



# Michigan Organic Connections

Volume XXVII, Number 2  
June 2021

## In This Issue:

A Message from the "Chair" .....	1
MOFFA 2020 Annual Report .....	2
Coming Soon! The Detroit People's Food Co-op .....	6
Preserving the History of Organic/Sustainable Agriculture .....	8
Support and Resources for Women Farmers .....	9
Book Review-One Size Fits None: a Farm Girl's Search for the Promise of Regenerative Agriculture by Stephanie Anderson.....	11
Farm Profile .....	12
Michigan Sustainable Farm Mentors .....	13
Policy Corner .....	13
Homogenized Farming, Part 1: the Mechanics of the Loss of Diversity .....	14
From the Editor .....	17
MOFFA News .....	17
MOFFA Sponsors 2021 .....	18

## A Message from the "Chair"

MOFFA held its Annual Meeting on April 13th. We reviewed the accomplishments of 2020, which owing to the pandemic were few (but not none ... see our [Annual Report](#), the next item in this newsletter). We look forward to resuming our primary activities in 2022, including Organic Intensives and the farm tours, and we welcome suggestions for these or other activities.

The biggest change for the organization this year was the resignation of John Biernbaum from his position as Chair, and from the Board. Dr. Biernbaum has made major contributions to MOFFA since joining the Board in 2009, and we will miss his guidance. He does intend to remain in touch with MOFFA as he looks forward to pursuing new projects following his retirement from MSU.

One of those projects is a greater focus on gardeners, and MOFFA intends to pursue that course as well. It is clear to us that it's imperative for the future of the planet that "conventional" agricultural practices be replaced with those that are more sustainable, regenerative, ... organic. And it's



increasingly clear that that will require political pressure from a wide coalition of activists, farmers, and many others to reach that goal. Gardeners and thoughtful eaters represent a significantly large number of people who have a stake in this struggle, and we believe we're in a unique position to attract and motivate these people to grow in a more regenerative way, educate themselves on the political landscape surrounding Organic, and speak up for the organic path.

One person who needs to hear this message is Tom Vilsack, the new Secretary of Agriculture. I was encouraged this morning to read that Secretary Vilsack met last week with members of the board of the [Real Organic Project](#). In his [letter](#), Dave Chapman of the ROP reports that "it was clear that he was very well informed about the issues challenging the organic community." Secretary Vilsack was quoted as saying, "So our number one responsibility needs to be, and should be, protecting the brand," which we take to mean acting on the existing NOSB recommendations on the certification of hydroponics, animal welfare, and fraudulently certified grain. All of which is at least mildly encouraging. We will follow his actions on these

issues, and we encourage you to as well: <https://www.realorganicproject.org/email/>.

This part of the newsletter is normally written by MOFFA's Chair. With John Biernbaum's resignation (which he has been working toward for some years), we are Chairless — none of the other Board members, for personal or business reasons, felt they could commit to the position at this moment. So we've decided to share the tasks of the Chair among the Board as best we can, with the invaluable assistance of Jessica Smith, our Administrative Coordinator. This situation makes it all the more clear that we are in need of additional people to volunteer to sit on MOFFA's Board. The commitment is not enormous. Any of us would be happy to talk to you if you're interesting in exploring the idea—let Jessica know at [moffaorganic@gmail.com](mailto:moffaorganic@gmail.com).  
—Julia Christianson

*Julia Christianson was MOFFA's "very-part-time" Administrative Coordinator from January 2013 until the spring of 2020, when she retired for the second time. She has been a MOFFA member since arriving in Michigan in 2010. In 2017 she and Maynard Kaufman edited *The Organic Movement in Michigan*. She was elected to the board in April, 2020.*

---

## MOFFA 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.

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

### 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.

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 who 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 Dr. John A. Biernbaum

*Dr. John A. Biernbaum is finishing 35 years as a Professor of Horticulture at MSU at the end of 2020. He is looking forward to spending more time at Pear Tree Farm growing food, flowers and herbs, being healthy, and helping others find health. He has been a member of MOFFA for over 15 years, and served as MOFFA's Chair from 2015 to 2018 and for 2020, his final year as a board member.*

Have you renewed your membership for 2021?

If not you still have a chance. MOFFA is driven by its membership. That means that it is YOU who makes it possible for us to host the Organic

Intensives, publish the [Farm Guide](#) and [newsletters](#), maintain our [website](#) and attend regional conferences, to name a few. Join MOFFA and be a part of all the things we do to build our vision of, "a vibrant and diverse community working together for healthy food that is available to everyone and for agricultural practices that support the long-term viability of our ecosystem."

[Become a member today.](#)

## Coming Soon! The Detroit People's Food Co-op

(This piece was written by Akua Woolbright, while the brief Q and A that follows it was with Malik Yakini.)



The Detroit People's Food Co-op (DPFC) is an African American led, member-owned grocery cooperative, which will be located in the historic North End at the southeast corner of Woodward and Euclid.

DPFC will be a full-service grocery store, offering a

wide variety of products including locally grown produce, groceries, baked goods, meats, fish, dairy, frozen foods, health and beauty items, beer, and wine. Although the exact product mix is still being refined, it is expected that about 80% of the store products will be natural and organic and 20% will be clean conventional. The store will also offer a deli and prepared foods department.

