossil fuels that will soon become scarce and expensive. This is good because global warming is mostly caused by the burning of fossil fuels. Every gallon of gasoline

burned in our cars and tractors puts 5.6 pounds of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere where it creates a greenhouse effect that traps the heat. The food industry, from farming to food processing and distribution, is the major user of fossil fuels. Our survival as a civilization requires that the industrial food system must be changed. How could this be done?

This is a solution to the "problem" of migration (really an opportunity) and will help to mitigate the problem of global warming and climate change.

One possibility is to welcome migrants instead of trying to turn them away. They should be welcomed and helped to acquire land, taught skills in organic food production on a small scale, and required to produce organic food for local

markets for a specified period of years. Organic methods should be preferred because they produce safer food without reliance on chemicals derived from fossil fuels. Citizens of our country who want to farm with minimal dependence on fossil fuels should be given the same subsidies and opportunities. This is a solution to the "problem" of migration (really an opportunity) and will help to mitigate the problem of global warming and climate change.

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Dr. Maynard Kaufman was a founding member of both Organic Growers of Michigan and MOFFA. He was an organic farmer from 1971 to 2003, when he sold most of his land to three young organic farmers. He was also a professor of Religion at Western Michigan University and helped to start the Environmental Studies Program there. He has recently published his memoir, From James Joyce to Organic Farming.

Healthy Soils, Healthy People

by David Kline

(The following is an excerpt from a talk given by David Kline in Kansas for a past Annual Prairie Festival at The Land Institute. In view of the freshly constructed MOFFA vision statement, his comments show that he is a kindred spirit).

When the oil squeeze comes, agriculture in the United States will have to move east where it rains. So it is crucial that our soils here remain alive and well and unpaved because the demand for good food will be great for people who wish to retain their health, their vigor, and their intelligence.

In a sense it comes down to the differences between small-scale ecological and industrial farming.

Vandana Shiva, the Indian activist for agrarian causes, wrote—"Industrial agriculture has become a war against ecosystems. It is based on the instruments of war and the logic of war, and has warlike consequences. The chemicals on which industrial agriculture is based were originally designed for chemical warfare. That is why corporate agriculture converts our farms into war zones. This aggressive, competitive mentality underlying military-industrial agriculture is evident in the names given to herbicides—Monsanto's herbicides are called "Roundup," "Machete," and "Lasso." American Home Products, which has

merged with Monsanto, calls its herbicides "Pentagon," "Prowl," "Lightning," "Assert," and "Avenge." This is the language of war, not sustainability. Sustainability is based on peace with the earth.

Apologists for industrial agriculture say that the industrialization of agriculture, and its dominance by corporations, has been "inevitable." In the 1940s they predicted we would be totally assimilated by the middle of the 20th century. They just didn't understand the Swiss resolve and Kingdom Christianity

Once the monster of consumerism was loosed on us we couldn't resist.

and the purpose-driven life of actually believing the Sermon on the Mount.

Given the chance, they said, we would trade the toil and insecurity

of animal traction for the promise of ease, abundance, and security (convenience). And once the trade is consummated, we become accustomed to conveniences, luxury, and all of those things that once possessed can not be done without. Once the monster of consumerism was loosed on us we couldn't resist. Consumers instead of producers. Takers instead of leavers. Ah, the slippery slope.

Every consumer has nine acres of land somewhere; "Ghost acreage." Our agrarian population is growing and is by no means made up of only rural people, as it includes urban gardeners; urban customers who buy our food; buyers who have grown doubtful of the healthfulness, the trustworthiness, and the dependability of the corporate food system. These are people who care about their health and good food, and recognize tomatoes that actually have juice in them. You are people that realize that good farms produce a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soil, plants, and animals.

In order to have "friendly farming" we need to approach the biological community, to quote Aldo Leopold, not as a conqueror, but as a plain member and citizen of it. As a farmer, my responsibility to you

is to produce the most wholesome and nutritious food using the least destructive [appropriate small-scale technology] means possible. And that is doable.

