Fall Cover Crops
Dave Colson, Ag Services Director

It may be August by the calendar, but fall is just around the corner and so it’s time to consider potential fall cover crops. Cover crops improve soil tilth and prevent soil nutrient loss to leaching or erosion. While cover crops like rye and oats can be seeded late into the fall, for maximum effect an August seeding may be beneficial. In trials done by Eric Side- man, a mid-August planting date for winter rye showed the best result for soil protection and crop growth. On the other hand, I have found that a late August planting of oats provides adequate cover and the amount of growth can be easily incorporated in the spring before planting. The main considerations in choosing a fall cover crop are: what are the goals for the cover crop and what is the intended use of the area next season?

In general, I like to think of my farm in terms of blocks or management units. These can either be uniform (1000 square feet, an acre or ten acres) or correspond to your existing fields. When I consider a potential crop block for next year I make a mental list of the positive and negative aspects of that land. This includes important factors such as:

• **Seasonal wetness** - in a wet spring is the field accessible, not only to plant commercial crops but to mow or till in the cover crop? This year, for example, it was too wet in June to mow and till winter rye, which then translated to a large amount of plant material on the surface, which was challenging to incorporate. Or, does the field dry out early and give an opportunity for early cover crop incorporation and planting?

• **Weed pressure** - was prior weed control in this field appropriate for the crop planned for next season, or do I need an opportunity to diminish the weed seed bank? Am I interested in planting a less aggressive crop like carrots or onions or will a fast growing crop like green beans allow me to utilize an area before the weeds can go to seed.

• **Fertility** - how does the management and fertility history of the field affect what I need to plant for the fall and for next season’s crops? For example, what is the soil organic matter level and could the soil benefit from a legume cover crop?

There are other aspects to consider, but I find having a number of planting blocks gives me more options for deciding what to plant for a fall cover crop. If an area is not needed for commercial production next year or if I can delay planting the crop until after the overwintering cover crop has been incorporated, I will utilize a winter rye perhaps mixed with vetch. Ideally I would seed this in mid-August and wait to incorporate the planting until mid to late June, being careful not to let the crop go to seed. On the other hand, if a block will be needed for an early spring crop or if I’m not sure how I will use the block next year, I may opt for a planting of oats that will be easy to incorporate in the spring. In these cases I may choose (Continued on Pg 2)
Fall Cover Crops
(Continued from Pg 1)

to add a field pea to the oats, as it will winter kill as well. Whether the nitrogen fixed by the peas will be available in the spring is up for debate, but the resulting diversity of roots and leaves does appear to have a beneficial effect.

As for cover crop seeding methods, I have had good success with broadcasting, either with a spinner or a drop spreader and covering the seed with a light raking for small areas or with a light tillage such as a three point hitch disc. Finally, when I order my cover crop seed I usually purchase extra oats to seed into areas that open up later in the fall, or to over-seed into growing crops to hold the soil and retain nutrients over the winter.

Field clean up and cover cropping may be the last thing we want to think about in this busy season, but a little planning can go along way in improving conditions for next year’s crops.

The Certification Program is delighted to have Certified Organic by MOFGA banners to give to all of our clients. Every producers gets one. We have some extras to offer for sale at $15/each. Email certification@mofga.org if you are interested in buying additional banners. They were printed at Liberty Graphics in Liberty ME on 100% organic cotton canvas. We hope to see them at farm stands and at farmers markets throughout Maine. Send us photos of your banner in action. We’d love to use pictures from producers on the web and in print publications.

We also just go our audit report from USDA NOP. That’s right, we get inspected too. And we get non-compliances. Next issue of Organic Sprout, we’ll devote space to discussing the audit findings and the changes that they mean for the program.

It’s a busy time of year. We hope to see you all at the Fair in a couple of weeks!

Mary Yurlina, MCS Director
Many homesteaders and farmers choose to preserve surplus product during the summer months to enjoy during the winter. Canning, a process involving placing foods in jars and heating them to a temperature that destroys the microorganisms that cause foods to spoil, is an excellent, shelf-stable, low energy method to preserve food. However, there are certain guidelines for preparation, packing and processing to achieve a wholesome, safe, canned food product.

The major cause of food spoilage is microbial growth, thus canning is a food preservation method that uses heat to destroy these microorganisms. The types of microorganisms that cause spoilage in foods are bacteria, yeasts and molds. They can contaminate the food through air, soil, and water or via the person handling the food. Temperature, amount of water, amount of acid in the food, and the presence of oxygen affect the growth of these microorganisms.