The co-op will be housed within the Detroit Food Commons, a new development being spear-headed by the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. In addition to DPFC, the Detroit Food Commons will house incubator kitchens, a community meeting space, and offices. Over the past few years more than 30 community engagement sessions have been held, primarily in the North End. We have also participated in numerous community events and recruitment activities, which have helped us to increase awareness, garner support, and gain valuable input to help ensure that DPFC meets the needs of the community.

DPFC will support the health and economic success of our community. We will carry fresh, healthy food and uphold high product standards in line with the desires of our member/owners and to support community health. Educational materials and classes will be offered to help people learn more about nutrition, cooking, healthy living, sustainability, community development, and more. DPFC is not profit-driven. We are looking to contribute to the local economy and promote spending within

Detroit. In line with cooperative principles, DPFC will work with other businesses to support their efforts and keep as much money as possible within the city. We will prioritize buying from local growers and producers, service providers and other vendors, whenever possible, to help our community thrive. In addition, the co-op will create close to 50 jobs for residents. These activities are guided by our mission and purpose which includes:

1. Improving community access to fresh and healthy food
2. Educating the community about nutrition and sustainability
3. Benefiting the community by supporting local businesses
4. Assuring member access to the goods, services, and facilities of the co-op

You can be a part of this movement. Detroit residents aged 21 years and older can purchase a lifetime membership for a 1-time fee of just \$200, which can be paid in 10 monthly installments. Each person who joins will own 1 share of the co-op and be eligible for periodic store discounts and profit-sharing down the line when the store becomes profitable. The co-op is democratically controlled by



its member/owners who have 1 vote and elect six of the nine members of the co-op's board of directors, the governing body of the co-op. The other three board members are appointed by the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN), the non-profit organization leading the formation of the co-op. That nine-person board sets policy and receives regular input from member/owners through our monthly board, committee, and membership meetings. Member/owners can also run, or nominate others, for the board of directors.

Think about that. You can own a share in a grocery store, and your vote and participation will allow you to decide who sits on the board and influence the direction of this project. You will have more control over your food supply and a say in what's happening



in our city. We can't help but notice the change that is happening within Detroit. There is an increasing number of new sports and entertainment centers, expensive stores, gourmet restaurants, and high rises going up, it seems like every day, and this "development" is no longer contained to downtown. It is creeping up Woodward Avenue. We have what is now called Midtown and New Center, and it is extending to the North End, Highland Park, and neighborhoods across the city. These activities lie in the hands of a few and are typically led by people who do not look like the majority residents or have our best interests in mind. Many of us are concerned about these changes but feel powerless to stop it. DPFC gives us something positive we can get behind and put our passion and energy into. You can be part of this historic effort to return some control to the people – to give us more control of our food and economic resources. Within the cooperative structure each member/owner has a vote for the board of directors and can participate in decision-making and planning. Cooperatives also return control to black people and other historically disenfranchised groups. While anyone is welcomed and encouraged to join us in this effort, it is important to know that DPFC is a black-led organization. This is a stark difference to what we're seeing in the corporate structures inundating this city. You can be a part of that change. You can have a say.



We need you. Not just what your one-time \$200 membership fee can do to help us reach our financial goals. We need the power of your presence and participation. Cooperatives are businesses run by the people, for the people. A co-op can't be given to a community. Members of the community must want the co-op and be willing to work together to bring it into being. Prior to opening, DPFC member/owners are expected to move the work of the co-op forward by participating in one of our three working committees: Membership and Outreach - working to recruit 2,000 members before the store opens; Operations – hiring the general manager and determining store policies, product line, and staffing needs; and Finance – developing budgets, policies, and procedures.

We currently have 1,165 member/owners, surpassing our initial membership goal of 1,000 member/owners prior to opening day. With more joining daily, we have now increased our goal to 2,000. You can help us get there by signing up today.

For more information about the co-op or to join, visit our website: [detroitpeoplesfoodcoop.com](https://detroitpeoplesfoodcoop.com). You can also reach us via email or phone at either [info@detroitpeoplesfoodcoop.com](mailto:info@detroitpeoplesfoodcoop.com) or (833) DPFC313 (833) 373-2313.



Q: The description of the Detroit People's Food Co-op reads like a community center whose activities are centered around food. Do you see it as filling a void left by the departure of other community organizations, or is this a recent/new community issue and a totally new solution?

A: The work of the Detroit People's Food Co-op is rooted in the historical struggle of African Americans for greater freedom, prosperity, and self-reliance. We are continuing the work done by many other organizations in the past of organizing Black people and our allies for health, safety, justice, and equity. Co-ops often serve as a springboard for other values-aligned activities.

Q: I see that this article indicates the threat of encroachment upon your community; do you hope that this co-op is merely a starting point, that in the future your organization will be able to expand and buy more property? Is your community well aware of the situation or is there unawareness?

A: We are interested in not just developing a food co-op but in developing a cooperative economy. We hope the Detroit People's Food Co-op serves as a model of how we might create less extractive economies in Black communities and for how community residents can work collectively for the common good. There is tremendous community awareness and support for the Detroit People's Food Co-op and the Detroit Food Commons.

Q: What has been the biggest challenge in getting to this point with the co-op?

