

Winter 2012-2013

The Organic Sprout

MOFGA's Newsletter
for Organic Producers

UNDERSTANDING MASS BALANCE:

MAINTAINING THE RECORDS

by Cheryl Wixson, Organic Marketing Consultant

As a math geek, my favorite part of the organic inspection process is the mass balance analysis. In a mass balance analysis, your records need to document that the input = output. So as a certified organic processor, my records need to demonstrate that our company purchased enough organic Principe Borghese tomatoes (input) to equal the amount of Jack's Organic Ketchup (output) that our company produced. Or as a certified organic farmer, my records need to demonstrate that I bought and planted the seed and harvested the amount of Winter Luxury pumpkin (input) to equal the amount of pumpkin (output) that was sold to the food-processing company.

When working with fresh produce like tomatoes, apples or squash, the mass balance analysis is usually done in pounds. For processors, the mass balance for items like spices and herbs are most often calculated in grams, with 454 grams equivalent to one pound. For certified organic farms, the record-keeping trail and analysis involves seed purchase records, planting and harvest records, and sales journals. Depending upon the farm management system, these may be individual logs, or records in a notebook. Regardless of the record format, the analysis is the same: a certain crop is evaluated from the beginning stages of seed or seedlings, all the way to harvest, sales and end use. Poor crop yields should be noted as a variance on your records,



and the corresponding sales should equal the amount harvested.

A good example of a crop fluctuation would be the comparison of apples. In the crop year 2011, on our farm, our records indicated that 65 bushels of apples were harvested from 17 trees. While this harvest amount may be considered lower than the average 10 bushels per tree, the orchard is being revitalized, and our records demonstrated that it was 3 times more than any of the prior years. In 2012, the orchard had a total crop failure and there was no harvest.

In performing a mass balance on the 2011 fruit harvest, an analysis was calculated on the input (65 bushels) and on the output: fruit pressed into cider, fruit sold to a food processor, and fruit put into livestock feed (rabbits).

Not having a scale on the farm, the estimate for the harvest mass was 40 pounds per bushel or 2620 pounds (input). On the output side of the equation, 600 pounds were sold to a food processor, 60 gallons of cider (12 – 5 gallon carboys) were fermented for sparkling cider or vinegar, and 60 gallons of cider were canned as juice. Cider house estimates are that 1 bushel or 40 pounds of apples yields 3 gallons of juice. Thus, on the output side, the cider equivalent of 1600 pounds of apples plus the 600 pounds sold equals 2200 pounds. While the 2620 pounds input does not equal 2200 pounds output, if the assumption was that the remaining 420 pounds were used as livestock feed, the records analysis do demonstrate a satisfactory mass balance.

As a processor, this analysis may become more complicated. For example, in the very nature of the (Continued on Pg 2)

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Understanding Mass Balance

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roasting process, coffee beans may lose up to 30% of their weight. Or in processing tomatoes to make a sauce, the skins and seeds are removed, and then the extract is boiled to remove water. Generally, 2.25 pounds of tomatoes are needed to make one pound of sauce. In cases like this, the processor needs to maintain detailed records that indicate these kinds of consistent losses and be able to demonstrate how these losses are part of the mass balance analysis. These records may be notes in a notebook, logs from processing or accounting records.

In addition, the processor needs to maintain sales records that demonstrate where and what quantity of product was sold, donated, or used in preparation for sampling. In all cases, to protect organic integrity, the final determination of mass balance must demonstrate that the input is equal to or greater than the output. Depending upon the size of operation, these records can take many forms. The simplest method may be a notebook, and the more detailed technique could involve formal accounting procedures like Quick Books. The bottom line remains the same, as your operation grows, the maintenance of these records becomes more critical, and is a key to your operation's financial success.

Cheryl Wixson, MOFGA's Organic Marketing Consultant, is always available to work with farms and processors on mass balance analysis. She can be reached at: cheryl@mofga.org.

Good Things Happening With Less Paper

Many changes are happening to improve the Annual certification process. We worked with some of you over the summer to make the paperwork less burdensome. We cut several pages from both the crops and livestock forms. We also replaced many long form questions with check box menus. Another initiative that will be ready in January is a web based renewal process for farmers. Stay tuned for more info as we get closer to completion. Another first is that we are not printing a Practice Manual this year. If you are fond of the 2012 Practice Manual, hang on to it. We will instead be issuing guidance documents for each certification scope--crops, livestock, handling--as well as a pamphlet on our policies. Since many of you use a three ring binder for your certification documents, these shorter publications can be placed in that binder with ease. And, you will receive only the ones that apply to you. If you are an organic coffee roaster, you don't need a guidance document about organic livestock production.