David Kline is a naturalist, writer, and semi-retired farmer. He and his wife, daughter, and son-in-law farm 150 acres and operate a 50-cow organic dairy near Mt. Hope, Ohio. David and Elsie have five children, all married and all are involved with organic dairy farming. David is the author of four books, Great Possessions (1990), Scratching the Woodchuck (1997), Letters From Larksong (2010), and The Round of a Country Year (2017). They also publish [Farming Magazine](#), a quarterly publication supporting small-scale family farming..

Give the Gift of an Organic Intensive Session!



Did you know— the better the health of ewes and lambs, the greater their wool and meat production? Sheep can require relatively low investment and maintenance when compared to other pastured farm animals,

can work well in small-scale and topographically challenging situations, and they bring with them many marketing options (wool, meat, milk).



Did you know— efficiency in agriculture is all the rage right now? Organic agriculture, known for rejecting the one-size-fits-all approach, can be a perfect home for the technology out there that can help

improve planting and cultivation in field crops. And the premium brought in by these organic crops provide the perfect incentive.



Did you know— the market for mushrooms continues to grow and is projected to continue this growth for the foreseeable future? Mushrooms are considered a health food with their low fat and high nutrient

content, and their cultivation has the added attraction of being suited to small areas as well as land not amenable to other forms of agriculture.



Did you know— Dan Kittredge is known as one of the leading proponents of nutrient density worldwide? That he is the founder of the Bionutrient Food Association? That his knowledge of remineralizing agricultural soils,

carbon sequestration, and of soils in general (as well as his focus on the connection between soil, plant, and human health) make him the perfect instructor if you wish to increase the quality of your personal and/or sellable food supply? And he will be sharing this knowledge...



AT THE MOFFA 2019 [ORGANIC INTENSIVES!](#)
[REGISTER NOW.](#)

Farm Tour of 2018—Plymouth Orchards and Cider Mill

by John Biernbaum

On August 30th, MOFFA partnered with Plymouth Orchards and Cider Mill to provide a tour of two locations and an opportunity to learn more about organic food production and marketing. Board members in attendance included Emily Nichols, John Biernbaum, Dane Terrill, Dan Bewersdorff, and John Edgerton.

The first site was Gateway Farm, a recently developed 8-acre vegetable production farm that is a sister operation to the orchard and cider mill. The property is located on M14 (10540 Joy Road, Plymouth), a few miles from the orchard. Its markets include an on-site farm stand, a CSA, and some wholesale accounts.

Farm Manager Ben Kasmenn was our Gateway host. He was happy to share a new building that housed the wash pack, coolers, office space, and equipment storage including a new tractor and a small indoor flow-through worm composter. The



building is the central hub of activity and the envy of those in attendance.

We saw warm season fruiting vegetables in full production and the beginnings of

cool season fall crops being planted. The fields and soil are being developed from the previous deep grass sod cover and resulting organic matter that was once a golf driving range. We also saw mixed cover crop plantings that were established for soil building and ground cover management. It was educational to see and hear about how the plan for the farm was developed and is being implemented.

After a short drive to the 100-acre Orchard and Cider Mill (10685 Warren Road, Plymouth), we gathered in the events barn to hear a welcome from our hosts Mary Emmett and Michael Adsit, as well as representatives from MOFFA and Ohio Ecological Food and Farming Association (OEFFA). A representative from Senator Stabenow's office also provided an update on the farm bill.

The participants then either climbed on the hay wagon train for a trip to the field or to the cider mill

for the first fresh cider of the season and warm doughnuts. The retail store and cider mill are impressive and organized to support the many visitors that arrive for apples, cider, doughnuts, and more. We were there at the start of the season and some participants were able to see the cider pressing process up close.

In the field we learned from Michael about the asparagus, raspberry, and apple production systems. The asparagus plot had wide aisles to allow for



ground cover and mowing between the rows.