A: There have been multiple challenges. One of the challenges has been one of public confidence in the Black community. Because of the history of broken promises and unrealized plans for developments of various types in the North End neighborhood of Detroit and because of the protracted nature of organizing a food co-op many people have questioned whether or not the co-op will actually happen. Membership recruitment was slow and arduous until the events of 2020. The early days of the pandemic caused many people to see the fragility of the industrial food system. The global protests in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd caused projects with a racial justice mission to suddenly have a higher profile. Our membership increased tremendously as a result of those two factors.

Q: Do you see the lack of availability of fresh food to your community or the lack of the knowledge of how to prepare fresh food as the biggest barrier to community health? Or should that be a need for tips in the efficient preparation of healthy food in a busy world? Or are the two (availability and knowledge) seen as equally important?

A: Capitalism and the system of white supremacy are the biggest barriers to community health. In American society, those two systems intersect in ways that make healthy food less accessible to Black, Brown, and poor people. National grocery stores have largely abandoned cities like Detroit in favor of the more affluent/whiter suburbs. Black, Brown, and poor people are more likely to be dependent upon public transportation which makes getting to the places that sell healthier food options more difficult. Healthier food options typically cost more. Because of the vast income disparities in American society, many Black, Brown, and poor people can't afford the higher costs associated with healthier food options.

Q: Are you hoping the co-op will spur other community activities in the future centered around food? Cook-offs? Food festivals? Are ready-to-eat food bars or food carts that are subsidiaries of the co-op somewhere in the future, or something that the co-op would likely support if proposed by a community?

A: Yes, we are hoping that the Detroit People's Food Co-op will serve as a hub for food justice/food sovereignty related activities. The co-op will include a deli and prepared foods section. We look forward to connecting with other food projects rooted in food sovereignty and racial justice.

*Dr. Akua Woolbright, Ph.D., is the Nutrition Program Director for the Whole Cities Foundation and the Board President of the Detroit People's Food Co-op. She is an authoritative expert on nutrition with a passion for helping individuals and communities achieve healthier lives. Malik Kenyatta Yakini is co-founder and Executive Director of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) and board member of the Detroit People's Food Co-op. DBCFSN operates a seven-acre urban farm and is spearheading the opening of the Detroit People's Food Co-op, a cooperative grocery store in Detroit's North End.*

---

## Preserving the History of Organic/Sustainable Agriculture

In the past few years, a confluence of concerns about climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and racial inequities have highlighted many flaws in the American food production and distribution systems, emphasizing the importance of creating more resilient, sustainable systems that can survive changes in an uncertain future. Local, organic,

sustainable, ecological, regenerative, equitable—debates swirl around what these terms mean and what the ideal food system should look like. We stand at a potential watershed moment in American agricultural history, a time of crisis that might—or might not—be the catalyst to seriously reforming the food system.



Like previous generations living in such pivotal times, it is tempting to think that the challenges we face today are unique, unprecedented, novel. Pausing for contemplation is not a natural response to crisis; we want to plan, look ahead, shape a future that fulfills our hopes and avoids our fears. Yet, as we work toward a better tomorrow, we may be able to save valuable time, energy, and emotional fatigue by stopping briefly to look back at yesterday, to remember what others (and even some of us many years ago) have done when faced with similar crises in the past.

Throughout the history of American agriculture, systems that we would now call sustainable or organic have developed in parallel with the chemical-intensive industrialized paradigm that we call “conventional” agriculture today. Advocates for these systems faced agricultural crises as bad as or worse than those of 2020—the Dust Bowl, the oil crisis, mounting farm debts—and combined ideas both new and old to promote agricultural systems that they believed would be better both for society and the environment.

Important as these earlier efforts toward sustainable agriculture were, they have in general not been documented well by historians. Their story remains to be told, to be made available to the general public, to give perspective and background to the crises we face in agriculture today. And that’s where you can help!

I am focusing my graduate research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on preserving the history of organic/sustainable agriculture. To make sure that I cover as diverse a range of perspectives as possible, I’m asking people who have been involved in organic/sustainable agriculture to fill out a brief, confidential questionnaire about the key people, publications, and organizations that helped shape your farming methods and philosophies. The information from this questionnaire will be used to

identify and conduct oral history interviews with key figures in the organic/sustainable agriculture movement.

My ultimate goal is to compile this information into a book to make the history of organic/sustainable agriculture available to the general public. It is my hope that a broader awareness of this history will help current and future sustainable agriculture advocates learn from both the successes and mistakes of their predecessors.



The story of sustainable agriculture must be preserved and told. Will you help with this important endeavor?

To fill out the questionnaire online, just follow [this link](#) or use the QR code below. If you would prefer to fill out a paper survey, please send me a request via mail or email, and I will mail you one.

Anneliese Abbott  
70 Science Hall  
Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies  
550 N. Park St.  
Madison, WI 53706

[amabbott@wisc.edu](mailto:amabbott@wisc.edu)

Note: I will be in Michigan during July from the 10th to the 15th, and may be able to schedule some in-person oral history interviews if anyone is interested. If you are, be sure to fill out the questionnaire online by the third week of June to ensure time for scheduling. Remote interviews can be conducted up through Christmas.