Unless there are changes, the guidance and policy documents will not be replaced annually, which saves paper and postage. They will also be available on our website. Another change is that we will offer the NOP Rule in a separate pocket sized booklet. We urge folks to rely on the government regulation website instead of the paper booklet. The web version is updated constantly, contains the latest rule changes, and allows for easy navigation to the section you seek.

If it sounds like we are moving away from paper and embracing the web, we are. It makes a lot of sense for an organization that needs to be careful with spending and wants to consume fewer natural resources. But worry not those who eschew this electronic medium as well as those who lack easy access to it, we will happily furnish you with hard copies of everything you need.

Best wishes for the New Year!
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Resource Guide for Organic Insect and Disease Management - 2nd Edition!

by Eric Sideman, Organic Crop Specialist

In 2005 MOFGA, OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) and NEON (Northeast Organic Network) joined forces and produced the "Resource Guide for Organic Insect and Disease Management." We used a fact sheet style with chapters covering the pest and disease problems found in four different crop families, and chapters on thirteen different materials used in management. This style was very well received. In fact, the Guide was ranked as the number one bestseller on the Cornell online bookstore, and we received an award for "Outstanding New Extension Publication" from the NYS Association of County Agriculture Agents in 2006.

In 2008 some of the same authors thought it was time to expand the book, and update it. MOFGA took the lead this time and applied for a SARE grant. We were awarded the grant and the second edition of the Resource Guide for Organic Insect and Disease Management is being printed now.

The manual will continue to be based on information developed in research trials. While we realize there are published guides (e.g. New England Vegetable Management Guide and popular organic farming literature), our approach will be different. These existing resources do not incorporate unbiased efficacy trial information, and often do not focus on products approved for organic production, nor practices and their success in complex systems integral to successful organic production.

A key to our approach this time was to work with farmers through farm visits and group meetings to assess their perspective on which problems are important. In addition, we discussed with farmers their thoughts on efficacy of both cultural practices and materials recommended in the first edition.

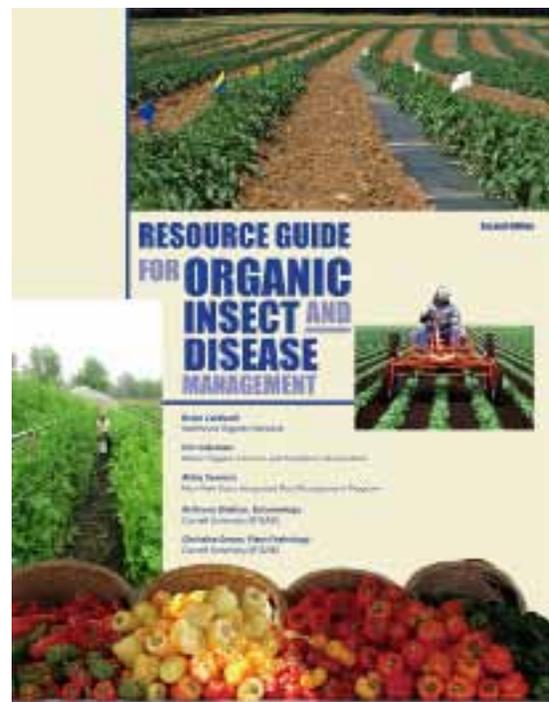
The new edition of the Guide will again consist of two primary sections. The first section will provide cultural information and management practices for nine crop families, adding four families that were not included in the initial publication (alliums, umbels, chenopods and legumes). The principal insect and diseases of these important crop families will be identified with text and pictures, and a brief description of their biology will be

presented. The life cycle of pests will be presented to allow growers to prepare for potential pest problems in their own fields. In addition to the cultural control information, we will provide material recommendations. These recommendations will be based on efficacy studies done at universities and summarized in the second section.

The second section includes updated material fact sheets that were in the first edition, plus several additional factsheets on promising materials, including sulfur, hydrogen peroxide, Trichoderma sp. and *Streptomyces lydicus*. Each fact sheet includes background information about the type of material, how it is made, how it works, and the types of pests it will control. Application guidelines for use, and a description of the effects it has on the environment and human health will also be included. Efficacy will be described in a summary account and by means of graphs.

The book now has updated information regarding changes to the National Organic Program regulations and OMRI status, and is a must even if you have the first edition.

The book can be purchased online at the Mofga Store (<http://mofgastore.org>) in the near future - stay tuned.