Ground covers were also being used for the aisles of the raspberry plantings. Michael shared how compost teas are a foundation of the management practices and are being used as sprays and soil drenches to increase soil biology and overall plant health. A batch of tea was being brewed on-site and participants were able to experience and learn about the brewing process.

In one area of the farm where the soil was being developed, a cover crop/green manure mixture with 12 species was seeded for feeding the soil microbiology and building organic matter.



The organic apple orchard is about 14 acres and was transitioned to organic starting in 2014. It was exciting to hear how Michael was pulling together ideas from a variety of sources to develop his production system. He has been able to exchange ideas with Michael Phillips and has begun testing tree and biology management strategies that can minimize pest pressure and damage. Michael shared valuable ideas and perspectives that he was learning regarding developing microbiology and higher brix levels in the trees that can influence pest/insect feeding on the trees and fruit. In addition

to compost tea, the apple trees were protected with kaolin clay foliar sprays.



Based on a show of hands at the start of the field day, the participants included a few farmers, some agriculture educators, and many curious

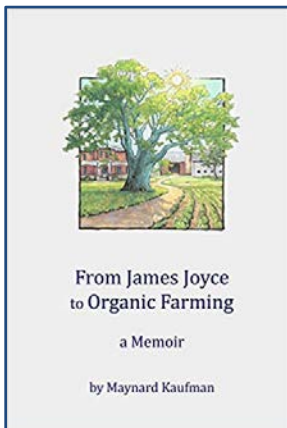
folks from near and far who wanted to know more about farming and food production. This provided reinforcement that the MOFFA Farm Tour Series

can help connect a wide and diverse network of people who want to know more about the sources of their food.

The tours of Westwind Milling, Plymouth Orchards/Gateway Farm, and Zilke Vegetable Farm proved to be instructive as well as socially stimulating. Based on surveys submitted by attendees of the three field days organized in 2018, participants were more than satisfied with their experiences and are excited to attend more field tours in 2019. Is your farm a candidate for a tour?

Book Review—From James Joyce to Organic Farming: a Memoir, by Maynard Kaufman

by Leah Smith



I should start by saying that I have spent my life avoiding the reading of biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs (except those about Abraham Lincoln and FDR). I have just never thought of them as enticing enough. I made the exception in this case because of the book's title, which suggests a transition in life from a focus on James Joyce to

one on organic farming. How does that happen? Really, Kaufman's memoir is an interesting coming together of disparate strands of life to form a unique whole. Or are they so disparate?

Without being overly burdensome, this memoir manages to touch on a number of different topics which came along during the phases of Kaufman's life. His story isn't told in strict chronological sequence, but each phase or focus has a chronology within it. He goes back to his experiences growing up on a farm in South Dakota through both the Depression and dust storms. That, combined with his pursuit of a career as a religion professor and, naturally, his years at the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, should not have led to a life farming. Yet they did. You see how his academic career, personal life, and personal goals eventually

came together to make a life centered around farming. And not just a life, but a prominent one.

He talks about the founding of the School of Homesteading, and in his description of it you can see how its creation and dissolution, the directions taken and achievements made, were truly the product of all those involved. It was a living, evolving thing. The people involved dictated its character, and my impression is that they came away feeling richer for the experience. Kaufman's interest in environmentalism and Green Politics, I think, can be ascribed to practical concerns, spirituality, and a sense of responsibility about the planet. These interests were not pursued alone. He details his part in the beginnings of the Organic Growers of Michigan and those of MOFFA.

Much time is taken to describe two important environments in his life, namely the scenes of his academic life and those of his farming life. There are the nuts and bolts of his academic years. Professors and campuses, accolades and fellowships, compositions and talks. I found these descriptions extremely interesting, as Divinity School ins and outs are rather foreign to me. But later in life his surroundings have changed and he has the pace of country life. He describes in detail the workings and history of his property that became the "real" farm he had begun to dream of. His old brick house had a little history of its own, as is often the case with old brick houses. Rural properties tend to have a legacy of people with dreams. And with this I am more familiar.