---

## Support and Resources for Women Farmers

If there is a silver lining to the pandemic that has disrupted our everyday lives for the past 15 months, it is the spotlight that has been shown on our food system’s complexities and the farmers who work tirelessly every day to ensure there are fresh fruits and vegetables at the farmers’ markets, the CSA’s, and on the grocery store shelves. And while one might think the agricultural sector is dominated by men, one out of every 3 farmers in the U.S. is a woman<sup>1</sup>. In our great state of Michigan, there are

more than 24,000 female farmers who operate nearly three million acres of farmland<sup>2</sup>.

Unfortunately many obstacles exist for female farmers that put them at a disadvantage such as lack of access to land, adequate funding to acquire land and equipment, and training and education<sup>3</sup>. Thankfully there are several organizations that support female farmers in various ways from teaching regenerative farming practices, engaging in

policy advocacy, and educating them about farm economics. Below is a short list of some of those organizations that support female farmers. For those women who have been considering a career in agriculture, maybe this list will provide some inspiration.

**Ag Women's Network** - This online community caters to women farmers and industry professionals who believe in an inclusive agriculture industry where diversity is celebrated and everyone can achieve their full potential.

**American Agri-Women (AAW)** - Established in 1974, its members are actively involved in engaging with legislative and regulatory matters at the local, state, and national levels. In addition, AAW initiated the Agriculture in the Classroom program which has helped increase student education about agriculture around the United States.

**Annie's Project** - The organization's founder, Annie Kohlhausen Fleck, has spent years working alongside her farmer husband learning how to be a strong business partner. Annie's Project's mission is to empower women in agriculture by providing educational programs designed to strengthen women's roles on the farm. You can find a long list of resources on the website that include information on estate planning, budgeting, farm labor guides, insurance, and more.

**FarmHer** - Marji Guyler-Alaniz left her corporate agriculture job in 2013 and started a photography project that showcases women farmers across the country and the critical roles they play. Each month over a million people learn about the 350 women who have been featured via photos, YouTube videos, podcasts, and blog posts.

**From Farms to Incubators** - From Farms to Incubators uses content and digital storytelling to increase awareness of women leaders and entrepreneurs and their contributions using technology in the agriculture sector. It plays a vital role in encouraging women to pursue careers in agtech. The initiative includes an award-winning documentary *From Farms to Incubators* that profiles many women entrepreneurs in agtech.

**Michigan Agri-Women** - This Michigan-based non-profit organization is comprised of members who work the land, as well as those who want to know

where their food comes from. It provides a platform for women in agriculture to communicate, have a voice, and connect.

**National Women in Agriculture Association** - This organization works to eliminate poverty by increasing the availability of fresh, locally grown foods while expanding economic opportunities for women. Its Soil Sisters project provides supplies and training to anyone who wants to start a garden as long as they agree to share with three other local families.

**Off Grid and Homestead Ladies** - This Facebook group boasts over 244,600 women who support each other in their efforts to live off the grid, or who are working toward that goal.

**Women Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN)** - Its mission for the past 15 years has been to engage women in building an ecological and just food and agricultural system through individual and community power. WFAN members can engage in a program called Women Caring for the Land that is focused on women farmland landowners who are interested in learning more about conservation and includes conferences, online resources, and peer-to-peer meetings.

**Women-In-Ag (WIA) Network** - In partnership with the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems emerged the WIA Network. It provides opportunities for mentorship, education, and peer-to-peer support.

1 <https://www.fb.org/viewpoints/women-count-in-agriculture>

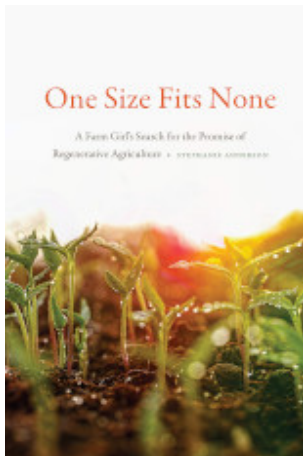
2 <https://www.farmflavor.com/michigan/michigan-farm-to-table/women-advance-michigan-agriculture/>

3 <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/partner-content-empowering-female-farmers>

*Stacey Wilcox is a marketing and business professional with 20 years of experience working with health and wellness, food, and technology companies. She is in the process of completing a Graduate Certificate in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems from Tufts University. She has an MBA from Northwood University, and graduated from Michigan State University with a Bachelor of Communication Arts. Stacey is also a certified health coach and yoga instructor. She is passionate about helping others understand the origins of their food. She was elected to the board in September, 2020.*

## Book Review-One Size Fits None: a Farm Girl's Search for the Promise of Regenerative Agriculture by Stephanie Anderson

Review by Leah Smith



I think it is safe to say that many of us read a number of books and/or visit informational platforms online that discuss organic/regenerative/sustainable agriculture. We read all about Monsanto, GMO's, carbon sequestration, soil microbes, CSA's, everything. And being mindful of that, I still say that everyone needs to read this book.

*One Size Fits None* has many different parts to it. The author, Stephanie Anderson, shares her own experience of being raised on a conventional ranch and harboring a suspicion of organic agriculture; or, as she puts it, that need to defend conventional agriculture because it is how she was raised. She goes on to tell of her temporary reporting career and the burgeoning feeling (from both it and the conditions on her family's ranch) that something in modern, conventional agriculture was wrong. To this narrative, Anderson adds the stories of five other farms and farmers. From Ryan Roth (Florida), Phil and Jill Jerde (South Dakota), Kevin O'Dare (Florida), Fidel Gonzalez (New Mexico), and Gabe Brown (North Dakota), she gathers further insights and builds a complete picture of United States agriculture, both the promising and the grave.