The Need for a Regional Grain Resource

by John Chartier, Aroostook Agricultural Specialist

In the spring 2010 MOFGA newspaper Cheryl Wixson stated in her Maine Local Twenty article "Although Maine has enough land to produce grains for its citizens, production is currently limited."

Really? Is there enough land? Is there a way to handle and process grains? Can we grow all our grains here in Maine? With MOFGA's support I have spent much of the past six months working to move this project forward. Work has included farm consultations about land use, as well as hosting grower information meetings with Organic Valley to support feed grain production for our organic dairies. There are growers currently increasing their acres in organic grains and there are growers considering the opportunity. Part of my work is reassuring everyone involved that, yes, we do have the land and, yes, we can grow and process grains in Maine.

The opportunity is real. As people better understand our food system and pay more attention to taste and quality, the demand for locally sourced, organic grains grows. Recently I spoke with Amber Lambke about some of exciting things that are happening at the Somerset Grist Mill. She working with buyers who will further increase demand for more acres of organic

grain. Matt and Linda Williams at Aurora Mills have been successful with both their grain farming operation and their mill, which only mills organic, Maine-grown grains.

As the capacity to get grain to market for human consumption has been growing, Maine Organic Milling has been developing its feed lines to support the organic livestock sector. Several microbreweries have developed or are working on brews based on Aroostook organic barley. Farmers have the opportunity to market their grains where they bring the highest price. With the current and projected tight worldwide grain supplies I think we are on the right track to work toward having our feed, bread, and brew produced close to home. Gears are turning – I'll keep you posted.



New Project Beginning: Reducing Tillage

by Katy Green, Organic Transitions Coordinator

MOFGA, with assistance provided by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), is beginning a new project focused on reducing tillage on organic farms throughout the state. The project will draw attention to innovative soil health building practices through a variety of workshops and on-farm field days. A major component will be information sharing focused on reduced tillage techniques that show promise for application in Maine's climate in addition to purchasing a piece of reduced tillage equipment that will be added to our Shared Use Farm Equipment pool. This addition of equipment will allow growers to trial a reduced tillage technique before making the investment in purchasing the equipment. We'd like your feedback on what that equipment should be. If you're interested in the project please fill out the enclosed survey. *(Please see the survey on the last page).*

The first component of the project coordinated as part of this grant was a session focused on Ridge Tillage at the 2012 Farmer to Farmer Conference. We had good attendance and great conversation in this session. The presentations given by speakers Nicolas Lindholm of Hackmatack Farm in Penobscot and Brian Caldwell of Cornell Cooperative Extension can be found in the Reduced Tillage folder on mofga.net. MOFGA.net is a free service for growers to share experiences and questions and we expect to disseminate a great deal of information about this project through that forum. If you have experience with reduced tillage or questions about techniques I encourage you to post them there or contact me at the MOFGA office. We hope this project will be the beginning of a long and vibrant conversation about tillage on organic farms and how we can best manage our soil. If you have suggestions for topics related to soil health or practices that you'd like more information about, please pass them along. We'd like to make this process a success by engaging as many organic farms from around the state as possible.



MCS 2012 USDA Audit

by Mary Yurlina, Certification Services Director

MCS is audited every 2.5 years. This past June, we spent five days with two USDA auditors. Mid-week, one of their supervisors arrived to observe the process. This was MCS's fourth USDA audit for which we were billed over \$16K, making it our most expensive. During their week with us, the auditors randomly selected client files to review. They observed us conduct three annual inspections with MOFGA-certified producers, covering all the scopes that we are accredited to certify (crops, livestock, wild crops, processing). If you were one of the producers chosen for this—THANK YOU! —we appreciate your cooperation and we know it was stressful with all those extra officials present. MCS inspectors also deserve a round of applause.

The auditors and MCS staff discussed how MCS evaluates labels, how we review material inputs, and how we generate organic certificates. They checked our resumes, conflict of interest declarations and annual evaluations, among many other documents. We ended the week with an exit interview in which all seven MCS staff, the two auditors, and the supervisor from USDA participated.

Here are the things we need to improve...

We need to make sure that Organic System Plans are complete before an inspection. Inspectors cannot be asked to fill in gaps in producer's plans. We have been making progress toward making sure that organic system plans (OSP's) are complete and have no significant gaps. Certification Specialists (Jacomijn Gardei, Katie Webb, Joan Cheetham, and Kate Newkirk) contact many producers during the course of the year by email, phone, or letter in order to clarify activities and gather missing information. While we think that inspectors can resolve some small OSP gaps, they, according to the NOP, are not the appropriate way to gather new information. Therefore, inspectors need to receive OSP's that are complete.