Carbon sequestering and the non-monetized household economy, food systems and climate change—Kaufman has wide ranging knowledge to share. Aristotle described the making of money (chrematistike) as an unnatural perversion as it has no real aim other than having and it is a desire without limits. Did I know that already? Freud taught that on a unconscious level money is equivalent to excrement. I certainly didn't know that. I imagine many farmers found him a rather "different" farmer, and many academic colleagues felt the same way about Kaufman the academic. His life has been one of serious reflection. His musings as to the roots of his decisions in life caused me to examine some of my own. I know what I think, but maybe not always

why I think it; and on this he made me think, leading me by example.

And I don't think I have mentioned James Joyce yet, have I? I guess if you want to know exactly where Joyce came in to the conversation, [you had better get a copy](#) and read for yourself!

Leah Smith is the MOFFA Newsletter Editor and a Michigan State alumna (B.S., Crop and Soil Sciences). She works at her family's farm, Nodding Thistle, and is a freelance writer.

Book Review—One-Straw Revolutionary: The Philosophy and Work of Masanobu Fukuoka, by Larry Korn

by John Biernbaum

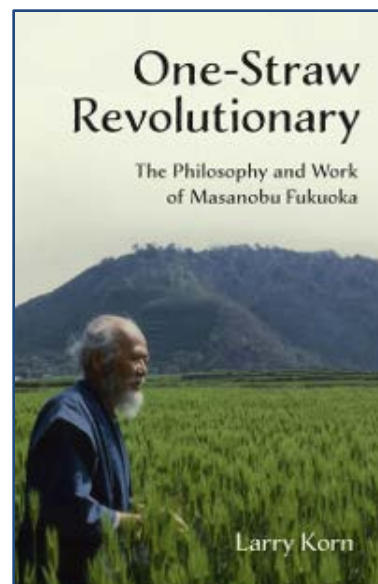
It has been over a decade since I read *The One-Straw Revolution* (1978) by Masanobu Fukuoka. It is on many recommended reading lists for learning about organic farming. I have spoken with people who have read it, but few, if any, that had much to say about it beyond that they liked it. Other books by Mr. Fukuoka that I have read are *The Natural Way of Farming: Theory and Practice of Green Philosophy* (1985) (not an easy read) and *Sowing Seeds in the Desert: Natural Farming, Global Restoration, and the Ultimate Food Security* (2012).

I think it was the special low price of the Chelsea Green summer sale that inspired me to buy the *One-Straw Revolutionary* (2015) along with other books for winter reading. *One-Straw Revolutionary* was the first one of the lot that asked to be read. The author Larry Korn shares the point that seeing Natural Farming through his eyes as a Westerner may be helpful compared to reading about it from the Eastern views of Mr. Fukuoka. I fully agree. After reading it, I feel like I have a new found appreciation of Natural Farming and how it relates to Organic Farming. My curiosity will make me go back and re-read the original *One-Straw Revolution* and see how much of the story was there and I just missed it or forgot it.

The story telling approach with the Natural Farming principles interwoven is perhaps what I like best about the book. Larry Korn does not set out to convince his readers what they should do. He shares his story as it intersects with that of Mr. Fukuoka and paints a picture of Natural Farming and how it might be useful to us. He also tells about the

evolution of Natural Farming for Mr. Fukuoka and how it was influenced by and is aligned with indigenous agriculture methods practiced around the world until recent times. The book is about life philosophy as much as farming.

Reading the book has provided some helpful answers to the question that keeps harassing me, which is, "What do I do next?" Larry Korn credits Mr. Fukuoka with understanding that to write about an idea that is outside the normal boundaries or in our "blindspot" is evangelical, but not as effective a teaching tool as writing from a position of experience. Mr. Fukuoka practiced what he wanted to preach for over 20 years before he began sharing the ideas publicly. There is nothing I can think of to want to do more than to continue learning how to be in nature and not just "a part" of nature. Natural Farming is about learning that humans never have been and never will be separate from nature, except by our own mental constructs. We certainly are not



called to dominate and subjugate nature. Our mission is to find our way back to the garden and how to be another spoke in the wheel of life or leaf on the tree of life. It never has been about feeding the world.