Ryan Roth is a conventional farmer; it is a family farm of thousands of acres with migrant laborers, an executive board, and no family member living on site. Ryan Roth is a caring farmer, concerned with the quality of his product, the viability of the farm, and the welfare of his workers. But Anderson's background information (each farmer's story is sprinkled with additional information filling out the general agricultural landscape) shows that the life of migrant laborers is rarely as agreeable as Roth tries to make it.

Phil and Jill Jerde raise bison, and children! This is a true family farm. Climate change takes center stage

during Anderson's talks with Phil, as does prairie restoration, holistic farm management, and CAFO's. In fact, this portion of the book has one of Stephanie's most effective literary devices when she compares the life and ending of a pasture-raised steer with the egregious existence of one on a CAFO (and its end in the mega-slaughterhouse). Kevin O'Dare raises lettuce, edible blossoms, and more for high-class restaurants in Florida. As is true of the other interviewees, he talks about wanting to provide food for all in the community and not just feeding those who can afford the best. But for each customer pool he needs different products; Kevin is very responsive to his customers tastes and wishes. He wants a viable farm, but also a meaningful one; and he comments on balancing farming and life in general.

Fidel Gonzalez is not of advanced years (he has a young family, in fact), but he is coming to agriculture as a second career. His urban farm has to be resilient to the climate and productive in a confined space. Community is important to him as well; not only does he want to provide healthy food for local people, but his "schooling" in agriculture was done by a community program. He began by having information shared with him, and in the future he intends to share back.

Gabe Brown is becoming a well-known name in regenerative agriculture. The inability to afford to continue with high-input conventional agriculture (due to crop failures) forced him to go without, and his farm's productivity and economic viability has gone up, up, up ever since as he has followed the practices of integrating animals with crops, keeping living roots in the soil for as much of the year as possible, and "stacking" enterprises on his acres, to name a few.

This book profiles one conventional farmer and four "organic" ones; some are whole-scale regenerative and some not; some are certified organic and some not. Two farms are urban and three are rural. Three of the farms (well, one farm and two ranches) are rather large and two rather small. There are family farms being continued, new farms being created, and farmers for whom farming has been the only job they have ever had as well as those who are entering it as the second act of life. There is diversity here. That is why this book is so good. You are



getting a picture from all different points of view. There are discussions about reaching your consumers, climate change, and economic viability as well as philosophy, religion, and the pure enjoyment of life. But most importantly, this book shows that farming isn't just a question of science or economics, but of social pressures and impacts. There is still a stigma about being a new farmer and wanting to use "weird" organics. There is a stigma about "rejecting" the conventional agriculture you used to practice (and that most of your neighbors still do) and "joining the enemy." It seems that the agricultural social influence that many do not feel is the weight consumers should have from the system

that feeds them cheaply and treats migrant laborers (and animals, and the environment) badly.

I strongly encourage everyone to read this book. I think it could help us to find common ground and understanding with people with whom we believed we had little in common. No matter who you are, this book really is a perfect fit!

*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.*

## Farm Profile

The Local Grocer and Weekly Greens CSA,  
Genesee County

Farmers: Erin Caudell and Franklin Pleasant

Description: 10 acres with 5  
large hoophouses for vegetables

Methods: Sustainable

Contact Information: The Local Grocer, 601  
Martin Luther Ave., Flint, MI;

[thelocalgrocer.com](http://thelocalgrocer.com); [facebook.com/thelocalgrocer](https://facebook.com/thelocalgrocer); [localgrocerflint@gmail.com](mailto:localgrocerflint@gmail.com); (810) 285-9900

Welcome to the second installment of a new regular item for Michigan Organic Connections. In this space we will share the stories of Michigan farmers pursuing sustainable agriculture. We hope we can all learn something from their experiences. If you know a farm you would like to see profiled, [let us know](#).

"Be the change you would like to see in the world" is an inspiring statement often attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, and is exemplified by two innovative, creative, resourceful, and very organized farmers, Erin Caudell and Franklin Pleasant. The following story shows how their business, farm, family, and lives are the change they wish to see in the world.

Erin and Franklin had been involved in the local foods movement and had often heard people talking about the need for more small farmers, enough to really make an impact on the success of this movement; so they decided to commit their lives to it. Eight years ago, they bought 10 acres of land in

Mt. Morris Twp, and erected 5 substantial hoophouses for vegetable sales at their stall at the old Flint Farmer's Market (and have since moved to the new Flint Market). They also started a CSA that had 15 members its first year. The CSA grew to about 40 members, and (5 years ago) they started The Local Grocer, a local and sustainable foods grocery located just north of downtown Flint. Then, Erin got pregnant with twins! How much more could anyone add to their life and make it all work? Well,



without great organizational skills they might not, but Erin and Franklin have each other's backs; they cover each other and with great planning and follow up, they keep it all working smoothly. One amazing outcome of this planning was that Erin wanted to have a backup plan for when the babies were born during the busy summer shares season. In case they might be unable to fulfill their shares, they asked their network of small, sustainable farmer friends to help them out. This temporary arrangement turned into a great business idea, Weekly Greens, which now incorporates three

farms. This “network CSA” increases the variety and quantity of products they can provide, as well as increasing the support that small farmers can bring to each other. In the past 3 years, Weekly Greens has grown to 130 members!