Each facility address must have its own organic certificate. This was a new interpretation of the regulation for us, but easy enough to address. We have about ten producers who have additional facilities that are distinct from their farm or flagship facility. They will be receiving an organic certificate for each location.

Organic certificates must be issued for the facility location—and not for a mailing address. This is another easy one to resolve. The organic certificates we issue now prominently display the organic production location, with the mailing address less prominently displayed.

Organic product labels need better scrutiny. The NOP is fussy about labels; therefore we need to be fussier. If you use the USDA Organic Logo you must not modify it. If you choose to use the black and white version as a transparent logo, then you must make sure that the color that shows through the logo is the same as the background color. Otherwise, you are changing the logo color, which is prohibited. Secondly, the label statement "Certified Organic by MOFGA" (or similar phrase) must appear beneath your farm name or contact information. The idea is that consumers have a standard place to look for this information. We have come a long way on labels, and most comply with the rule. Please remember to have an MCS staff person to approve your labels before you print them.

We need to write more non-compliance notices. While reviewing client files, there were a few instances where the auditors wondered why we had not issued a non-compliance notice for what appeared to be non-conformity with the organic rule, as reported by an inspector, or as noted in correspondence. We have maintained an elevated threshold for deployment of the official notice of non-compliance, which is the first step in the NOP adverse action process, opting to try to work with producers on issues first. Sometimes this approach has not worked as well as we hoped and compliance issues remain unresolved. Records and documentation are good examples of regulatory requirements that are difficult for some producers and which do not always get addressed in a timely fashion. Crop rotation and winter outdoor access for livestock are other areas where issues can remain even though we have requested that they be addressed. To resolve our non-compliance in this area, we will be issuing more non-compliance notices to producers based on the information in inspection reports and farm plans. We will also be taking a closer look at "continuing improvement points"; if no progress is evident after a reasonable length of time, then a non-compliance notice will be issued.

(Continued on Pg 11)



National Organic News

by Dave Colson, Ag Services Director

The National Organic Coalition

The National Organic Coalition (NOC) is a national alliance of organizations working to provide a "Washington voice" for farmers, sustainable agriculture organizations, consumers and others involved in organic agriculture. Started ten years ago, the members include farm organizations (MOFGA was a founding member) as well as environmental groups and cooperative retailers. NOC provides members with monthly updates on farm legislation and the National Organic Program (NOP) and works to coordinate strategies. In June of this year I attended a NOC meeting during which members met with House and Senate Ag Committee members to lobby for portions of the farm bill important to the organic community. In October the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) met in Rhode Island. At this meeting NOC arranged for an open meeting of interested groups, supported testimony to the NOSB and coordinated involvement in ongoing discussions over projects and processes under NOSB review. The advantage for MOFGA in working with this Coalition is both administrative, as NOC provides the framework for meetings, but also gives us a forum and voice, which would not be as strong alone. The next NOC meeting will be held in DC in January and there will be a NOC gathering at the next NOSB meeting in Portland, Oregon in the spring.

National Organic Standards Board Meeting

In October, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), advisory body to the USDA's National Organic Program, met in Rhode Island. The discussion regarding inclusion of biodegradable bio-based mulch film on the national list is of particular interest to crop farmers. The result was that these biodegradable plastics (such as BioTelo) will undergo a product review based on specific criteria. So, the good news is that these mulch films, that many in MOFGA and elsewhere have advocated using, have taken a step closer to approval. However, don't plan on using these products any time soon, as the NOP still needs to work out a review process and the companies involved will have to apply for approval. In other words, BioTelo or any other plastic must still be removed at the end of the season and cannot be incorporated into the soil.

Additional guidance from the NOSB on biodegradable mulch is expected some time in 2013.

The 2012 Farm Bill

The Farm Bill is the U.S. government's primary agricultural and food policy tool. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation that is renewed about every five years.

In June, the Senate passed their version of the bill, which MOFGA and NOC generally supported, but the House version was held up by Republican leadership. The presidential election stalled further work and currently House Republicans are waiting for 'fiscal cliff' negotiations to inform their approach to the bill. The debate will center on the level of funding for food stamps and crop subsidies, the two biggest expenditures in the current (2008) bill. Other significant expenditures are for crop insurance and conservation. The Senate version cuts \$23 billion in spending from 2012 levels. The precise target for farm spending cuts may be determined as part of high-level deal making between the White House and Congress. The White House has suggested cuts of \$32 billion, including a reduction in crop insurance. The federal cost share for organic grower certification fees appears safe, at least for Maine and a few other states.