I want to thank Larry Korn for that reminder. My perception has grown to see that organic farming is a step in the right direction but only a part of the answers that I seek. If you are looking for something more to help you find that partnership and path back to nature, I recommend you read [One-Straw Revolutionary](#).

Policy Corner

by Julia Christianson

On the Federal level, it seems that Congress is very close to voting on a unified version of the Farm Bill, which appears to be closer to the existing Senate version than the House version, which is on balance good news for organic and regenerative agriculture. But as the nation mourns the passing of George H.W. Bush, legislative activities are on hold, and Congress is due to adjourn on December 14th. So at this point we do not know when the 2018 Farm Bill will be enacted, but it should be soon.

In Michigan, we have a new Governor, Gretchen Whitmer, and Lieutenant Governor, Garlin Gilchrist. They have put up a website at

michigantransition.org where they discuss their vision for the next four years in Michigan. They also ask for our input at michigantransition.org/vision/, and we encourage our readers to respond and let them know that yes, we have all been thinking about the future. Share your vision for the future, share our vision for the future—share.

Julia Christianson is MOFFA's "very part-time" Administrative Coordinator, and in her capacity as a MOFFA member serves as the volunteer Chair of MOFFA's Policy Committee.

From the Editor

The theme of this final Michigan Organic Connections for 2018 is "Focus on the Future," and so my thoughts for this newsletter are all about encouragement and the year to come. I **encourage** you to visit the MOFFA website and (re)familiarize yourself with all of the different kinds of information available there, from policy and ag. conference updates to the availability of land, internships, grants, and jobs. Not to mention the Farm Guide. I **encourage** you to read a copy of Maynard Kaufman's book, From James Joyce to Organic Farming: a Memoir. It has value whether you are interested in philosophies of life in general, the origins of the organic farming movement in Michigan, or simply an interesting story of a path through life that led one man to his ultimate and unexpected destination. I **encourage** you to adopt some new way of interacting with the agricultural

community in this coming year, whether it is by attending a MOFFA Farm Tour, taking part in the OEFFA's Begin Farming Mentorship program (it is extending into Michigan, you know), or adding your voice to those who take part to putting together this newsletter. And lastly, I **encourage** you to attend one of the upcoming Organic Intensives this January. MOFFA always tries to have relevant, useful, sought after topics for its educational sessions, and this year looks like it is no exception. Thank you to all who contributed to this newsletter, and best wishes to all this season.

*Leah Smith
MOFFA Newsletter Editor*

MOFFA News

Board – We are still actively seeking a member from the southeastern area of the state, ideally someone who is involved in urban agriculture. If you are a

MOFFA member who would be interested in serving on the board, please [let us know](#).

Michigan Organic Connections Newsletter – We continue to be interested in featuring new voices in the newsletter. If you are interested in contributing, or if you have a suggestion about content or can recommend someone who would be interested in contributing, please [contact Leah](#), our newsletter editor. If you're not interested in writing an article, please consider contributing photos of your farm or your harvest; we're always looking for more illustrations.

Sponsors – MOFFA is now accepting Sponsorship from organizations and individuals who are willing to demonstrate their support of our mission with a financial contribution. The change from soliciting sponsorships specifically for Organic Intensives will enable us to increase our activities throughout the year. Please take a moment to view the logos of those who have already pledged their support at the end of this message, and let them know you appreciate their sponsorship. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor for 2019, please email us or view the sponsorship page on the website.

WHY JOIN MOFFA : To position yourself and every dollar you donate toward spreading a wholesome, just, ecologically focused organic ethos across all of our local Michigan communities. Join online at <http://www.moffa.net/membership.html> or call 248-262-6826.

New memberships are now effective through December, 2019.

Join today and we won't bug you again for a whole year!

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