Some of the methods they use to help them while caring for young children, farming the greenhouses, and running the store and farmers' market stall are seemingly little things but they make a big difference when trying to get it all done. Although they don't like the idea of using plastic as mulch in the greenhouse, they've found they needed something durable, so they use a very thick gauge plastic that can be rolled up and reused next season. It prevents weeds, which is a lifesaver. To fund a lot of this, they applied for and received grants/loans for the hoopouses; most from sustainable foods foundations and one payable in produce! Marketing for Erin and Franklin means educating their customers about where their food comes from, literally how things work on the farm. Customers become friends and this makes them all a part of the same community.

This lifestyle involves getting to eat their own food, and, of course, their children get to eat it, too. They

eat carrots and cucumbers like candy, and are growing up with an awareness of how it all works that very few children get these days. This is something that cannot be taught in a classroom. Erin notices that over time, the land they bought for their farm has become more diverse. She sees more insects and wildlife and feels satisfaction in the fact that they have been and are a part of this growing diversity, especially for her children. More than that, Erin and Franklin are a part of an ever growing and diverse group of Michigan farmers, committed to bringing food and community to all.

Submitted by Linda Purdy

*Linda Purdy has been an organic grower, and an active member of Organic Growers of Michigan as well as MOFFA, for the past 30 years. Linda and her spouse Lee purchased an historic flour mill in Argentine in 2000, and they were millers of certified organic grains for 15 years. In 2016, they sold the mill, and are now growing specialty crops as well as their own grain and are milling grain both from their own farm and other organic farms in the region at Westwind Farm in Swartz Creek. In addition to the milling, they operate a CSA and host educational sustainable living events at the farm. Linda joined the board in October, 2019.*

---

## Michigan Sustainable Farm Mentors

Get paid \$15/hour for the time you spend charting a path to your farm's success with insights from one of seven amazing Michigan farmer mentors! You will be paired with a farmer whose farm experience matches your farm goals as closely as possible. The mentors include urban and rural growers and small and large-scale farmers raising pastured livestock, and sustainably-grown vegetables, cut flowers, and fruit. **Beginning farmers** will focus on understanding

and improving financial viability, environmental sustainability, work-life balance, and community connections. **Aspiring farmers** will focus on how to find land, credit, and skills to get started. You will also be paid to connect with a peer mentor and to advise program leaders on how to improve the program in the future. [Sign up](#), [visit the website](#), or email [brandtk7@msu.edu](mailto:brandtk7@msu.edu) for more info.

---

## Policy Corner

By Jessica Smith

One of MOFFA's goals is to represent the organic/sustainable growers of Michigan in policy matters on both the state and national scale. Since our last newsletter there have been several opportunities for us to do this.

- At the beginning of March we endorsed the Safe Line Speeds During COVID-19 Act which would prohibit slaughterhouses from operating at the dangerously fast speeds for the duration of the pandemic. This legislation was reintroduced by

Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)

- On the state side, we signed onto a letter of support of the rewrite of Part 115, Michigan's solid waste laws. This package of bills is intended to “update our solid waste laws to be based in Materials Management instead of just providing for unlimited landfill space. This legislation is not perfect, but still represents a paradigm shift from landfill first to holistic system development for recycling and composting,” according to the [Michigan Environmental Council](#), an active stakeholder in the

development of this bill. As a member of the Michigan Environmental Council, MOFFA was glad to sign this letter of support. The bill package passed in the House and advanced to the Senate Regulatory Reform Committee.

- We also signed the [FY22 Agriculture, Climate and Infrastructure Letter](#). This letter, written by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, and addressed to House and Senate Leadership and copied to House and Senate Agriculture Committee and Budget Committee Leadership. The letter begins by stating that “the undersigned organizations are united both in our endorsement of the principles underlying the bicameral Agriculture Resilience Act (ARA; H.R. 2803/S. 1337) and the Climate Stewardship Act (CSA; H.R. 2534/S. 1072) and in our strong support for inclusion of key funding elements from those bills being included in the agriculture portion of the American Jobs Plan Act (AJPA) legislation.” To this end the letter recommends increasing investment in these areas from the proposed \$1 billion to “\$200 billion over ten years to support robust investment in farm bill conservation, research, renewable energy, private forestry, and regional food system and supply chain resilience programs, in addition to the agriculture, forestry, and rural-related elements already contained in the President’s American Jobs Plan.”

In other news, the Cornucopia Institute has released the [Organic Beef Report and Scorecard](#). Cornucopia has produced many [scorecards](#) on organic products found in the market place, from yogurt and cottage cheese to toothpaste to help consumers know that when they buy organic, they are actually getting organic.

The National Organic Standards Board had

its [spring meeting](#). A highlight from the materials review was the approval of paperpots used in paperpot transplanting systems. Many other materials will require further discussion at the fall meeting including biodegradable mulch film, ammonia extract, and Kasugamycin, an antibiotic used to prevent fire blight. There has also been a request from the National Organic Program that the NOSB work on the problem of the need for more and better trained organic inspectors. They discussed partnering with higher education institutions to train personnel and mentoring rookie inspectors.

In continuing news, the comment period for the Origin of Livestock proposed rule is open until July 12. The notice proposes revisions to the USDA organic regulations that would change how conventional livestock are transitioned into organic production and how transitioned animals are managed in the organic system. This is an opportunity to comment on specific provisions that were not considered in the previous 2015 proposed rule, based on public comments to that proposed rule and comments received during the supplemental public comment period in 2019. This additional public comment period will inform USDA’s development of a final rule and allows people an opportunity to submit comments on the new information. You may [submit your comments here](#).

*Jessica Smith is a long time member of MOFFA. Raised on her family’s organic farm in Michigan, she attended Michigan State University and completed a Bachelors of Science in Crop and Soil Sciences and a Masters in Entomology. She has recently moved to Indiana where she continues to raise chickens and garden organically. Her close ties to Michigan keep her an active member of MOFFA and in the winter of 2020 she took on the role of administrative coordinator.*

---

## Homogenized Farming, Part 1: the Mechanics of the Loss of Diversity

By Leah and Jessica Smith

(This article was originally published in the Fall 2017 issue of *Farming Magazine*.)

Farming in America has changed dramatically since the 1960s. Have these changes been for the better? What has instigated these changes? Is it a question of survival of the fittest, or simply survival of the subsidized? How have these changes affected the remaining small and mid-size farmers? What about farm consumers? One thing we can guarantee, large farms are NOT simply “large small” farms. The days of countrysides filled with homesteads composed of

two milk cows, four beef cows, some pigs, some goats, some chickens, a donkey and a few ducks and geese, plus field crops, hay fields, a garden, and the orchard, are gone.

A number of components come together to make farms what they are. What farmers want to raise for themselves personally, what they can sell and to who, and what consumers/processors want to buy all factor in. Additionally, the type of inputs and resources they need to purchase (and from whom), or instead are able to maintain themselves, will



affect the way a farm can operate. Also, the manner of government support or, conversely, government support given to competitors will affect a farm's viability. What are the trends in these areas?

Seeds and plants are surely a very important "input" on a farm. The types of plants grown, their environmental requirements in a sometimes challenging climate, and their cultural requirements impact what is required for their successful growth. Is the farm a highly fertilized monoculture or a self-sustaining, crop-rotating polyculture? Do the crops require intense irrigation or just a nice hay mulch to be happy?

Seed companies used to be many in number (in the thousands), and most were small and family-owned. But the small seed companies have gone and the world of seeds is now dominated by big business interests. The passage of the Plant Variety Protection Act (PVPA) of 1970 helped to make seeds an attractive arena for big business, granting property rights protection for sexually reproducing seeds. The expansion of intellectual property protections (which is happening with the input of DuPont and Monsanto) has been in play ever since, leading to increasing control over the seed industry. Chemical and commodities firms began to buy up the small, independent seed companies. At first, these chemical/seed companies' genetically engineered seeds were their primary interest for patent protection and increased sales, especially when they could sell their seed in a package deal with their chemical product, as illustrated by the various Roundup Ready/Roundup duos. Additionally, their focus was commodity crops. Now these companies are easily moving beyond genetically engineered seeds and into traditionally bred hybrids, and adding traditional hybrid fruits and vegetables to their commodity seed collection. Have you seen the statement on a packet of non-GE hybrid Big Beef tomato seeds saying that by opening the package you agree not to save seed from this plant or engage in breeding? Not even to save seed for yourself? No, you won't be attempting to do any de-hybridizing on your own with "their" genetics if the big seed companies own a seed variety with a trait you admire. And they are very likely to own it. The large chemical/seed companies intend to specifically patent more plants and protect naturally occurring genes as their own intellectual property and maintain a close watch on the seeds that farmers buy and sell and save. With court rulings continuing to be handed down from the government to support these efforts, are farmers left with a choice?

This privatization/capitalization of the seed industry has led to an increase in seed prices, naturally. Far

worse, these profit-driven companies have "bought the right" to decide which seeds (i.e. which genetic traits) will be preserved for the future and which will not, as they control so many seed varieties and can simply decide to no longer offer them for sale. They may offer no alternatives to the high-input type of seed. For example, Seminis ceased to offer more than one-third of its entire stock of seed varieties (approximately 2,500 fruits and vegetables) in a step it called a cost saving measure prior to being bought by Monsanto. This has all led to the loss of many varieties of edible plants, and with the loss of their DNA we are as a nation left more vulnerable to climate change, diseases, and pests which could find the synthetically fertilized and intensely irrigated crops that have been favored in recent years easy pickings.

Heirloom seeds are a popular subject these days. In the seed and nursery catalogs of old when variety used to be the rule and not the exception, these varieties were the open-pollinated seeds that are the heirloom seeds of today. It is important to remember that (thus far) intellectual property protections do not apply to open-pollinated (or heirloom) seeds. This makes the current Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI) all the more important. OSSI is a combined effort of farmer-breeders, academics, and other concerned persons to keep as many seed varieties as possible in the public domain and in use. When a seed variety is OSSI-pledged, it means that all involved breeders, seed companies, and purchasers of said variety agree to The Four Seed Freedoms in any transfer of these seeds in the future. Basically, they agree to treat the seeds as a common resource for the future and agree that the seeds can be saved, sold, used for breeding, used for trading, or used for research. As it used to be. It is an effort to maintain open access to the once common resource of seeds.