Dave Colson is MOFGA's Agricultural Services Director. He can be reached at dcolson@mofga.org.



Livestock Enterprise Budgets: Running Your Farm's Numbers

by Diane Schivera, Organic Livestock Specialist

We all know how important it is to “know your numbers”. We need to farm in a sustainable fashion, not just environmentally but also economically. Enterprise budgets are one way to reveal the economics of your farm. These budgets allow you to isolate required input costs to operate one portion of your farm and the income being generated from that enterprise. For example, if you have a broiler and egg operation, you might use some of the same facilities and equipment for each operation. But maybe one is paying you a living wage while the other is not. Running an enterprise budget will help you sort this information out. These budgets are available on the internet as downloadable Excel spreadsheets and are constructed to do all the calculations. Plug in the values collected from your operation and *voila* - the answers are revealed!

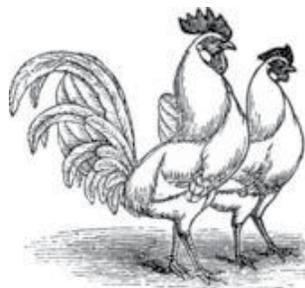
As you use these files you can begin to change numbers around that would reflect changes you make in your management. For example, how much do you need to charge for eggs if you were to change your labor value (which you should charge for) from \$8 to \$10/hour?

I have a spreadsheet that will calculate the number of hens you need for the amount (dozens) of eggs you want to sell. It takes into account the laying percentage of the flock. When you add the inputs, it calculates the break-even cost for your eggs. Contact me and I will forward it along.

A Break Even Poultry Calculator

Adam A. Hady from the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension has created a break-even poultry calculator with tabs for both layers and meat birds. It is available at <http://richland.uwex.edu/agriculture/poultry-and-rabbits/>.

On the University of Kentucky web site, there are 14 livestock budgets available for producers to use. They are: Cow/Calf Spring, Cow/Calf Fall, Replacement Heifer, Steer Backgrounding, Summer grazing, Hog Farrow-Finish, Hog Finishing, Meat Goat-Low Intensity, Meat Goat-Medium Intensity, Meat Goat-High Intensity, Sheep-Fall Lambing, Sheep-Early Winter Lambing, Sheep-Late Winter Lambing and



Lamb Finishing. http://www.uky.edu/Ag/AgEcon/pubs/software/budgets_livestock.html.

Many other universities also have spread sheets on their websites. Just be aware that these files make assumptions about feed and energy

use that can vary by climate.

Holistic Management International (HMI) is an organization whose mission is educating folks to use a personal Holistic goal as the basis for decision-making. See the Mofga calendar for information on Beginning Women Farmer classes offered by WAgN (Womens' Agricultural Network) based on HMI, which start in January. HMI also has spreadsheets for sorting out the economics of pasture management: <http://holisticmanagement.org/free-downloads/>.

Have fun marveling at the abilities of these files as you begin to see what is paying on your farm!

Diane Schivera is MOFGA's Organic Livestock Specialist; she can be reached at dianes@mofga.org.





Financing your Farm Project in 2013

by Melissa White Pillsbury, Organic Marketing Coordinator

As your fall CSA winds down, your livestock head for processing, and your early spring crops get planted, your thoughts may turn to how to finance the project that will help you reduce your workload next year or increase your output. We want to bring your attention to three financing options – two with deadlines in January.

First, **MOFGA's Organic Farmer Loan Fund** makes loans in the range of \$5,000 to \$20,000 to MOFGA-certified farmers or transitioning farmers for working capital or investments in equipment or infrastructure. MOFGA is particularly interested in lending to organic farmers who need to establish a credit history so that they may borrow from traditional sources in the future. We encourage all applicants to inquiry about funding availability before putting together an application. For more information, call 207-568-4142, send an email to loanfund@mofga.org or visit our website: <http://www.mofga.org/Programs/OrganicFarmerLoanFund>.

Coastal Enterprises, Inc.'s Sustainable Agriculture Fund offers a wide range of financing options, from microloans of \$5,000 to investments up to and beyond \$500,000 for farm mortgages, operations, equipment, buildings and supplies, and other working capital needs. Rates are fixed, starting at 5%, and repayment is matched to cash flow. Applications are accepted at any time. In addition to loan capital, free business planning counseling and lending technical assistance is available. For more information call Gray Harris at 207-882-5135 or send an email to gharris@ceimaine.org.