While the canning process destroys most potentially harmful microorganisms, *Clostridium botulinum*, which causes the often-fatal disease botulism, is able to grow without oxygen, and thrives where there is low acid available. For this reason, foods are divided into 2 groups for canning based on the amount of acid they contain. In food preservation, a food with a pH of 4.6 or lower is considered to be high acid, while one with a pH higher than 4.6 is a low-acid foods.

Directions for proper canning have been developed on the basis of low-and-high-acid foods. Because microorganisms are easily destroyed by heat when acid is present, high-acid foods may be processed in a boiling water bath at a temperature of 212 degrees. High acid foods include fruits and fruit juices, jams, jellies and preserves, pickles and pickled products.

Temperatures higher than 212 degrees are required to destroy the spores of *Clostridium botulinum* in low-acid foods, which include tomato sauces, vegetables, meats, fish, poultry and game. To reach a temperature higher than 212 degrees, it is necessary to use a pressure canner and have the product reach a temperature of at least 240 degrees.

The only safe way to can food at home is to match the food product with the safe canning procedure, use a tested recipe (USDA), and follow recommended procedures. More information about these procedures can be obtained from your local cooperative extension service.

Here are some guidelines:

1. Do not hot fill jars and seal without further heat processing.
2. Do not use the oven to can. Use appropriate kettles.
3. Do not use the dishwasher or microwave to can. Temperatures will be uneven and not hot enough.
4. Steam canners are not recommended
5. Do not use chemicals or preserving powders as a substitute for heat treatments.
6. Do not take shortcuts. Use only tested, currently approved methods.
7. Do not use jars, cans or lids not manufactured for canning. They will not withstand the heat treatment.
8. Do not use overripe foods or foods with signs of spoilage.
9. Do not over pack foods. Be sure to leave the recommended headspace when jars are filled. This will ensure that the proper vacuum is created.

Jams, jellies, pickles and relishes that are high acid foods and can be safely processed in a boiling water bath may be produced for resale in a kitchen that is licensed by the Department of Agriculture with a home-food-processor license. MOFGA offers workshops on kitchen licensing; the next one is December 5, 2012.

Questions concerning processing value-added products may be directed to Cheryl Wixson at Cheryl@mofga.org, or 207-947-0892.
National List Changes to Pectin and Yeast May Affect Your Organic Products

On June 6, 2012 the USDA-NOP published this year’s rules pertaining to the 2012 Sunset Review of substances on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. Each year a subset of substances on the National List are reviewed by the NOSB and recommendations are forwarded to the Secretary of Agriculture.

This year there were changes to 3 substances that will affect MCS certified organic processors and which become effective on October 21, 2012. These substances are:

205.605(b) Pectin (low-methoxy) 
Will be removed from the National List

205.606 Pectin (high-methoxy) 
Will be changed to:
Pectin (non-amidated forms only).

205.605(a) Yeast  
[nonsynthetic growth on petrochemical substrate and sulfite waste liquor is prohibited (Autolysate; Bakers; Brewers: Nutritional; and Smoked – nonsynthetic smoke flavoring process must be documented.] 
Will be changed to:
Yeast [When used as food or a fermentation agent in products labeled as “organic,” yeast must be organic if its end use is for human consumption; non-organic yeast may be used when organic yeast is not commercially available. Growth on petrochemical substrate and sulfite waste liquor is prohibited. For smoked yeast, nonsynthetic smoke flavoring process must be documented.]

Changes to the Status of Pectin

Pectins are classified based on their ratio of esterified to non-esterified galacturonic acid; high-ester pectin is referred to as high methoxy while low-ester pectins are referred to as low methoxy pectins. High methoxy pectin is used when there is a high amount of sugar in the product. Low methoxy pectin is used in conjunction with a calcium product when there is a low amount of sugar in the product.

Amidated pectin is a modified form of pectin where some of the galacturonic acid is converted using ammonia to carboxylic acid amide. Amidated pectins are low-methoxy pectins which have more sites available for calcium to be adsorbed and which are more tolerant to variations in the calcium concentrations used in a product. Non-amidated low-methoxy pectin requires a more exact concentration of calcium to pectin ratio.