Plants are not the only lifeforms reproducing and growing and being valued on farms. There are many different kinds of animals there as well, and they, too, are not what they used to be. Animal genetics is not a topic with which most people concern themselves. In fact, they concern even fewer than you think. Animal breeds are now the business of a few huge, international genetics firms. The involvement of small-scale interests long ago left the picture. EW Group, Hendrix Genetics, Tyson, and Smithfield are the companies in control, whose interests are in raising animals in confined environments. The animal traits of greatest interest to them are strictly those which increase profits. Adaptability to different environments and resistance to disease don't concern these businesses. Controlled, confined environments for animal raising

and antibiotics eliminate the need for such concerns. Naturally, with a major portion of the animal gene pool being controlled by so few (and those with such limited requirements for an animal), there has been a resultant loss in genetic diversity in animals of many kinds. By and large, there is little variety to be found in U.S. animal breeds. Though there are more than 500 breeds of swine in the world, the vast majority of those raised in the United States are hybrids produced from but three (Duroc, Hampshire, and Yorkshire). These breeds and their hybrids fulfill the desired characteristics stated above. The only laying chicken trait that matters is high egg production. Simple. High feed conversion on grain diets, fast animal growth, these are strictly bottom-line concerns and the only ones that count in beef cattle. And with around 1,000 breeds of cattle present in the world, it is the Holstein alone that makes up more than 85 percent of the milking cow population in the U.S. Their milk production is high and they well tolerate high grain diets as well. This is all to the pleasure of processors, which are increasingly larger and more industrialized and have influenced farmers to embrace larger, industrialized, homogenized animal herds.

You may not need 500 swine breeds for your own farm. But if you would simply appreciate one or two that are not as susceptible to disease and can thrive without the support of antibiotics, wouldn't some options be nice? Some farmers and ranchers meet with difficulty when seeking livestock adapted to pasture production. Since the gargantuan companies control animal genetics, they control what breeds are being raised and sold, and they don't care about hogs that can be raised on pasture. They control what is available for you to buy, and as far as they are concerned you don't need to have a choice from amongst a robust collection of many breeds with many traits that have been maintained for generations to create a diverse gene pool. But do they actually control the genes of the animals with the same iron fist with which Monsanto controls Roundup and their Roundup Ready plants? It is well known that companies which develop transgenic animals hold patents on their knowledge. However, as they also "own" such a large amount of animals (and they insist their DNA) of the non-transgenic, hybrid variety, these companies are achieving success with claiming ownership and intellectual property protection of these non-transgenic animals, too. But this claim has never applied to heritage breeds of animals.

Certainly you have been hearing a lot about heritage cattle, swine, and fowl lately. Consumers and homesteaders who have heard about these animals like what they hear. Adaptability and vigor, followed by superior flavor. The business interests that favor the consistent and standardized do not like what they hear. This public interest in heritage breeds is being perceived as a threat to the viability of the product they have for sale. Steps have been taken (by those positioned to do so) to combat this challenge with what you might call scare tactics involving disease epidemics in animals. Salmonella is often cited as a risk to outdoor poultry production, even though there is a lower incidence in less confined flocks. Individuals like Linda Faillace (author of *Mad Sheep*) have experienced government surveillance of their heritage sheep, in some cases being forced to destroy herds due to claims of scrapie (a disease related to bovine spongiform encephalopathy or mad cow disease). In Linda's case, her sheep that had to be destroyed were disease free. Don't think swine have escaped. In 2011, the Department of Natural Resources in Michigan issued regulations that essentially outlawed heritage swine in the state on the basis of physical characteristics (such as straight tails) with no genetic criteria, claiming that control of these breeds was necessary to control the potential of feral pigs. Heritage swine farmers were ordered to kill their fenced in livestock in a move that was strongly supported by the Michigan Pork Producers Association and the big business interests they represent.

(Part 2 will be reprinted in the next edition of Michigan Organic Connections.)

*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.*

*Jessica Smith is a long time member of MOFFA. Raised on her family's organic farm in Michigan, she attended Michigan State University and completed a Bachelors of Science in Crop and Soil Sciences and a Masters in Entomology. She has recently moved to Indiana where she continues to raise chickens and garden organically. Her close ties to Michigan keep her an active member of MOFFA and in the winter of 2020 she took on the role of administrative coordinator*

---

## From the Editor

Hello to all. First, I would like to acknowledge how much the MOC newsletter will feel the loss of contributions from Dr. Biernbaum. They have been many over the years and he leaves behind a massive hole that could be impossible to fill. However, we did manage this time, at least, to create another newsletter with information, perspectives, and ideas to share. As always, I am very grateful to those who took the time to contribute. As with so many things in life, it is important to understand the viewpoints of others,

helpful to learn what resources are out there that may be of use to you or others, and encouraging to discover the progress that is being made, in this case in the shared arena of agriculture and food security. In this instance, spreading the word is just as important as the thoughts and actions that are themselves taking place. The words will inspire more actions, and before you know it we will have a movement on our hands! And if you have a perspective to share, too, please do. Happy gardening and healthy eating to all. Enjoy summer.

---

## MOFFA News

**Michigan Organic Connections Newsletter** – As always, we are interested in featuring new voices in the newsletter. If you are interested in contributing, or if you have a suggestion about future 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. 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 2020, 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.



---

## MOFFA Sponsors 2021