No Small Potatoes Investment Club makes loans of up to \$5,000 with three year terms and 5% interest for equipment or special projects that help a farm operate more efficiently and/or support growth. Several farmers have applied for both a MOFGA loan and a No Small Potatoes Loan at the same time to finance a \$25,000 project. The next round of NSP applications are due on Friday, January 25th, and decisions will be made in mid-March. See www.slowmoneymaine.org/investment-club/ to download an application or e-mail walkermadore@myfairpoint.net to get more information.

A new investment club, called **Maine Organic Lenders**, is starting up in the midcoast. They will lend to organic farms throughout Maine, and have a special interest in Knox, Waldo and Lincoln counties. They will make loans up to \$25,000 and will consider flexible terms. Applications will be accepted at any time. Please contact Deb Chapman at cci@midcoast.com for more information.



Make sure your PRODUCTS and MARKETS info is up to date!

Did you know that the information in your renewal paperwork that lists your products and where you sell them is an excellent- FREE- marketing tool for your farm?

The products and markets information appears in several MOFGA publications: the Organic Maine! Directory of MOFGA Certified Farms, Foods and Products is published annually and distributed to individuals and businesses statewide; MOFGA.net and mofgacertification.org contain online searchable directories of MCS clients, your products, and where to buy them.

In addition, MOFGA staff use the info contained in these directories to direct inquiries we receive regularly from families and businesses wanting to buy MOFGA certified organic products, so this is the best tool we have to make the right recommendations for folks and build your market!

Please make sure your PRODUCTS and MARKETS information is accurate and complete!



Farm Healthier!

by Lani Carlson, Maine AgrAbility Project Coordinator

There are an estimated 5,700 farmers and farm workers in Maine whose work is impacted by a health condition or disability. There are things you can do to farm with less pain and greater productivity!

Maine AgrAbility is a statewide program that works to help farmers, farm workers, and farm family members with injuries, chronic health conditions, and disabilities continue to farm successfully. The Maine AgrAbility program is available to make farming easier and safer by using the collaborative efforts of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Goodwill Industries of Northern New England and Alpha One. Our free services include:

- **Farm visits to assess your specific situation and needs;**
- **Suggestions about adapting worksites, tools and equipment;**
- **Connections to local service providers and small business advisors; and**
- **Connections to possible funding sources.**

Whether you're dealing with arthritis, hearing loss, heart disease, paralysis, amputation, or any other health condition, we have resources, tools, and connections that can make your work easier and more productive. Health conditions or injuries that hinder your ability to farm do not need to be the result of farming.

AgrAbility is made possible through a grant from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). AgrAbility funding was originally developed in 1990, out of concerns about the hazardous and physically demanding nature of farming. Maine is part a national effort and joins 24 other states in offering AgrAbility programming.

In addition to working directly with farmers, we also work with rural agriculture, health care, and rehabilitation professionals to provide education and information about supporting farmers with a disability. If you are interested in further education on the topic of farming with a disability, a farm visit, or simply want to know more about Maine AgrAbility, please contact us anytime.

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Maine AgrAbility: www.umaine.edu/agrability
National AgrAbility: www.agrability.org



2013 Growers Meetings Planned

Sunday - Jan 20th - Aroostook (Northern Girl Hosting)

Thursday - Jan 31st - Washington County - Cobscook Bay Learning Center, Lubec

Thursday - Feb 7th - Central Maine - Augusta or environs

Details to come, please check the Certification and Mofga websites: www.mofgacertification.org, www.mofag.org



News...

2013 Beginning Women Farmers Class: Registration deadline extended

To accommodate more farmers, the 2013 Beginning Women Farmers Class will begin on January 6, 2012!

Sponsored by the Maine Women's Agricultural Network, and funded by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the Beginning Women Farmers program draws on the work of Allen Savory and others to help women farmers to be successful.

This innovative program instructs participants on using a holistic approach to decision making on their farms. Participants will meet for ten sessions on topics that include goal setting, financial, business, and marketing planning, land and infrastructure planning, soil fertility, and planned grazing.

Participants are provided with a mentor and are connected with a network of other beginning women farmers throughout Maine and the entire Northeast for additional support. Two of the classes take place on local farms.

Classes will be held in Fairfield, Maine, on Sundays from 9 – 4. Cost for all sessions is \$150.00 - \$500.00, based on a sliding scale. *Scholarships are available.*

Classes are held twice a month through June 2nd. For more information, and to request an application, contact: Gail Chase - gchase@kvcog.org
207 453-4258 ext. 218

Reigi II, aka Eco II, two row pto weeder for sale, purchased 2003, kept under cover, new v-belts, modified with front toolbar with chisels, with extra fingers. \$4200 Contact: Jason @ Checkerberry Farm - 207-277-3114.

Would you like to sell to Common Ground Country Fair food vendors?

Eating at the Common Ground Country Fair is a unique experience. Our food vendors and staff work hard to provide fairgoers with food made with Maine, Certified Organic ingredients.

In December, prospective food vendors for the Common Ground Country Fair begin sourcing ingredients for the coming year. MOFGA.net is a useful tool for facilitating these connections.

On the forums webpage, under the Farming & Gardening heading, there is a "Marketing Opportunities for Maine Farmers" bulletin board where growers can post availability and food vendors can post needed ingredients. Growers and food vendors can use this forum to find Maine, Certified Organic ingredients. If you need help setting up a profile on mofga.net please contact Melissa at MOFGA via 207-568-4142 or melissa@mofga.org. If you have questions regarding food vending please contact April or Colleen at commongroundfoodarea@mofga.org.

Is your Barn in Need of More Cats?

The Cat Coalition of Western Maine is a group working to better the lives of homeless felines in our community through programs which:

- Trap homeless cats
- Spay/Neuter homeless cats
- Home free-roaming cats
- Place feral cats in barns
- Educate on the benefits of spaying and neutering pets

If your barn is in need of more cats or you are having a problem with feral cats, please contact them:

[Facebook.com/CatCoalitionofWesternMaine](https://www.facebook.com/CatCoalitionofWesternMaine), or call
207-647-5220, email: catcoalitionofwesternmaine@yahoo.com.





MCS 2012 USDA Audit

Continued from Pg 5)

Inspectors must not use commanding language in their inspection reports. The inspector's role is to verify OSP's. They do this by visiting farms and facilities, making observations, asking questions, and reviewing records and documents. They do an exit interview with the producer in which they list the potential compliance issues. Finally, they complete a report, which is sent to the certifier. It is up to the certifier to send a copy of the report to the producer with a letter about the findings and compliance issues. Sometimes the communication will be in the form of a non-compliance notice. As we noted in the preceding section, we will be sending more non-compliance notices in 2013.

Inspectors must not tell producers what to do or how to do it. So, if an inspector observes that a producer lacks field activity records, the inspector needs to present the issue in manner like this: "Records documenting field activities such as manure application and harvesting do not exist and therefore verifying whether or not the manure waiting period was met for potatoes could not be done NOP 205.103; 205.203)." The inspector should not be writing, "The farmer needs to get a calendar for recording field activities." It's not bad advice, but the inspector is not there to advise clients and there is more than one way to solve this lack of documentation.

We need more staff time devoted to consistency and quality control. We try to get a lot done in a year. In addition to the routine work of plan reviews and inspections we take on special projects, like creating a custom web published database for renewing farm plans on line. We also pitch in with projects and programs at MOFGA. We are not always consistent and mistakes are made. The audit made it clear that we need to set aside time to sample and review our routine work. We need to make sure that seven staff and a dozen inspectors are conducting organic certification business within an acceptable range of individual variation. Are we handling the same issue with different clients the same way? Are all our inspectors thorough in their reporting? We need more in-person communication sessions between staff and inspectors. We also need to commit time for catching errors in our database. This can be done with regularly scheduled queries. All of this quality control is do-able; it just takes time. We are in the midst of a reorganization to improve programmatic consistency, information quality, and service performance. As always, feedback from producers is useful and welcome.



2013 calendar

Events & Training

Jan

6-Celebratory Gathering in Memory of

Russell Libby. Sunday, 2 pm to 4 pm, Exhibition Hall, MOFGA's Common Ground Education Center, Unity. Pot-luck refreshments served at 3 pm. Information: Call 207-568-4142.



8 to 10 - Maine Agricultural Trades Show, Augusta Civic Center. Free admission. **Jan 8 - "MOFGA Day" & MOFGA Membership Annual Meeting** (schedule on pg. 12).

15 - deadline to apply for MOFGA Journey person program. FMI: www.mofga.org, under Programs tab, click on "Jour

Feb

7 - Central Maine Growers Meeting - Augusta environs.

Mar

TBA - MOFGA's Spring Growth Conference, MOFGA's Common Ground Education Center, Unity.



1 to 3 - Meet Your Farmers and Fishermen: a celebration of community supported agriculture and fisheries, locations state-wide. FMI: www.mofga.org/Events/Community-SupportedAgricultureFair/tabid/876/Default.aspx, melissa@mofga.org, 207-568-4142

21 and 28 - Organic Farming: Principles and Practices, by Eric Sideman, with other farmers and agricultural services staff from MOFGA; for those wanting to learn the reasons behind organic practices (soil, pest and weed management), and how to decide the best practice in particular situations. Maine Audubon Society complex, Falmouth. Registration info and fees at mofga.org.



2013 Maine Agricultural Trades Show

January 8, 2013 is "MOFGA Day" - a full day of presentations and workshops on organic production in Maine - *all free!*

Time	Location	Presentation/Workshop
9:10 am	Cumberland	Organic Certification Information Session - If you market and sell products as ORGANIC, chances are good you need to need to be certified by a USDA-accredited certifier to comply with USDA regulations. MOFGA Certification Services Staff will provide an overview of organic production practices, including processing. Information on how to become certified organic will also be presented. Organic product labels collected from stores will be available for demonstration and discussion. Mary Yurlina, MOFGA Certification Services Director
9:10 am	Piscataquis/Sagadahoc	Apples for the Home - Join David Buchanan, author of Taste, Memory: Forgotten Foods, Lost Flavors, and Why They Matter, as he explains his explorations for varieties suitable for the backyard, while building a home collection of apples for fresh eating, winter storage and apple cider.
10:10 am	Piscataquis/Sagadahoc	Crop Rotation - One of the challenges faced by new farmers or those transitioning older land into organic production is setting up crop rotations and using cover crops effectively. Yet, incorporating these soil health-building practices is essential to successful organic farming in the long-term. Join MOFGA's Agricultural Services Staff for a presentation on strategies for bringing old land into production and creating a crop rotation that cycles cropland out of vegetable production and into green manures.
10:10 am	Cumberland	Adventures in Marketing - A chance to sit down with your peers and discuss what worked this year, what didn't, and share ideas and ask questions as you refine your marketing plan for 2013. Roundtable discussion facilitated by MOFGA Organic Marketing Coordinator Melissa White Pillsbury.
11:10 am	Cumberland	Farming and Ergonomics: Make simple changes in the way you work and stay injury- and pain-free. AgrAbility Specialist, Goodwill Workforce Solutions, Ellen Gibson
11:10 am	Piscataquis/Sagadahoc	Farm Labor: What you Need to Know - Farm labor management is a crucial but undervalued part of any intensive agricultural operation, and a potential stumbling block for successfully increasing your scale. Lisa has 15 years of experience managing all sorts of farm labor, from employees to apprentices. She'll take a broad view of the many important issues involved in being a boss and a mentor - from legal, tax, and insurance considerations to effective recruitment strategies; to interpersonal relationships and communication. There will also be plenty of time for discussion.
1:30 pm	Piscataquis/Sagadahoc	MOFGA Annual Meeting - Hear from MOFGA Staff, Board Members and Committee Chairs regarding the organization's activities and accomplishments over the past year. Elect MOFGA's Board of Directors for the coming year and network with members.
3:00 pm	Cumberland	Organic Sheep and Goat Production Producers Roundtable - Join us for a session with Certified Organic producers to learn about organic certification, opportunities to transition to organic with NRCS and join in a discussion about how MOFGA's technical services can help you with production challenges.
3:00 pm	Piscataquis/Sagadahoc	Season Recap - Winters are not as cold as they used to be. Springs are wetter than they once were. Summers are drier than in the past. Whatever the reason, 2012 sure had some serious pest problems. Come see pictures and discuss preparation and possible solutions for next season discussion led by MOFGA's Organic Crop Specialist, Eric Sideman.



Shared Use Farm Equipment Survey

MOFGA, with support provided by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) is adding a piece of equipment to the Shared Use Farm Equipment pool administered by Maine Farmland Trust. Items currently in the pool are a seedbed cultivator, plastic mulch layer and a two-shank sub-soiler. We are looking to add a piece of reduced tillage equipment to the available pool. We'd like your feedback on what the equipment should be!

Please fill out this short survey and let us know what you think.

Equipment Options: Which are your top two choices?

Zone Builder

Spader

Strip Tiller

Roller-Crimper

Ridge Tiller

Other: _____

- Check this box if you are currently using only a rototiller or rotovator for ground prep.

- Check this box if you would use a two bottom plow if one was available from this pool rather than your rototiller or rotovator.

How much horsepower do you have?

Draft animals only

<20

20-40

40+

How many years have you been farming?

<10

10-20

>20

How likely are you to participate in this pool?

Not at all

Maybe

Likely

Definitely!

Do you have suggestions on how to make this equipment sharing pool more useful? Please feel free to use the back of this sheet.

Return to: Katy Green, MOFGA, PO Box 170 Unity, ME 04988

Fax: (207) 568-4141