Previously the National List recognized high methoxy pectin as an agricultural ingredient on 205.606 while it recognized low methoxy pectin as a synthetic on 205.605(b). This previous version of the rule thus allowed the synthetic amidated low methoxy pectin.

The current rule change doesn’t mean you can’t use a low-methoxy pectin - you just can’t use the synthetic amidated form.

We have talked with the supplier of the most commonly used form of low-methoxy pectin by our processors and unfortunately found out that their current product is an amidated form of low-methoxy pectin.

Consequences of Changes to Pectin

FOR AN ORGANIC LABEL - As a result of this change you will be required to show that you have attempted to source an organic form of pectin before using any pectin. You may not use an amidated low-methoxy pectin. If you do find a source of organic pectin you will need to revise the ingredient statement on your label to indicate “… organic pectin …” and have the label approved by MCS.

FOR A “Made With Organic …” LABEL – you may use an amidated low-methoxy pectin but you must have new labels approved by MCS.

This change initially went into effect on June 27, 2012. However, the USDA-NOP has granted an extension until October 21, 2012 in order to allow for product reformulation. (Cont’d on Pg 5)
National List Changes to Pectin and Yeast
(Continued from Pg 4)

Consequences to Changes to Yeast

Yeast is now required to be “organic” if it is used in products intended for human consumption. You may still use a non-organic source of yeast but you must document that organic yeast is not commercially available. In addition, the old annotation still stands if using non-organic yeast, therefore you will need to have your source sign a “Verification of National List Annotation” form that says the yeast was not grown on petrochemical substrate or sulfite waste liquor and for smoked yeast that a non-synthetic smoke flavoring process is documented.

Questions concerning the National List changes can be directed to Kate Newkirk, Assoc. Director of Processing, (207) 568-4142, knewkirk@mofga.org.

Questions concerning reformulation of your products can be directed to Cheryl Wixson with Ag Services staff, cheryl@mofga.org.

Farmer-Related Grant Opportunities

- SARE Partnership Grant – For cooperative projects led by agricultural service providers to conduct on-farm demonstrations, research or marketing projects with farmers as active cooperators. Deadline: November 1, 2012 (http://www.nesare.org/Grants/Get-a-Grant/Partnership-Grant)

- SARE Sustainable Community Grant – For project addressing issues such as marketing, enterprise development and value-added product development. Must be affiliated with Cooperative Extension, a municipality or other institutional entity. Deadline November 15, 2012 (http://www.nesare.org/Grants/Get-a-Grant/Sustainable-Community-Grant)

- SARE Farmer Grant – For commercial farmers looking to test new ideas through field trials, on-farm demonstrations or other techniques. Must involve a technical service provider and be transferable to other farmers. Deadline: November 27, 2012 (http://www.nesare.org/Grants/Get-a-Grant/Farmer-Grant)

Congratulations MOFGA Farmers!

400+ farmers and processors have passed MOFGA’s rigorous certification standards assuring the highest quality organic food.

Celebrate this achievement by purchasing certified organic food.
AROOSTOOK COUNTY UPDATE

A few weeks ago I traveled south to Augusta and as I drove through the “100 mile wilderness” it dawned on me again what is unique about Aroostook: the land (well and potato wrestling, but that is for another story). This is an update on projects that have been gaining momentum and are key infrastructural pieces needed to help solve the “Maine feeding Maine” puzzle.

A group of producers led by Woodland organic beef producer Stan Maynard and meat cutter Troy Haines have continued to push for a USDA/MOFGA inspected facility in Aroostook. They have developed a business plan and started to approach potential investors to help get financing in place. A part of this plan is to develop 100 new farms utilizing 30,000 acres of underutilized land. Close your eyes and picture rolling hillsides with cattle, sheep, and goats.

Another exciting development has been the start-up of Aroostook’s first certified organic veggie processing facility. Northern Girl promises to be a great addition by allowing some of the summer’s bounty to be processed into healthy frozen and ready to cook eats. They are planning to again process at Loring for 2012 and then move after the new building in Van Buren gets completed.

Growing grains is nothing new to the area, but a new effort is being made to expand the feed pool for CROPP Cooperative and Maine Organic Milling (MOM). The increase in concentrate costs is a real concern for organic dairies and this is a way to connect northern Maine grain growers with central Maine dairy producers in a way that can be profitable to both. They have hosted three producer meetings over the course of the year to educate growers on how to bring ground into barley production for this market.

There are several new films that involve the county and its agriculture with one of the notable being “Betting the Farm” which allows viewers to experience first hand what it was like to launch MOO as a Maine milk company. Another exciting note on MOO is that a new dairy is being built near Stockholm. One step closer to a full truck!

As I work on or around these projects every day it is all too easy to become a “new-junkie” and want to throw my hat into working on the hundreds of other amazing ideas that haven’t gotten this far, yet. However at this time I am trying to help out in any way that I can on THESE, NOW, because I believe that getting some of these key pieces in place will help others to see the vision and join us.

John Chartier is MOFGA’s Agricultural Specialist for Aroostook County. He can be reached at jchartier@mofga.org.

PEST Reports...are you getting yours?

MOFGA Organic Crop Specialist Eric Sideman, Ph D., compiles a report every week or two during the heart of the season highlighting problems happening now or likely to show up soon. Eric hears about problems from growers all around the region so please help out and let him know if a big or unusual pest problem is happening in your area. To contact Eric and to sign up to receive the report via email send a request to: esideman@mofga.org or call the office at 568-4142. You can also access current year reports from www.mofgacertification.org, as well as reports for the past 5 years, archived at: http://www.mofga.org/Publications/PestReports/tabid/732/Default.aspx.
MOFGA’s Agricultural Services staff has launched an effort to do more promotion of MOFGA certified farms and processors through the stores that many MCS clients sell to. We are currently working with several prominent outlets to get signage up in the stores telling the stories of the MOFGA Certified Organic farms and processors they buy from.

If you sell your products to a store or other retail establishment that you would like to see do a better job of promoting their support of the MOFGA Certified brand, get in touch (melissa@mofga.org or 207-568-4142) and I’ll follow up with them.

Keep in mind that part of this effort involves collecting several things from you:

1. A personal statement telling why you have chosen to be MOFGA certified organic
2. Photos of the farmer/farm family, the working farm, and your products
3. Your farm/business logo (if applicable)

Thanks for your help in this effort!
News...

Obsoles Pesticide Collection Program for family farms...

Family farms and greenhouses, as well as homeowners, have an opportunity to safely and legally dispose of pesticides that have become caked, frozen or otherwise unusable, including those that are banned in Maine. You must register by Sept 28 in order to participate. Follow the link at: thinkfirstspraylast.org or call Henry Jennings, Maine Board of Pesticides Control executive director, at 287-2731.

Lots of Certified Organic Producers are giving talks at the Fair!

Organic Dairy Farmer Sarah Smith from Skowhegan is giving the Keynote on the Commons on Sunday (11 am). Horsepower Farm and Mandala Farm have livestock demonstrations. Gail Edwards, Deb Soule and Edie Johnston are all giving different talks on herbal medicines. Mark Guzzi, Tom Roberts, Tom Vigue.....the list goes on and on. Check out http://www.mofga.org/TheFair/ScheduleofEvents/tabid/106/Default.aspx/.

MCS Reviewed Livestock Materials List

MOFGA Certification Services has compiled a list of all the livestock production inputs (such as health care products, feed supplements, etc) that we have reviewed and determined to meet the requirements of the organic standards for use in organic livestock production. The list is available in print. If you would like a copy please contact MOFGA Certification Services.

Planting the seed for future generations.

Please consider leaving a gift to MOFGA in your will.

Bequests will help assure the long-term viability of the organization and our many programs - such as training the next generation of farmers.

For more information, please contact MOFGA at 207-568-4142 or www.mofga.org.
2012 calendar

Events & Training

**Sept**

4 – **Organic Tree Fruit and Nursery Production** in a Diversified Small Farm System. Tuesday, 5pm, Five Star Nursery, Brookline Part of MOFGA’s Farm Training Project.

14 - 16 – **GROW (GrassRoots Organizing Workshops) New England Weekend.** Bryant Pond 4-H Camp in Bryant Pond (on Christopher Lake in western Maine). Participants will learn and hone organizing skills, enjoy beautiful surroundings and healthy food, network with old friends and meet new ones with similar interests. Ask for a brochure--register by mail or email. For more information, contact: Jacqui at 284-3358 or jacquio50@yahoo.com; Iggy at 415-4458 or iggy19@riseup.net.

21 - 23 – **Common Ground Country Fair.** MOFGA’s premier event celebrating rural living. Three full days of educational talks and demonstrations, entertainment, delicious Maine-grown, organic food and products from local artisans. Details. To volunteer contact volunteers@mofga.org.

27 to 30 – **Timberframe Class** at Hidden Valley Nature Center, Jefferson. $500 ($450 for HVNC, SWOAM, MOFGA members) includes breakfast, lunch and all materials. Co-sponsored by MOFGA, which offers some scholarships. FMI: 586-6752, gary@hvnc.org or www.hvnc.org.

**Oct**

6 - 8 – **Nose to Tail Pork Processing.** At MOFGA’s Common Ground Education Center in Unity. This workshop covers all aspects of raising, humanely slaughtering, and processing pigs. Registration opens June 1st.

10 - **Women and the Woods.** Day-long workshop at Hidden Valley Nature Center, Jefferson. Co-sponsored by MOFGA. Fee to be established. www.hvnc.org

21 – **Great Maine Apple Day.** At MOFGA’s Common Ground Education Center in Unity. Celebrate the history, tradition, and flavor of Maine apples with MOFGA. Rare and heirloom apple displays, educational talks, as well as apples and apple products for sale.

24 - **Food Day.** Food Day seeks to bring together Americans from all walks of life to push for health, affordable food produced in a sustainable, humane way. www.foodday.org.

24 - **Discussion: Transitioning to Organic Sheep and Goats.** 6 p.m., MOFGA, Unity.

**Nov**

9 - 11 – **Farmer to Farmer Conference.** At Point Lookout in Northport. This is MOFGA’s annual conference for farmers - a great opportunity to talk about what works and what doesn’t while learning new ideas from University faculty, fellow farmers, and others. Registration will open in early August.

10 to 11 – **Maine Harvest Festival.** Bangor Auditorium. www.maineharvestfestival.com/index.php#

15 – **Introduction to Low Impact Forestry.** MOFGA, Unity. LIF principles and practices. Mandatory prerequisite for LIF Level I on Nov. 16 to 18. $75 ($25 for students and apprentices). Register at mofga.org.

16 - 18 – **Low Impact Forestry Level I.** MOFGA, Unity. Draft animal tract and small machinery and hand tools tract. Prerequisite: Intro to LIF (Nov. 15). $125 ($100 for students and apprentices). Register at mofga.org

16 - 17 – **Chainsaw Safety, Level I.** MOFGA, Unity. Two-day workshop on saw mechanics, operation, maintenance, safety and safe felling techniques. $160, includes breakfast and lunch. Registration (at mofga.org) closes on Nov. 1.

16 and 18 – **Chainsaw Safety Level II.** 8 am to 4 pm, MOFGA, Unity. One-day session offered on both Nov. 16 and 18. For those who have taken Level I and have one year of practice. $60, includes breakfast and lunch. Registration (at mofga.org) closes on Nov. 1.

For a full calendar of events please visit www.mofga.org and click on Events.
# How is MOFGA Certification doing?

Earlier this year MCS asked MOFGA certified producers for their input and responses to the certification program. If you haven’t had a chance to complete the survey, please use this one. You may answer all or just some of the questions; all responses are appreciated. **Please mail the survey back to MCS, 210 Crosby Brook Rd., Thorndike, ME 04986.** Answers will be kept confidential.

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<td>1. Why are you certified organic?</td>
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<td>2. What are some things you would like to see changed about the certification process?</td>
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<td>3. With organic certification requirements in mind, how would you describe your ability to keep and manage records?</td>
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<td>4. How has your interaction with MOFGA Certification Services, LLC (MCS) staff (Mary, Jaco, Kate, Katie, Grace, Joan, Jake) been? (Consider phone calls, email, letters....)</td>
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<td>5. How has your interaction with MCS inspectors been? (Staff are sometimes inspectors, and you can consider them in this role. Consider scheduling, how the on-farm visit unfolded in terms of time spent on different aspects of your operation and records).</td>
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<td>6. How has your interaction with MOFGA Ag Services Staff been?</td>
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<td>7. What areas of support could MOFGA or MCS better provide certified growers?</td>
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<td>8. What else is on your mind about organic certification and/or MOFGA certification Services, LLC?</td>
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Thank you so much for taking the time to do this. If you would like to stay anonymous please leave the box below blank, otherwise we would love to know who submitted this survey: