

SPRING 2021

CULTIVATED

THE NORTH AMERICAN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY

IFOAM NORTH AMERICA

**COOPERATIVE
MARKETING
IFOAM - ORGANICS
INTERNATIONAL ED
FOOD JUSTICE**



FREE FOR MEMBERS

SPRING 2021

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THE NORTH AMERICAN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY

Organic is a verb

It's a relationship, not a commodity. It describes a process that re-defines our place on the planet away from the center of things, but caught in the same web with all other life. We are an integrated section of the web, not an individual specie.

Organic begins at home. It examines the place we live in, and adjusts practices as needed in order to do no harm. We can't 'eat away from home' because there is no other 'home' than the place we occupy.

IFOAM's role in the sustainability of this home is essential, and as North America is the world's largest organic market, participation in all things international is a critical responsibility we must acknowledge. The IFOAM World Congress is set to move forward in September, but with caution and respect for the global situation. The pandemic has demonstrated to all of us of the role that both 'small organic' and 'big organic' have to play in a post-pandemic global foodscape.

Enjoy the articles in this issue

In this issue we have conversations with:

OFARM, a marketing collective in North America's heart-

land who is organizing organic farmers for better pricing of their products.

Louise Luttikholt, the Executive Director of IFOAM -Organics International has joined us in a conversation outlining her vision of hope for the future, and the processes that our network are involved with in the international relations of organic agriculture.

Daphne Miller is a practicing doctor active in the food justice movement offering us an integrated look at food, farming and health.

A Special Thank You

I've known Dr. Brian Baker for over 25 years and am proud to call him a friend as well as a colleague.

We first met while working at CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers) in the 1990s. Brian was our Technical Coordinator and the organic materials program that Brian developed at CCOF led to the formation of OMRI (*The Organic Materials Review Institute*), now providing the list of acceptable and prohibited list of materials allowed in

both US and Canadian organic agriculture today.

His career has included both standing as the first president of IFOAM North America, and long term member of the IFOAM – Organics International Standards Committee. Brian has worked as Research Director of the Organic Materials Review Institute, as well as Research Networker at FiBL, the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture.

I don't know of anyone else who is more knowledgeable about organic agriculture, and his dedication to IFOAM North America has been critical to our success.

We owe Dr. Brian Baker a deep debt. He has now passed on his position of IFOAM NA President, and we wish him well in his future work.

Thank you, Brian.

Welcome our new board members

Our *Annual Members Meeting* included the election of four new Board members, bringing a fresh set of experience and wisdom to our organization:

Mary-Howell Martens and

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The North American Organic Agriculture Quarterly

SPRING 2021



THE WORLD WILL
OPEN AGAIN.
SLOWLY.
CAUTIOUSLY.
LIKE SPROUTS
POKING A FINGER
OF GREEN UP
THROUGH THE SOIL.
FULL OF HOPE
AND LONGING.

EDITOR'S CORNER



her husband Klaus farm 2000 acres of certified organic grain, dry bean, and vegetable crops in rural western New York, certified organic since 1992. They also own and operate an organic feed mill and seed business (Lakeview Organic Grain) producing feed for organic dairy and chicken farmers in a 400-mile radius, with many customers who are predominantly Old Order horse and buggy Amish/Mennonite small-scale organic dairy farmers.

Jeff Schahczenski is an Agricultural and Natural Resource Economist. His work includes the publication of studies and education on crop insurance, national agriculture public policy, transgenics, blockchain, soil health, and climate disruption. He served in leadership roles with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and other agriculture and conservation NGOs. Jeff worked for Rutgers University and served in the Peace Corps in Belize,

and is currently an adjunct instructor within the Montana University System. Jeff has also been an active organic farmer, founding one of the first certified-organic Community Supported Agriculture farms in New Jersey.

Alan Lewis navigates government affairs and food and agriculture policy for *Natural Grocers*, a Colorado based health food chain founded in 1955 with over 160 stores in 20 states. At the federal, state and local level, Alan engages on food, agriculture, nutrition, rural economic development, technology, biotech, cannabis, trade and health issues. Alan has lived overseas for extended periods, which lends to his understanding agriculture in varying social and political contexts. He also oversees organic certification and compliance for *Natural Grocers* while advising dozens of food, natural product, and ag-tech start-ups across the country.

Nicolas Walser is the Field Manager at Linden Lane Farms, located in the Kootenays, BC, Canada. Nic holds a Bachelors of Applied Science in Sustainable Agriculture with a minor in Policy Studies from Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Previous to his agricultural work, Nic worked in the non-profit sector, training youth in environmental restoration. Nic sits on the Certified Organic Associations of BC's *Accreditation Board*, which oversees organic certification in the province. He also audits certifying bodies on behalf of the board. Nic is a member of the BC Institute of Agrologists, the National Farmers Union and the Central Kootenay Food Policy Council.

We're very pleased to welcome them all onboard.

Thank You!

— Ken McCormick

CO-PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



Jennifer Taylor



Marla Carlson

Please Welcome the New Co-Presidents of IFOAM North America

In a bold move demonstrating the goals of increasing equity and international cooperation in organic agriculture, the Board of Directors of IFOAM North America have appointed two outstanding women as our new co-presidents, sharing the positions of president and vice president for their one-year term.

These two leaders in the organic community will be job-sharing a demanding job as part of women taking on senior leadership positions in our movement.

In keeping with IFOAM goals of increasing cultural diversity, equity, and gender equality in agriculture, the North American Board celebrates the unique leadership skills of Jennifer Taylor and Marla Carlson by supporting this innovative step of shared leadership.

These are difficult times, and we must rise up to the task of finding new solutions to the challenges we face. We welcome their co-leadership skills as an important contribution to North America’s presence on the international stage.

Jennifer Taylor

Jennifer has a B.S. Degree in Agronomy and Soil Sciences from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, M.S. Degree in Agronomy- Crop Production and Physiology from Iowa State University, and a PhD in Vocational and Technical Education- Teaching and Learning from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). She is associate professor at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

Jennifer has been the IFOAM NA vice president and has served on the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) as chair of the NOSB Materials Committee, ad-hoc GMO subcommittee, and on the Policy Committee. Jennifer is a farmer Board Member of Organic Farmers Association, serves on the Rodale Insititue Board of Directors, Standards Board for the Real Organic Project, and advisor to the National Organic Coalition.

“We’re very excited about the

year ahead. It’s important to build the capacity for organic livelihoods with education and technical assistance, networking with NGOs on the ground, mentoring new farmers and building on the IFOAM Strategic Plan.

Organic agroecology farm practices, the benefits of organic farming systems, and related wellbeing strategies offer powerful solutions to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. I would like to see IFOAM NA promote participatory capacity building strategies that support the Principles of Organic Agriculture and the important role of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, especially as we address our local and global challenges of climate, environmental degradation, hunger, health & wellbeing, and inequality.

We need to have consensus on how we respond to international issues, policy, and outreach to support what we do. And to do this, we need

WE WON’T BE ABLE TO CHANGE ANYTHING IN FARMING IF WE CAN’T CHANGE OURSELVES.

to revitalize our Policy Committee. Our Policy Committee needs to meet on a monthly basis and might require some emergency meetings at times to respond in a timely matter to urgent issues that need attention.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to serve as the Co-President of IFOAM NA.”

Marla Carlson

Marla Carlson has a BA in Anthropology from the University of Lethbridge, Canada and MSc in Policy Studies from the University of Bristol, England. Marla has been working for and with organic farmers in Saskatchewan since 2006. She currently works for *SaskOrganics* as their Executive Director, and in this leadership role, she is always looking for innovative ways to fulfil the organization’s mission to cultivate a healthier world for the benefit of all through organic food and farming.

In addition to her role with

SaskOrganics, Marla is President of *Organic Connections* – the largest organic farming conference in Western Canada, President of the *Prairie Organic Development Fund* and a member of the *kway skastasowin wâhkôhtowin Steering Committee*, a *Rockefeller Food Systems Top Visionary Prize Project*. She also serves as a director on two food related community initiatives in Regina – *Every Bite Project* and *Food Regina*.

“I love to work collaboratively and am looking forward to bringing this approach to the Co-Presidency role with the IFOAM NA board. Sharing the position with Jennifer will provide an opportunity to bring our different skill sets to the table.

We need to be very focussed in what we want to achieve and spread the work around so that we can get some important tasks done.

It will be a benefit for the organization if this year we focus on member services and

connection with our members, both individually and collectively. We plan to engage with our long-time supporters to communicate our vision, and get them excited enough to bring new members in.

We’re also looking forward to working more closely with IFOAM - Organics International to help amplify their vision and strategies in North America. The global organic movement is diverse. IFOAM - Organics International provides a platform through its Regional Bodies structure to find common ground to advance organic production’s contribution to addressing climate change and achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. We are stronger together! I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing President, Brian Baker. Brian’s commitment to IFOAM and knowledge of the organic sector in North America and beyond will be missed.”



Members, Associates and Supporters:

- Accredited Certifiers Association

Acme Agriculture & Food Ltd.

Agrisystems International

Alliance for Organic Integrity

Arnd Zschocke

Bai-Si USA

Belcairn Concerns LLC

Brian Baker

Canada Organic Trade Association

Canadian Organic Growers

Certified Naturally Grown

Certified Organic Association of British Columbia

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**COOPERATIVE
MARKETING**
in
**ORGANIC
COMMODITIES**

Ken McCormick



OEARM is an organic grain marketing cooperative based out of Aldrich, Minnesota, established to maintain sustainable prices for organic farm production. The organic grain market is feeling the effects of increased demand for organic feed, mixed with tightening controls on fraudulent organic claims over grains imported from Eastern Europe, as well as South and Central Asia. Here is their story.

What Our Cooperative Does

Mike Schulist: It's a networking business. We're in the market and act as marketing consultants, but the main objective is that we don't undercut each other. We have a totally different system than the conventional system, and it's designed to keep our farmers sustainable, able to pay their bills with the money they have in their pockets, not relying on government programs, not wanting to visit their lender every year, and being able to pass their farm on to the next generation.

My own *National Farmers* group is based out of Ames, Iowa. One third of our production goes to the food-grade market, mostly with food-grade soybeans. We have one buyer who contracts a year ahead of time, which our growers like. We do a bit on the wheat side but

not much on the food-grade corn side. Food-grade soybeans sales have been slow with the COVID pandemic, and moving product these last three months has been a challenge at times.

We were dabbling with some organic buckwheat. Millet is getting more popular for gluten-free products, mostly from South Dakota. We also sell some white milo (white sorghum).

Martin Eddy: My group are wheat suppliers on the food-grade side. We're trying to expand our corn on the food-grade side with some success, because the idea is to get out of feed as much as possible because the margin is so thin. We grow the quality. We have a low microtoxin count because we're just so dry. That's what customers want.

So we look for something to organize around, and it's been

high quality, high protein milling wheat.

A lot of our cooperative's acreage is in Kansas. The Texas dairy and poultry industrial complex buys a tremendous amount of grain. It's become very commodified, and we're competing with the Cargills of the world. None the less, we try to go direct.

I've been in a couple of deals where it's very obvious that it's a real slugfest for this market, and companies that have the wherewithal are going on zero or negative margin just to get market share.

Soybeans is the other star that

is coming up for us. We're getting calls all over the place for soybeans. It seems like the soybean market is really ripe to have some bottom price, which we can legally do: Set a price. This is the price: \$21 or \$22 dollars/bushel. Whatever soybeans are worth for feed beans and food beans (60 lbs per bushel). That's something we work on.

I was inspecting farms back in the 1980's during the big soybean hoo-haw with Japan, and everyone's uncle and aunt were saying, *we're breaking out this alfalfa*, with a lot of farmers coming in specifically to grow organic

soybeans. We may see that this summer, or in the next couple of years. Soybeans being what they are, it's not a bad thing. It's still an annual crop.

The young guys who are coming in, they're seeing the handwriting on the wall. There's no future for them in the conventional market, and that's why they're coming into organic. The idea of a co-op that works together to get them a good price—they're thrilled.

Oren Holle: On the list of commodities grown by our members, it would be 'all of the above.' We're not highly involved with the pulses, lentils

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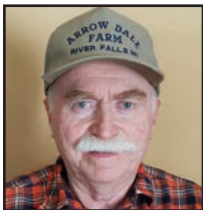
Oren Holle.

Oren is President of OEARM, who owns and operates a certified organic crop production operation in Northeast Kansas.



Carmen Fernholz.

Carmen serves as Vice President of OEARM, and operates a 450 acre organic cash grain farm near Madison, Minnesota.



Bob Keatley.

Bob serves as Secretary for OEARM, and operates a 240 acre certified organic farm in River Falls, WI.



Martin Eddy.

Martin is a Marketer with Central Plains Organic Farmers (CPOF) who has worked for OEARM since 2014.



Merle Kramer.

Merle is a Marketer with Midwest Organic Farmers Cooperative (MOFC) with 28 years in organic sales.



Mike Schulist.

Mike is a Marketer with NFOrganics: the Organic Grain Program Manager for National Farmers Organization.

In the ag community on the organic side, you have a chance.
— Mike Schulist

The young guys coming in, they're seeing the handwriting on the wall. There's no future for them in the conventional market, and that's why they're coming into organic. — Martin Eddy

or edible peas, mostly because we operate in a part of the country that doesn't grow those crops, but we're looking to grow into that area. We also don't have much quinoa, but a cooperative initiative is being introduced for *Kernza* in Minnesota. Our members grow triticale as a rotational crop and for feedstock. We've not gotten into hemp, but we occasionally deal with sunflower. We also have a long-standing relationship with Lindley Mills in North Carolina. We're establishing some market clout, but not nearly enough. There is a turning point where it will be big enough. It doesn't have to be 50%, but it has to be a significantly larger percentage than it is today.

Our Vision

Martin: Our vision is rural prosperity. When you drive through the American Midwest and see the bombed-out small towns, organic is a way to directly get income into a farmer's pocket so that they can contribute to their communities. We have a desperate need to rebuild our soils, but all that costs money, and we need to tell that story to the public. It's expensive to rebuild an area that's been bombed-out by conventional agriculture.

When I was first hired, our manager at *Central Plains* said that our job was to 'de-commodify commodities,' and that's pretty well where we're at. That goes back to the idea of de-commodifying labor, which is what a union does. We're growing food, not commodities. The truth be known, larger organic farmers are in a good position to buy up half the county because they're getting a good price and can outbid anyone for the good land. They have the premium, and they have a system that works. **Mike:** In the ag community on the organic side, you have a chance. Big ag has taught us for years to 'produce more for less money.' I dairy-farmed for 28 years, and when you talk to the bank for equipment or something they say: *What you need is to milk a few more cows.* And so you're milking more cows for less money. The conventional system is broken. At least in the organic system you have a chance to get a fair buck for your grains and for your vegetables. And rightly so. Those kids, the next generation below us, all deserve a chance. The younger generation, who I see in the farmers markets, clearly demonstrate where we are getting our food from.

Carmen Fernholz: Our rationale for a set target price, is that those prices reflect a monetizing of ecosystem services. It's a critical understanding that part of our set price reflects monetizing the ecosystem services that organic agricultural systems perform. And I want to emphasize that. **Merle Kramer:** There's a lot of comparisons where you look at a 10,000 head dairy farm with all the pollution it produces. Organic agriculture needs to be contrasted to conventional agriculture relative to the environment, the climate and things that people care about. **Oren:** You won't get any disagreement on this out of this circle. We've been in that mindset far too long with conventional ag. And there's another whole category on how much of that cheap food cost is being born through government programs and subsidies, all of which should never have been necessary if we had a viable market at the farm level so that farm producers could engage with all of these processes on their own without government support. And that leads back to what Carmen said: All of those costs need to be taken out of the market.

Our Concerns

Martin: Concentrated Agricultural Feeding Operations (CAFO's) perpetrate the idea of agricultural industry in rural areas, with all the political and economic power that comes from concentrating power in one group rather than distributing it among many different farmers. The most interesting thing is how we counteract that concentration, That is the larger issue for the organic community to talk about. CAFOs are a symptom of colonialism. We send our raw materials out at wholesale, commodity prices. Then we

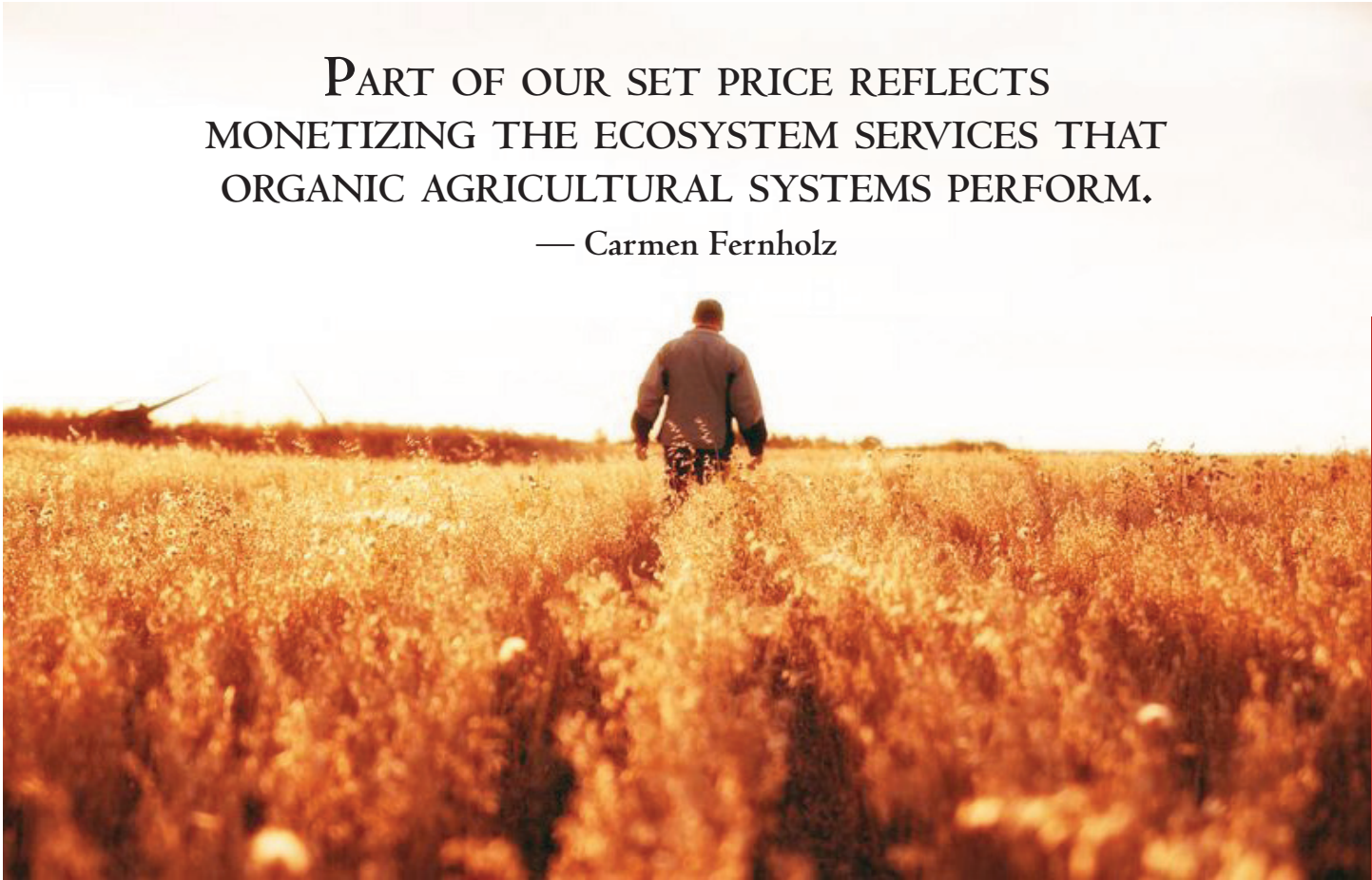
buy back our inputs at retail level. We see this system in place across the countryside in the United States, and it's become the norm world-wide. And that's how poverty is created. Multinational corporations excel at this game. Hydroponic production is similar— replacing soil with capital. **Mike:** My biggest fear in the organic industry, is that it continues in the form of the conventional model: produce more for less money. The CAFOs came from the conventional model. The bigger you are, the more you can produce for less.

And it doesn't benefit the small and mid-sized farmer. I'm also concerned about the imports of soybeans with the NOP, with some of the end users who were dependent on these imports are now being weaned off of them. I'm concerned that the organic soybean market might get too hot. This soybean market is a reflection on the imports. It's a better price for the farmer, but it's a challenge for the marketer and for the end users who are buying them. These farmers are performing as they should too. And why did the industry get dependent on these imports in

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PART OF OUR SET PRICE REFLECTS
MONETIZING THE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES THAT
ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS PERFORM.

— Carmen Fernholz



the first place? Because they drove the price of soybeans down below \$20 into the \$15 range. That's been our message all along. We're not getting our fair share. And how do we convince the consumers that the farmer should be rewarded for all the work we put into the process?

On the positive side, our organic grain department at *National Farmers* hasn't been busier. These new farmers want to be part of something. We have 20 new members in the last two months and we're going to have to hire more help.

Merle: It looks like soybeans have a big upside because of the uncertainty of what the NOP is wanting out of India. I was told that two certifiers in India have been put out of business, and there's one left. All these things are hanging in the balance, including whether we're going to get a lot of soy protein from India or not. It's all because organic chicken operations have ramped up their production, based on imports. And since the feed has been a fraud, they're coming back to the US market.

That's going to screw up everything.

I don't know what's going to happen with soybeans. It could be that we see \$35/bushel soybeans by this time next year. Things have just

gone so far out of balance the last number of years.

It's good news for farmers, in the fact that soybeans will be worth more money. But with minimum 3-crop rotation, some crop is going to be overproduced, and the prices will go down on these commodities.

The CAFOs have injected into the organic farm economy, the conventionalization of organic, and that was not the original intent. It could have been done just the exact opposite.

Bob Keatley: The other factor now is when a consumer looks at a chicken house and its neighbor, and the only thing they see that's different is that the organic operation is feeding them a little bit of organic corn. So the consumer is confused.

That's why we have to differentiate ourselves. The intent of the organic movement from the beginning is certainly not about CAFOs.

Carmen: There's always a soft spot in organic grains. We're starting to experience it again when the price of conventional grains start creeping up. And I don't understand how Cargill deals with that, because if conventional ag ever gets close enough, people are going to jump out of the basket. I don't see how Cargill can always assure that they have that

grain unless they start impacting on their own conventional price, which they do in some way.

Oren: It boils down to economics.

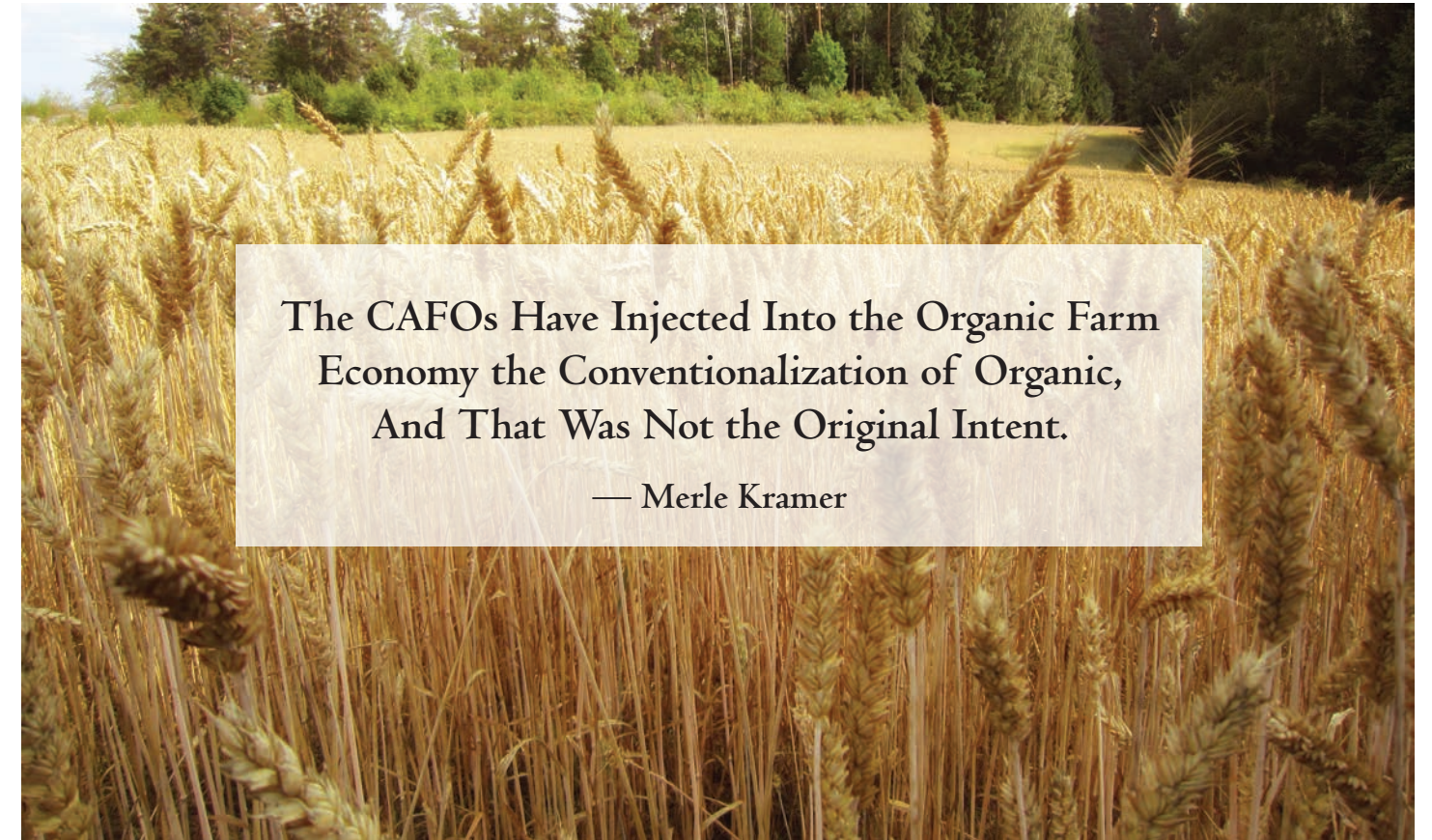
One of the failures for anyone considering transition to organic, is the uncertainty of a profitable market in three years down the road. Once we see some upward price movement in corn, once corn hits \$6, there will be a whole bunch of farmers getting into transition who will abandon organic immediately if they see no guarantee that the organic market will be far enough north of that \$6 number to justify the cost of organic transition. We need to establish a basic market system that guarantees economic feasibility down the road.

Like Carmen said, with all the costs of environmental benefits, with all the marketing costs, we need a guarantee to the producers/farmers that they will be able to pass these costs along in the market.

That is what we're here for: to establish a market opportunity for them.

Strengthening Organic Enforcement.

Oren: After several years of highly suspect, foreign-sourced grain coming into the United



The CAFOs Have Injected Into the Organic Farm Economy the Conventionalization of Organic, And That Was Not the Original Intent.

— Merle Kramer

States and Canada being sold as organic, hundreds of independent farmers are in support of the proposals being made by the National Organic Program (NOP) for strengthening organic enforcement (SOE).

OFARM believes that most of these proposals are useful and helpful, but will not be enough to give us the certainty required to meet the same organic standards that US and Canadian farmers are required to meet, especially concerning large bulk quantities of imported grains from overseas.

The growth of organic food in North America will continue to outpace the ability of the USDA NOP to enforce the

new standards they are trying to enact, and the ethics of the second and third world countries where this foreign grain is coming from will be suspect under these suggested regulations.

Oversight from independent organic inspections are needed to assure organic standards are being followed before allowing these grains into the US food economy. Foreign and domestic opportunists, criminals and corrupt government officials have made organic paperwork appear from nowhere. These practices will continue with or without the new **Strengthened Organic Standards** enacted and in place for the USDA

NOP to enforce, so stronger action needs to be taken. Hundreds of shipments of organic bulk grains and food ingredients have arrived into the US with little ability by the NOP to trace them back to their original farms in foreign countries.

American farmers are losing hundreds of millions of dollars in competition with unverifiable *organic* grain coming in from unverifiable sources from around the world, and American consumers consuming billions of dollars of retail consumer products produced from fraudulent grain thinking they were eating honest food supporting an ethical and sus-

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tainable food system is a terrible thing that has been allowed to go on for far too long.

Martin: The original intent was that the government would certify the certifier as being kosher, but there was considerable mistrust of the government and this process became a private-public partnership. The SOE will move forward and brokers will have to be responsible now for an audit trail back to point of origin. This will be an interesting exercise for imports.

Oren: One of the big weaknesses in the SOE, is that there is no establishment of authority for the NOP to direct the international inspection process. These shipments are planned a long time before they happen, and we need a mechanism to get involved with organic verification long before any of that commodity gets to the boat. In our conversations within the NOP, they hang their hat on the fact that they have no authority or resources to do many

of the things that they should be doing. But there are a lot of resources they have been provided. Only a few years back, there were only nine NOP staff and now there are 63 people. Yet when we look at the issue of fraud and oversight, there's only 14 staff members in that particular section. We may have to champion for the regulatory authority, and Congress may have to set some deadlines for this. I hope we can find this within the USDA, but we're going to have to keep

the up pressure to get more action on this.

Merle: There also needs to be a new pricing category for anything coming from overseas that is very expensive to verify, such as: food ingredients, grain, and retail products, because it takes a lot of money to enforce standards in these categories.

Oren: We don't have a lot of specific information, but it's rather interesting about some of the actions taken in India, and how quickly that changed the dynamics of imported soybeans into this country. Our indications early on were that in India, it's not just the Indian soybeans production that we're talking about, They are importing soybeans from other parts of the world, including South African soybeans coming into India to be processed there. It also came to light that the Chinese were shipping soybeans into India for processing to avoid tariffs on Chinese products.

Merle: Imagine if USDA had not allowed these CAFO operations to start. What would the lay of the land look like now? We would have hundreds of small farmers around a city like Chicago, spreading out 150 miles around. We'd see small farming operations raising chickens, family dairy operations, and a revitalization

of rural America. All that could have taken place if it wasn't because of the USDA. One bad decision has put us into a terrible organic economy.

Cooperatives and Marketing

Carmen: Strengthening the organic market is only going to happen if farmers understand that they have to market together. We need all the members in the organic community to say: *We have to protect ourselves and work together.* How can we engage everyone to speak the critical message that we're not just paying for the value of the corn, but we're paying for the entire value of the ecosystem-services that farmers provide?

We're a lonely farmer's voice out there. When we get other people to look over our shoulders and see everyone who is benefiting from the ecosystem-service benefits saying: *Hey that's not too cheap a price.* Then Cargill starts backing up. But we can't do it being the one lonely voice out. It can't be done. It never has been. When we do, look at the pushback we get. We as farmers may expect somebody to hand it to us.

And that's our problem. We don't take our destiny into our own hands, and we blame the consumer and we blame Cargill and we blame everybody else. But when it comes right down to it, we think that they're supposed to hand it to us. You don't hand anyone else that thing unless they ask for it and demand it.

Bob: The take-way is two things. 1. We need to educate the consumer, and 2. We need to educate the farmer at the same time. We also need to educate these guys that are coming into the organic industry— that the only way they're going to survive this is to coordinate their marketing together. That's what our organization is all about, and we've been struggling with that message for years.

How do we get these new organic farmers into our organization, joining us and marketing their products together with the goal of keeping prices up? That's always been our struggle.

Oren: Farmers still own the product first. The issue is that we haven't organized ourselves to be at the bargaining table with an equal amount of power and negotiation. Having a price list is our goal, but prices are based on day-to-day negotiations. There are still sales being made below

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FARMERS STILL OWN
THE PRODUCT FIRST.
— Oren Holle

these prices, given current market situations. Much of it boils down to day-to-day negotiations based on current market factors. Our marketers are doing very well in keeping our producers in the upper part of the available prices at the time, but in most cases we're still quite away from our target prices. When we talk about not deeding below a certain price, we try to evaluate the current market factors and establish some pricing parameters that producers are looking for under the current market conditions. This keeps us in the very upper echelons of the prices at the time. In that respect, our producers do much better than most individuals who market themselves.

Martin: What would be helpful is to have communications with other farmers in the world on this issue. We should be talking with them. They should be making a fair buck just like here. We don't have to play South Africa against South America. That liaison is IFOAM's role, isn't it? We've always wondered about other farmers around the world and how that's working for them. We get it from the manufacturers, but they say: "Everything is fine here. Nothing to see!"

I think that we need an international conversation on grains. American agriculture

has been used by Cargill, and Archer-Daniels-Midlands to beat the head of other commodity farmers in other countries to depress their prices. It would be interesting if there was a little more communication with actual farmers who are growing organic grains in other countries. We'd certainly like to talk to co-ops in Africa and India.

What can IFOAM do?

Oren: We see a lot of cooperation within the organic industry on a lot of fronts. Our active producers know how organic farming is done and they are willing to share their information about their operations with other beginning organic farmers. But when it comes to the other side of the business equation—in the cooperation on marketing—many farmers have been so ingrained into the old agricultural marketing systems that it's extremely difficult to have a conversation with them about what cooperation in marketing could do for them. And if there's anything that IFOAM could bring to the table, it would be the idea that cooperation on the marketing side will be good for the health of the entire organic community.

Carmen: How can we more vigorously engage all the voices in the agricultural community

into this discussion?

We all share our wisdom about managing weeds, but we never seem to share vital issues facing the economic growth of our movement.

Bob: We need to do a better job at delivering a message to consumers on the deeper environmental benefits that organic agriculture offers, both to them personally, as well as to the whole country. Even though we've been at this for 20 years, we're still not getting that message across, and it's time to fine-tune that message to the point where it's understandable.

We have to do a better job at educating the consumer on what organic agriculture is doing on America's farmland, and how it benefits them in countless more valuable ways than just protecting them from toxic substances. Growing an organic crop is good for the water supply, good for wildlife biodiversity, good for rural communities and excellent for creating long term fertility on our lands.



TIME IS REALLY, REALLY SHORT

IFOAM - ORGANICS INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LOUISE LUTTIKHOLT SHARES A CULTIVATED CONVERSATION ON ORGANIC AGRICULTURE— FILLED WITH PURPOSE AND HOPE.

Louise Luttkholt: Everybody should have an entrance to organic.

People need to be rewarded for their efforts. I would say that size is not per se, decisive or bad. It's what you do with that size. I recently realized that one of the initial farms that Rudolf Steiner spoke of, was a huge Eastern German farm with thousands of hectares. But it depends on how you design it and what your intentions are with it. So I would like to not bash size per se.

CQ: We have IFOAM members on both sides of the 'scale up' and 'scale out' issue. On the scale-out side, a large group of IFOAM member produce-market gardeners passionately grow fresh produce for urban communities. They are now beginning to organize more sophisticated local food



production networks with other small farmers. These networks are developing into food hubs, coordinating their individual operations with other farms for operational support, profitability, infrastructure development, and they are increasingly working in a more collective fashion.

On the scale-up side, North America has a large carrot grower whose size of operation will fit the entire certified acreage of a mid-sized European country into their fields. Their organic carrots can be found in nearly every supermarket in North Amer-

ica, and we are happy to note that organic inspectors verify that the management of the operations meet high organic production standards. Their farms are thriving and they are managing to limit outside inputs while creating better soil on their lands.

I see both of these groups taking positive steps forward.

Louise: I also think that counts. In an ideal scenario, we can talk about another context in which organic can take place, and also another rewarding system. And what I so much appreciate of many initiatives in North America is that we are looking for ways to break out of the current economic and legislative context.

On one hand, the times have never been better for that. On the other hand, we can also see how farmers are suffering from the current context,

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and for some of them, it is very difficult. I think that we should differentiate that issue from size. If I think about my personal dream—that all of agriculture would be truly sustainable—then the more the better. But if we talk about being truly sustainable, I also think that diversity is a very, very important part of it, and I talk about the diversity of business models and the diversity of interactions. This cannot be one-size-fits-all. But the invitation is there for all farmers who are not yet organic to join the club. Because only then can we move forward with the serious work of healing the world. And all the organic farmers, both current and in the past who have done so much of this pioneering work—this is what they offer to the world.

What I really, really appreciate is to offer some ways forward.

Time is short. Time is really short. So if we want to move forward, we should make sure that we move our energy onto the right levers. And most probably, those levers are neither within our sector, nor pointing at those who are not as good at organic as others.

There is a whole world outside of organic where we can make huge steps forward in this work. A whole context in which we all can work. And I

think that's where we need to look.

That is the invitation that Organic 3.0 gives us.

CQ: The constant innovation encouraged by Organic 3.0 offers the large-acreage organic corn/soy rotation farmer an opportunity to add diversity corridors into their operation or mixed poly-cultural practices into their fields. So as you say, organic is just an entry point.

There are also cost-benefits to organic. Farmers are offered a way out of the financial obligations to large seed and input suppliers, with more capability to establish their own market networks, and taking their farms off the chemical dependencies of conventional agriculture.

There is an awakening among farmers, particularly the younger generation in the Midwest areas of North America. And I think we have the organic community to thank for playing an important role in this.

Louise: Thanks for sharing that. From the perspective of Asia, where our Asian group is very active, there are more and more municipalities being connected to what is called ALGOA (*Asian Local Governments for Organic Agriculture*), who have turned their full

municipalities into organic, and whether they are certified is not interesting at all. But they all see the need for living conditions to move to organic agriculture, which is an entrance to many things. We talk about health. We talk about education. We talk about local markets. We talk about fairness. And this is so interesting to see.

There are governments in Africa, including Senegal and Togo, where they include food agro-ecology into their policy measures for agriculture. They have policies for switching farm support for inputs, to offer incentives for things other than chemical fertilizers.

This is excellent news! There are states in India who are moving to organic, whether certified or not. This is what IFOAM - Organics International brings to the world. These states have massive programs for training their agricultural extension services so that they help farmers transform to a better way of agriculture. These programs include how farmers want to do their marketing—for instance, through participatory guarantee systems.

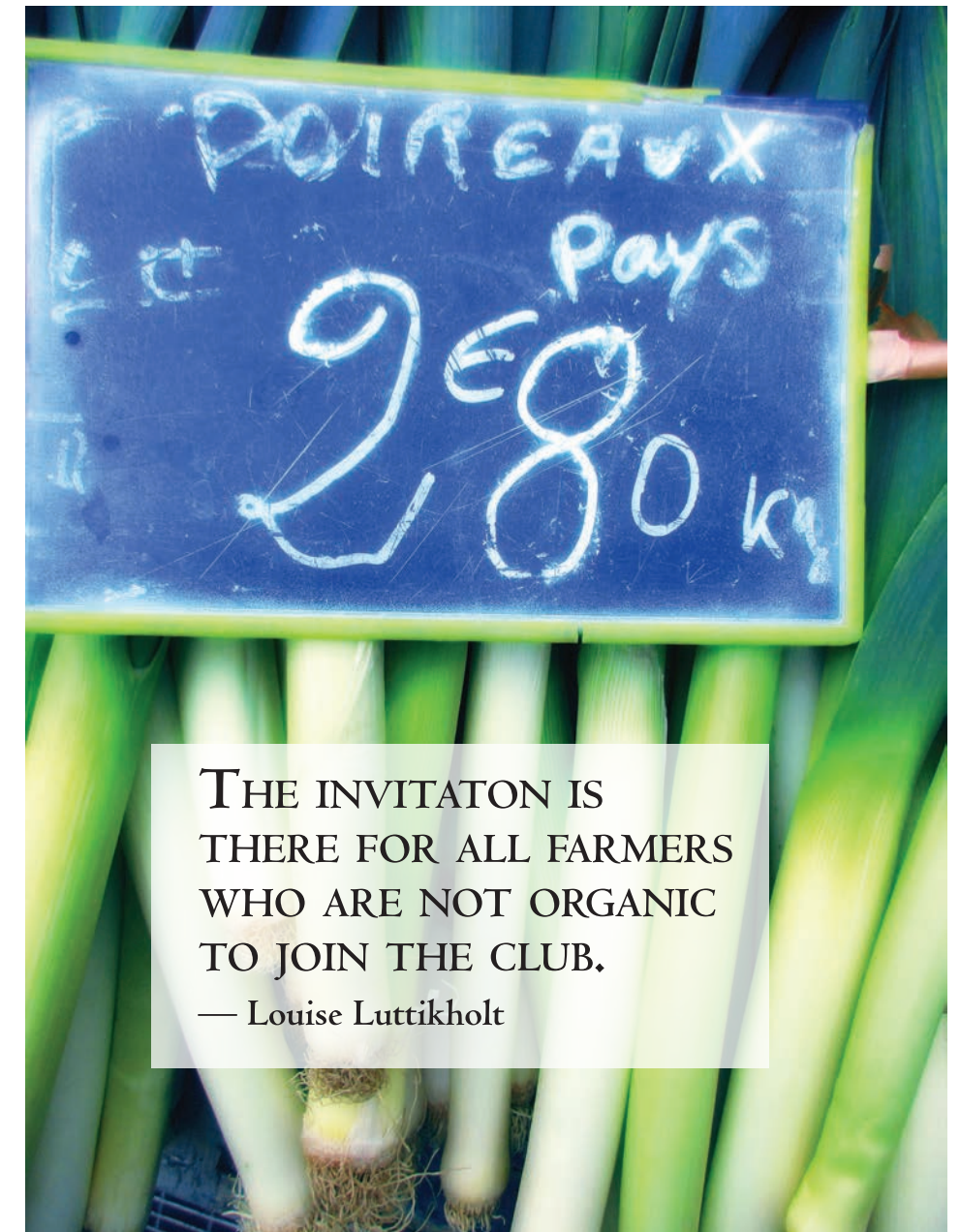
We have island states in Oceania, who don't see another choice, and are moving towards organic. This is understandable, given the dire

situation they are in terms of climate change.

We have the European Commission, who has set an active goal for organic agriculture. In 2030, they want 25% of European agricultural land area to be organic. Happily, we already have states in Europe who are over that. For example, Austria right now has more than 25% of their agricultural land growing organically. Several other states are also moving in that direction. Sweden is around 20%. And what I like about that, is despite the fact that the percentage of organic acreage overall is still small, we get a taste of what it could look like. This is something we can learn from.

So while this conversion process has really gotten traction over the last few years, time is very short. If we look at the 2030 sustainable development goals, we are simply nine harvests away. That's interesting to think about: only nine harvests to reach clean water, life on land, and all the 17 goals that the world community has signed onto. [United Nations 17 Goals](#).

This is also a very exciting time. The United Nations has started a *Food Systems Summit*, which is a real 'circus' where people from all around the world are being brought together. [Click Here](#). It's also



**THE INVITATION IS
THERE FOR ALL FARMERS
WHO ARE NOT ORGANIC
TO JOIN THE CLUB.**

— Louise Luttikholt

interesting to see how the discourse has changed from 2008-9, when the original IAASTD (*International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development*) report came out. [Click Here](#)

You might be aware of the IAASTD report, comparable to the IPCC (*Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*). At the time in 2008, there were al-

ready over 300 scientists from around the world who shared their input to come to a very simple conclusion: Business-as-usual is not an option. At that time, this report did not resonate well because of those conclusions. There were forces who wanted to make sure that the conclusions in the report were not shared publicly.

What I see happening now that we are 12 years ahead,

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COLONIALIZATION HAS
EXTERNALIZED A LOT
OF THINGS.

— LOUISE LUTTIKHOLT

is there has been a publication entitled IAASTD +10, in which the discourse has dramatically changed. Now we should be careful with the discourse, because not only can there be greenwashing, but we also have a critical need: The need to change.

There's also pressure from consumers. They are no longer simply accepting the situation. Consumers are demanding responsibility and accountability. The organic movement in Germany supports a demonstration in January where citizens, farmers and environmental organizations alike go into the streets and demand: *'We are fed up!'*

In German, *Wir haben es satt* sounds very beautiful.

It's this coalition with environmental organizations and farmers organizations together, that really offers strength to our movement. So in that sense, we are living in an exciting time and we can well represent the interests of organic agriculture because there are now so many farmers who do so much good work.

I think that we also need to be inviting all other farmers to come: 'Join us. Play with us. I know that you now are in a difficult situation. It might be the context in which you are farming, or the way you inherited the farm, but there is

something else here, and please have a look.' And that's quite a responsibility that we have in the organic sector.

CQ: I like your term: 'Come play with us.' That attitude is important, because farmers around the world have much to learn from each other. There are so many different models of agriculture in different regions, and the Big Business model in North America is very different from the wet rice farming culture in Asia.

In Bali, the community has control over the land and water resources, with the management of the irrigation process in charge of a 'subak.' This local organization is overseen by local priests within the Balinese religious practice. They call it *Agama Tirta*, which means *The Religion of the Holy Water*. The subak is central in the management of both fertility and insect control, and their oversight has allowed the community to opt out of 'The Green Revolution' that brought in chemical-based farming practices. Under their guidance, the use of artificial fertilizers have been dramatically reduced.

With community consensus, the Balinese farmers all agree to lower the levels of water in their rice paddies just before a predatory local grasshopper

specie lays its eggs. After the grasshoppers lay their eggs, the farmers collectively raise the water levels and drown the eggs.

We need more whole systems thinking in our communities, promoting agriculture as a system which is dynamic and alive. When we share our sense of community and connection with the land, our agricultural practices can achieve levels of sustainability far above those available when we view farming as a 'private business.' It then becomes, as you say: A Joy.

Creating sustainable agriculture requires us to create sustainable human cultural behavior. And I think that the cultural behaviors of the Balinese fit well within your own idea of: 'Let's play together.'

Louise: I know this sounds funny, but this might be the first time in history that we realize that the Earth is round. Galileo made a good discovery at the time, but we are now at a point where we can no longer externalize what we do. Colonialism has externalized a whole lot of things. Our way of production and our current economic capitalistic system also thrives on externalization. But the Earth is round. Everything that we externalize comes back to us. We're now at a point where it is so clear

that we are all interconnected. On one hand, that's sometimes frightening. On the other hand, it's the base on which we now can have the discussion on what the next steps shall be. And that is really, really interesting.

The role of IFOAM in North America

CQ: So what role would you like to feature about IFOAM - Organics International to North Americans? We tend to be rather insular in our views and don't look very far outside of our own local view. You can see the bigger picture.

Louise: I think that there is a role in which IFOAM North America can play as the window to the global organic community. The US is a huge country and I understand how there can be a sense of insularity. It's quite a task just to understand the US and Canada, let alone how other parts of the world are functioning. But there is a big world out there and a lot to learn from. It is a world in which we are really interconnected. It's not just learning from each other, but taking a responsibility. The US organic market is the biggest organic market in the world. And it means that by that sheer fact, the US or-

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ganic sector, whether you feel it or not, imposes things on other parts of the world. For instance, farmers who export their valuable products to the US and Canada are subject to local regulations. I'm not pleading here that everyone should export, but let us just talk about coffee, tea, bananas and other things that we all like to enjoy, and that also give a livelihood to farmers. The sheer fact that the US is the biggest organic market means that there's already a responsibility, and it has a significant impact on how others can make a livelihood.

CQ: We have seen how the international demand for quinoa has taken away some of the diversity of crops grown in Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru, as quinoa became a commodity cash crop and restructured agriculture in those countries.

Louise: That's true. And we learned how the quinoa crop was being exported to satisfy the people here in Europe, so the people in Bolivia wouldn't have this very valuable and nutritious crop for themselves. There are quite some aspects to this as well. That's how all these things are interconnected.

In terms of what IFOAM as a network offers the North American sector, I think: 'The connection to the world.' This

includes trade agreements, how the North American and EU regulations are related to each other, and what are the implications of that for the rest of the world. We learn from the contextual policies of those relationships. And we offer examples of places that are 100% organic, and how the countries and states accomplished that goal. These are not small states. These are Indian states that have millions and millions of farmers. Do we want to be part of the conversation on what the next step is in organic and sustainable agriculture? Do we relate to our partners in agro-ecology and regenerative agriculture? Do we want to commonly shape that?

I'm convinced that many people transition to organic because they feel they are part of *The One Earth*. And that is the community that IFOAM as a network offers.

CQ: What we're seeing in North America is the rise in popularity of organic dairy, eggs and meat— with a corresponding rise in the imports of organic grains from other parts of the world to feed this demand. This has a significant impact on agriculture in other parts of the world of course, and there have been some cases of fraud as part of this dramatic rise in demand. I think there is a role for IFOAM -

Organics International to play in how organic integrity is maintained. The impact of the world sending organic gains and soy into North America also has a big impact on the agriculture in other regions as well. We are indeed interconnected, and we're seeing some of the complications of that interconnection. How do we balance local food economies with export food economies?

Louise: The point I come back to is what I initially said: Some of this is directly related to organic, and other parts are related to the context in which the farmers produce. And we have to see how we form our coalitions. When it comes to international trade, I don't think that organic trade can heal everything that there is in the world. But there is a role to play in the very innovative ways of marketing that we are developing. There is also a role for us to connect with the IATP (*Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy*) for instance, or other organizations that are concerned with international trade. Sometimes I'm concerned that all the *bads* of the world are put on the shoulders of organic farmers, whereas they already do so much. They do their best to improve their part, and there's also something in the political context that we need to focus some attention on.

IFOAM policy and regulatory issues

CQ: How much effort does the IFOAM - Organics International office give to policy and regulatory mechanisms?

Louise: We look at the global level at the inputs and outputs of the food and agricultural organizations of the United Nations, including The FAO (*Food and Agriculture Organization*) and other UN organizations that set frameworks and help governments to set frameworks and guidelines on sustainable production and many other aspects.

The other area where we are getting increasingly more active in, is directly advising governments— not on regulations but on what might be a good transition from one sort of agriculture to another.

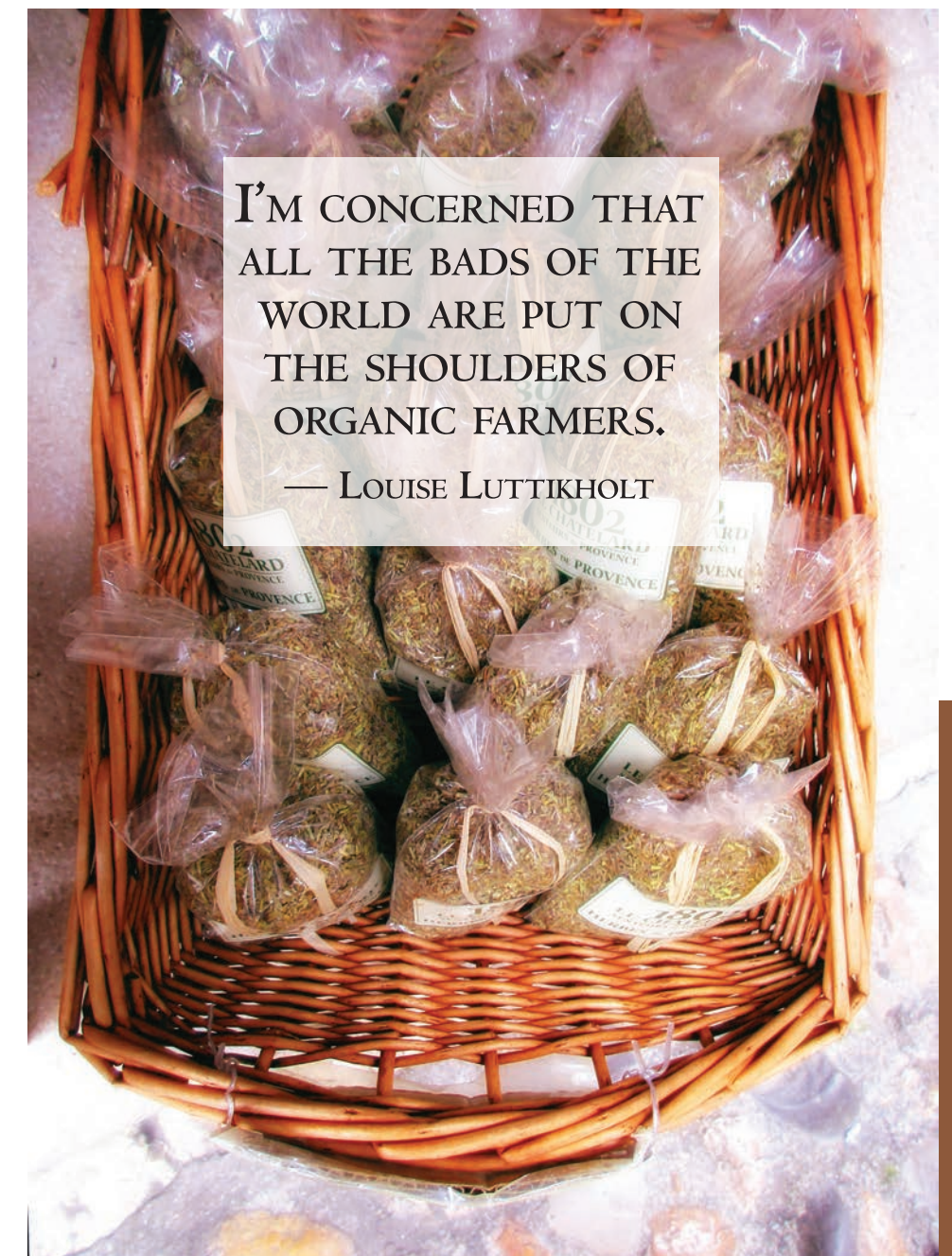
You may be aware of our *Policy Toolkit*: [Click Here](#) It's something that we're really promoting and using when we talk to governments. We have now set up a platform for government decision-makers to talk to each other. So indeed, if you ask what can we learn from Senegal or what we can learn from some of the Pacific Island states, what we hear is: 'We need to have some of these decision makers talking to each other.'

Because there are so many questions, we've created the

Food Policy Forum for Change [Click Here](#) in which we want to moderate this discussion, mentor decision makers, and show what is possible. Most of the time we need to have individuals make the change in the system, but if they are doubtful, or they have questions, or they've been pushed back, it will be difficult for them.

So how can we support them? Show what is possible. Show what is happening in other parts of the world. That's an initiative we take.

Another one is to make sure that others amplify our arguments and our rationale. So we seek contacts with others like Consumers International or Greenpeace International and



I'M CONCERNED THAT ALL THE BADS OF THE WORLD ARE PUT ON THE SHOULDERS OF ORGANIC FARMERS.

— LOUISE LUTTIKHOLT

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a broad range of local organizations so that they pick up on our messages. And maybe they transform it a little bit in their own language, but they speak the arguments and rationales that we would like them to speak.

Our international campaigns, like *I grow Your Food* [Click Here](#) are helping in that direction. We are building these up in a relatively easy and playful way on social media, helping create the kind of social pressure needed to effectively discuss change at the UN Food System Summit.

We also need to gather proof, so we are working with some projects that are financed by development corporation aid to work at both the local and international level. We are demonstrating that organic agriculture doesn't need to be certified, but organic practices are actually a direct tool for providing better nutrition to people. So we work with rural service providers in specific areas, animating people to revive and improve old ways of conserving food and vitamins. We show that diversified agricultural production increases the nutritional intake of local families, and that diversify in school gardens can improve their health. With these results, we can go to the global platforms for nutrition to demonstrate programs for

scaling up nutrition. So we're talking agriculture, and showing real results by just making the move to organic.

That's what we're showing the world from our office in Bonn. What is great about our network, is the groups we work with. I spoke of our activities with IFOAM Asia, where they convene with the mayors in their region. The IFOAM Organics Europe regional group is very, very active when it comes to the EU Regulations, as well as their common agricultural policy, so that all the work we do, works in common. There's also a role that IFOAM NA has to play, offering examples from the US and Canada to show others in the world organic community what is running well in your region. While some of the North American initiatives are not unique, I'm aware of a couple of very good regional CSA models that people around the world are looking at, and we are all learning from the refinements that your members are making.

So these are valuable experiences of how we can share with each other.

CQ: You're mapping out a knowledge-sharing network.

Louise: That is very important.

CQ: None of us knows the whole picture. We're active here in nutritional and pro-

duction issues, agro-ecology, equity and building a toolkit that enables us to speak directly with each other in a way that enhances our knowledge base. And yet, we're not islands. As you said, we're all on a small planet and we need to work together.

I believe that: *The community mind is smarter than any individual.*

Organic World Congress 2021

Louise: There are so many experiences we can all learn from. And that is what the Organic World Congress does: Making those experiences available to others, celebrate them and share them.

Unfortunately, we had to postpone the World Congress from last year, but it will take place one way or another. The plenary speakers are already confirmed and the topics will include an animated discussion of business models that are up-scaling and out-scaling organic. We will be discussing various business models within the same sector, to see how each of them plays their role, and which one might be better suited than another for individual operations. So it will be really exciting when we can talk to the CEOs of some of these companies.

We will be talking about what does societal transformation

mean. And so we are looking at agriculture more from the social perspectives, with speakers from the US *Presencing Institute*. [Click Here](#)

The Congress will also be looking at what signals of hope exist already, and what are the next steps for raising those signals. This is an offering at the edge of hope.

So we promise this Congress to be very, very interesting. It's not only doom-and-gloom when we look at our world. There are so many wonderful examples, with many practices and experiences that we can build on to map the next steps in our journey.

Included in this exciting event will be break-out groups. The speakers and presenters who have already submitted their content for the Organic World

Congress for 2020, responded to the call in 2019. There are specific groups where members can find a lively exchange around their subjects, and an opportunity for the audience to listen, work on the issue, and ask questions. So in that sense, there are a comprehensive set of smaller groups focusing on: seed, education, policies, value change approaches, refinements in certification, as well as agricultural practices.

It's always a pleasure to be at one of these breakout-groups where farmers, without much 'formal' scientific background, show pictures of their farms, and demonstrate how they have gone through transition.

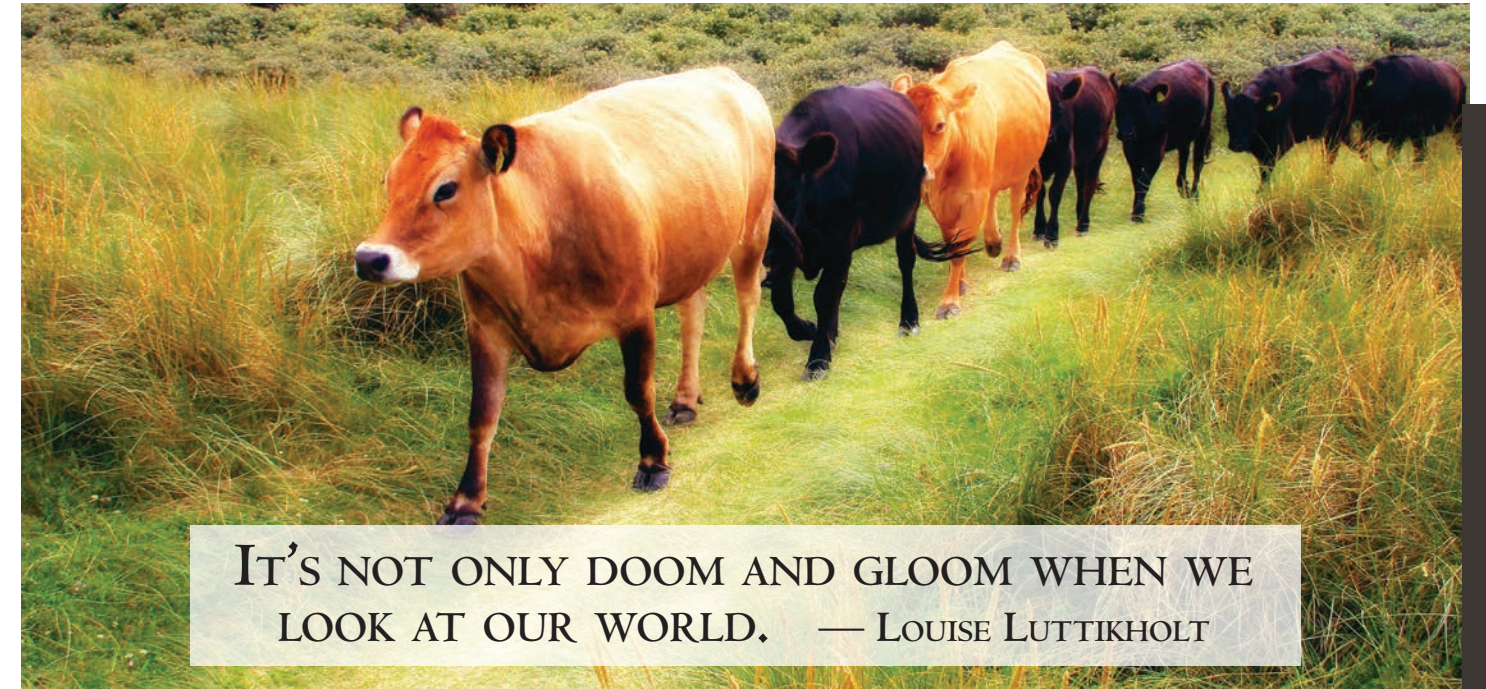
CQ: Is there a full listing of the sessions and break-out groups that IFOAM members here can look at?

Louise: Our preliminary program, conference forums and side events are available: [Click Here](#).

CQ: We have a large group of diverse members in North America. Some are farmers, some are policy developers. We have trade experts, agronomists, and a wide group of food activists who will be glad to hear that there will be something for each one of them to participate in. It's important for a democratic process that every member has a voice and an opportunity to influence policy. We're looking forward to hear and be heard from like-minded agriculturalists around the world.

Louise: Even if the Congress unfolds on video, this is still a good opportunity to create change. Of course, we hope

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IT'S NOT ONLY DOOM AND GLOOM WHEN WE
LOOK AT OUR WORLD. — LOUISE LUTTIKHOLT

that there will be a live component, but due to the pandemic, we're not currently sure what that will look like. We have concerns about members in less affluent parts of the world who may not have received vaccinations in time. Although we want this to be a truly inclusive event, we must make sure that everyone can participate safely.

We also have new tool at IFOAM - Organics International where every quarter, the regional bodies come together and exchange and look at opportunities for collaboration.

We say: *Excellent! Go for it.* Which is different from: *Oh, we all have to do all our planning together, which might be a heavy bureaucratic process.* But this is a nice way to collaborate.

Rising above difficult times

CQ: These are difficult times, and to move through them gracefully is a big challenge. Farmers are saying that it's hard to meet with their customers, and a challenge to arrange certification inspections.

Louise: While it's been difficult for farmers, their stature and image has risen. People know again how important it is to have food security and healthy soil. There is also a real opportunity for farmers

to contribute to communities more than ever.

CQ: This tragic health crisis has proven to the public that there is resiliency in our food system, and the local farming community has made a major contribution to this. People are finding joy in going to their farmers market and having a box of fresh-picked produce delivered to their homes.

Louise: The CSAs and box schemes have been the invention of the organic sector, and it's fascinating how many people are signing up on the internet to be connected to a local farm and get their organic food delivered. I can be proud that the organic sector has already lived this before, and it's now being taken up by others. And when the consumers embrace it, they start to ask: "So what's behind it? How do you produce this?"

CQ: The public is beginning to embrace the joy of an intimate relationship with the land we inhabit and the cycles of the seasons.

The more progressive farms who have grown large CSA programs, are now being financed by their local communities, and converting the new land they add onto their operations into land trusts. Organic farmland then be-

comes a permanent community asset. As local people take ownership of the protection of their local land with organic covenants, this offers better opportunities for the land to transfer successfully from one generation to another. New Agrarians can take over the operation with the benefit that the land has been managed organically, and will continue to be managed as organic. It creates a permanent community asset supported and financed by local people, offering vital environmental services back to the community.

This is a powerful consciousness shift.

Louise: Time is short and we must choose where we go as a next step, and where we spend our energy.

If we take on the responsibility and role of the organic sector, it's an honor to help contribute to the much needed paradigm shift.



Membership Resources

Why we need IFOAM North America

The organic sector needs a strategic organization that provides a sustaining and dynamic vision based on a solid foundation of underlying principles. IFOAM NA should serve as a forum for the debate of the key ideas of the organic sector. We need to create an environment for a healthy and respectful dialog among members of the organic community. We will have differences, and those differences can be passionately expressed. The forum should provide a safe space for people to express new ideas within the context of the organic principles and the evolution of Organic 3.0.

IFOAM NA also has a responsibility to train and mentor the leaders of tomorrow. In that context, IFOAM NA can work with educational and academic programs to develop teaching materials. IFOAM NA can also develop a network of mentors who will prepare tomorrow's organic leaders. IFOAM NA can also work with existing non-prof-

it organizations that seek to advance organic agriculture research, and provide a common platform for those organizations to act in concert.

The Scope of IFOAM Activities

- Takes a position on public policies;
- Makes public comments as an organization;
- Supports or opposes proposed legislation;
- Signs onto petitions;
- Acts on litigation;
- Issues public statements; or sends out communications related to matters of interest to the organic community.

Goals for IFOAM this year:

- Developing and Promoting Organic 3.0
- Exciting Webinars
- Supporting Diversity & Equity
- The IFOAM Academy

Social Media for organic food activists

Please follow us on social media, share our posts and offer your comment to the postings.

[Facebook address](#)

[Twitter address](#)

[IFOAM North America website](#)

IFOAM - Organics International [Instagram address](#)

IFOAM - Organics International Key Policy Documents

[Global Policy Toolkit](#)

[Organic Regulation Toolkit](#)

Food Policy Forum for Change [A Peer-to-Peer Exchange Among Policy Makers](#)

An interview with Daphne Miller

The intersection of soil, food, health, and justice

An important discussion in Organic 3.0 is the upgrading of our food system to guarantee that underserved urban communities have equal access to quality food

*Daphne Miller is a whole-systems thinking medical doctor and author of **Farmacology**, a book that introduces us to the critical idea that it's the farm where our food is grown that offers us the real medicine. Miller explores all the aspects of farming—from seed choice to soil management—bridging the traditional divide between agriculture and medicine. Today, she is working on the front lines of food security in Richmond, California.*

We began a conversation on how organic is defined by what it isn't, rather than what it is.

Daphne Miller: It's really hard for people to wrap their brains around something that's an absence of stuff rather than all the good things that come with a healthy production system. I am less concerned about agricultural terms such as *organic* or *regenerative*, and more concerned about promoting a way of



WHAT THE FOOD JUSTICE MOVEMENT IS TEACHING US IS THAT MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR NEED TO CONTROL THE SOIL WHERE THEIR FOOD IS GROWN, IN ORDER TO RECLAIM THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH.

growing food that does not require a lot of external inputs, which supports and nourishes communities.

I have found that it is hard to make a living doing food system work as a doctor. I still need to keep my day job. But honestly, I feel I can have a more positive impact on the health of my patients by collaborating with farmers, ecologists, agronomists and food system workers to grow a more health-centered foodshed.

This is my passion work.

When I started to do this work, I focused on food production rather than retail or eating environments, because agriculture is a fundamental driver of health. The way we grow our food impacts our health in so many ways—through culture, environment, economy, and of course, nutrition. I look at my work in agriculture and the food system as a medium for shifting community health.

So often, when people want to talk to me about the connections between soil and human health, the number one topic they want to discuss is the microbiome: how the microbes in the soil interact with those in our gut. I think this stuff is super cool and cutting edge,

but it is only one aspect of the human-soil-health connection, and the microbes are a function of much larger decisions that are being made on that land. A more important connection between human health and the health of the soil is whether every community can determine how its soil is treated and how its food is grown. What the food justice movement is teaching us, is that marginalized communities and communities of color need to control the soil where their food is grown in order to reclaim their physical health. Of course, by extension, they need to determine which seeds and other inputs are used to grow their food.

People also want to do lots of scientific studies to explore why natural places make us feel good, so-called *biophilia* research. I am not so sure if it makes sense for us to be focusing too much attention in this realm. We have co-evolved with our natural environments and ecological milieu since we were tiny, unicellular organisms, so it makes sense that these are places that make us feel at home. I would rather have us spend our research efforts figuring out how we can have a smaller footprint in order to preserve these natural

places.

I am not sure if I am a medical ecologist, in fact I am not even sure what that term means. But I like the sound of it. When I use the term, it's almost aspirational. Wouldn't it be amazing if I had the training and a job that allowed me to look at natural settings and human bodies as one system. I think that the divisions that currently exist between medicine and ecology are often artificial, and do a disservice to the pursuit of 'health-for-all.' We don't really have a term for that kind of work.

I'm presently involved with a Rodale Institute program that's trying to create a certificate and a training fellowship for health professionals to become partners in growing a healthy food production system.

We call the Fellowship: *Health from the Soil Up Fellowship*, [Here](#) because we don't really have a term other than that. Its mission is to train health professionals about the various connections between food production, agriculture and human health. We need this to better engage in food system transformation.

In my work as a physician, I am involved with a Veggie
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Rx project in an underserved community in North Richmond, California. A lot of my patients are well below the poverty level and are really hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. They have experienced higher rates of hunger and nutrition insecurity, and higher rates of hospitalization and death, compared to the general San Francisco Bay Area.

So our clinic has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a local farm called *Urban Tilth*, which is a rather amazing farm. Most of the community members who run and work on the farm are people of color, and they offer a weekly CSA box which includes their own produce, plus food from other farmers of color who are in the greater Bay Area. They have been giving these deliveries of fresh vegetable to our patients in a box once a week as part of a clinical intervention.

I just got off the phone with a head of the health plan for our county. It's a health plan that covers a lot of these low-income patients, and I was trying to convince him that the health plan should be paying for these boxes. It's really cost-effective for them to be paying for food rather than paying for the diabetes medicine or, god forbid, hospitalization for congestive heart



**MOST OF THE
COMMUNITY MEMBERS
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failure or amputations from advanced diabetes. So why not pay for a 30-dollar CSA box once a week?

He totally got it. And I think that's really forward thinking.

But he told me: "Daphne, you have to understand about these health care plans— they

only care about the next 12 months, and you need to show cost savings within that framework. They don't care about prevention in the long-term, so if you're talking to me about feeding fresh vegetables to young children who might go on to develop diabetes and heart disease, we can't do that



math, because that's 20 years down the road and we don't know if they'll be our patients then."

It's just so sad that this is our outlook. This is not how food works. Food is something that we invest in as a long-term health resource. What we eat when we are young impacts our health in our 50s, 60s and 70s. So the idea that we can use food to shift outcomes within a 12 month period is not very realistic.

Investments to support farmers and fresh foods might change our health outcomes if we just had a bit longer term perspective.

Urban Tilth is also helping transform the corporate landscape planter boxes outside our clinic into edible herb boxes. We might as well replace these useless plants with edible herbs that offer a high nutrition bang per ounce. I'm

thinking cilantro, oregano, rosemary and thyme, and let our patients grab little handfuls of it as they leave our clinic.

We also have a cooking class every week out in the parking lot so that it can be socially distanced. Many of our patients really appreciate learning about vegetable butchery and how to use fresh herbs to boost their diet.

As an endgame, we are trying to broker a relationship between our patients and the farm, and cut out our clinic out as the middle person. The farm is less than two miles away, and people have never even heard of it. We're trying to be a community bridge.

70% of what I deal with in the clinic on a daily basis could be solved if people had more access to more healthful food and the resources to be able to prepare it. That's a

challenge when you're working two jobs and life is incredibly overwhelming.

The discussion of 'food deserts' is a bit outmoded also. Instead, I like thinking about 'zones of nutrient insecurity.' On the one hand, there are often healthy food sources that are overlooked when the USDA makes the determination that a place is a food desert. This includes local farms and gardens, food swaps, corner stores, and foraging opportunities. On the flip side, many retailers who officially qualify as a food source, including supermarkets, often serve unaffordable junk. Part of the challenge with creating an alternate local food system is not just making sure that the resources are there, but getting the word out to folks, because people are used to heading to the supermarket.

We also need a more seamless way of enrolling community

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members in SNAP or Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Programs, because these dollars can be used to pay for fresh, local food.

Overall, poor people still have to work way too hard to obtain good food. It is not even near becoming a universal right in this country, which is crazy. And it's even crazier that advocating for and providing delicious and healthful food isn't a core activity within healthcare. Some health institutions and insurers are doing this, but not enough.

Many farmers stand ready to grow the right things and get them to the right people. It's just that they only have so much bandwidth and don't have the time to build these relationships. *Urban Tilt* would have been unable to bring vegetables to our patients had we, as health professionals, not reached out to them. And how many folks in health care are building these bridges and directly supporting local agriculture?

Doctors and health professionals need to advocate and act on a whole different level. They need to ask: How do I support food production? Who are the local farmers? How do I get these resources to my patients?

Whether you're in a clinic, in hospital administration, running a cafeteria, or in a skilled

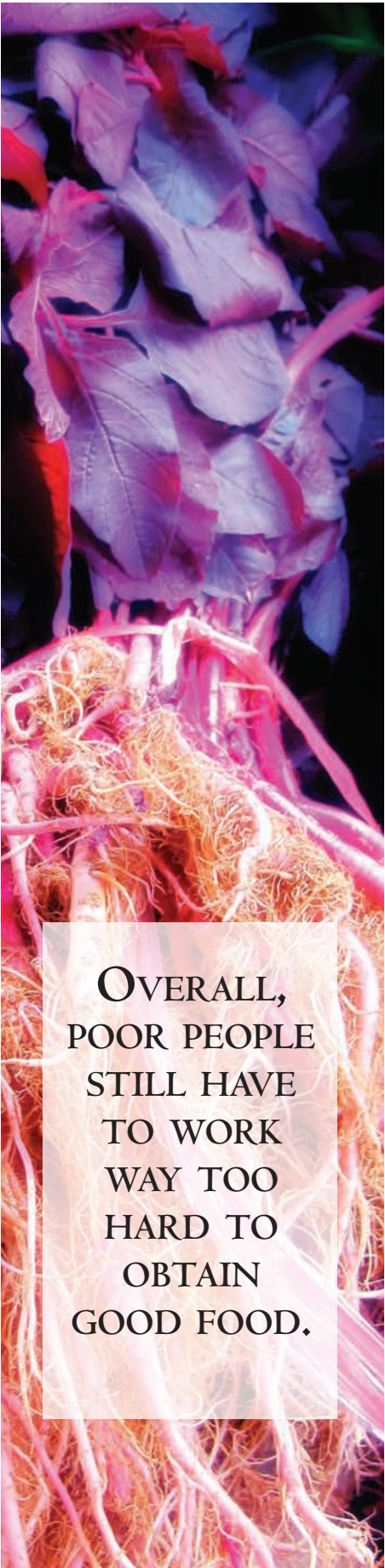
nursing facility—you have power to change your soil and your food system.

We also need to tell our story to the local insurers, and start demanding that wholesome food is offered as a benefit. State Assemblyman Robert Bonta in California has introduced a *Food as Medicine* bill, and is getting involved with changing policy. We need to take the long view when it comes to food, farms and health.

CQ: What do you think of the term, Food as Medicine?

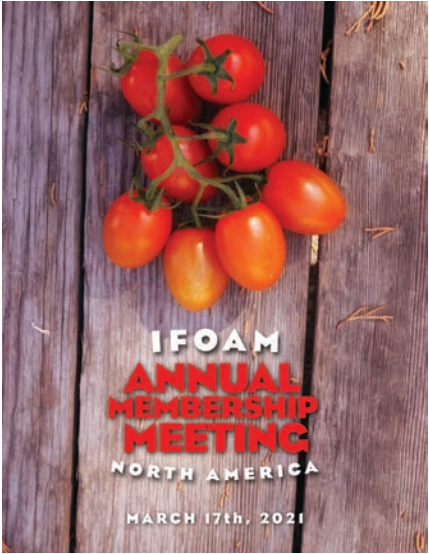
DM: We've gotten used to popping a pill in the morning and feeling different by evening.

I think it is a bad idea to put food in that category. Pharmaceuticals like Prozac and Viagra are medicines. There are certainly foods that can act medicinally. For example, I just finished my cup of coffee, and that's affected me rather rapidly. But the same-day effect of medicines and medicinals is very different from the slower process of eating a diet of well-grown food that changes our physiology over decades. Food is nourishment.



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IFOAM North America's Annual Membership Meeting



Opening the meeting

Outgoing President Brian Baker presented a meeting agenda overview, including a call for member feedback, after which Vice President Jennifer Taylor welcomed attendees and presented an overview of IFOAM North America. Board member Marla Carlson then gave a short presentation on *Organics by the Numbers in Canada*, identifying our members.

Following Marla, IFOAM NA Coordinator Ken McCormick presented a slide showing the IFOAM year in review. He talked about how we are a diverse and resilient group here for the long term. Then reviewed our year's activities, including:

- Our *Organic Spring* Town Hall webinar,
- The launch of *Cultivated Quarterly*,
- WeShare, our first International webinar on the issues connection farmers worldwide faced during this pandemic, and
- Outlined an overview of IFOAM NA priorities for 2021.

IFOAM Organics International Report

IFOAM Organics International Executive Director Louise Lutikholt joined us from Germany to give an overview of global perspective on organic agriculture, with a look at:

- Sustainable development goals,
- FiBL/IFOAM statistics from 2019 showing continued organic growth, including some states where it's 100%.
- IFOAM's Theory of Change
- IFOAM achievements as a global player in UN positions
- UN Food Systems Summit to develop bold new actions
- Policy levers driving sustainability
- IFOAM tools to serve the Organic Ag community
- Food Policy Forum for

change - with Ministers of Agriculture and state decision makers

- Increased visibility and credibility, with success stories and innovations like the *IGrowYourFood* campaign
- Closer collaboration as a network with the IFOAM Network Council, along with a reminder of the *World Congress* 6-10 Sept 2021 virtual forum. More Info: [Here](#)

Question and Answers

A question and answer period followed, moderated by Brian Baker. Members discussed the following:

- Regenerative term impact on organic and caution against greenwashing
- A study regarding how much non-certified organic farming is out there with intentional practices
- How is IFOAM engaging in climate disruption by promoting organic
- Resources on IFOAM Internationals work on nutritionally sensitive agriculture shared, and
- What resources or policy work has IFOAM done on the topic of adventitious

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GMO contamination that puts organic status at risk.

Member Participation

Brian then shared a few slides outlining IFOAM NA priorities and asked what members want from the organization:

How do we formulate policy positions, and what if we disagree? What programs should we initiate and how should we be involved?

In the discussion that followed, members spoke on how recent work from the Organic Center on climate and agriculture could be an area of focus.

In the meeting chat section, we received lots of comments on the importance of dealing with organic fraud. The Canadian Organic Trade Association has asked for a grant to look at fraud, and as a result now has gotten sued. Louise Luttkholt commented that IFOAM cannot take the role of global policing, but can provide information and promote transparency. IFOAM NA has been speaking with organic grain traders on this issue to assist communication among other grain traders.

Discussion followed on how can we find a niche and add value to our members by not duplicating what's being done by other groups. IFOAM is unique in international focus and global perspective. We

are an enabler and amplifier to what members are already doing. While Sustainable Development Goals need amplifying, very little discussion is being focused on sustainability or on structural inequities. Little attention is made about organic 3.0 in this region either.

Brian closed with:
"Be a member 365 days a year... Be involved.... Get active."

Elections

Secretary Steve Walker then shared election results: With 45 eligible voting member organizations, 26 voted (58%), and the candidates with top three vote totals will serve three-year terms, while the next two will serve two-years. Thanks to all. Here are totals:

- 23% Mary-Howell Martens (elected 3 year term)
- 21% Jeff Schahczenski (elected 3 year term)
- 20% Jennifer Taylor (elected 3 year term)
- 15% Alan Lewis (elected 2 year term)
- 13% Nicolas Walser (elected 2 year term)
- 9% Thorsten Arnold (not elected)

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Margaret Scoles presented a Statement of Activity for 2020 and a Statement of Financial Position Comparison.

Some highlights include:

Contributions totaled about \$4,500, Total income for the year was just under \$15,000.

2020 spending tapped into some prior reserves. Our year-end totals were compared for the last several years.

Expenses included the Coordinator position.

Wrap up / Call for volunteers

Possible working groups: North American Organic Action Plan, Organic 3.0, Policy - Organic Manifesto, and SDG's focus.

Louise Luttkholt noted that there's a lot of resource information from IFOAM - Organics International that can be copied and shared. We do more and do it better when we work together.

Ken McCormick spoke to the value of IFOAM North America and our need for financial support, encouraging donations.

The meeting concluded with recognition of our outgoing Board members — Shannon Jones and Brian Baker — with special recognition for Brian's determination and commitment as a founding Board Member.

News Updates

European Action Plan for the Development of Organic Production

With the European Green Deal as the center of a climate-neutral Europe, The European Commission has published a comprehensive report describing the essential role that organic farming plays in this goal. Their new Organic Action Plan addresses improved integrity of organic products, inclusion of organic into green public procurement and specific funding for research and innovation in organic farming.

The plan encourages a marked increase in the share of organic farming in the EU, by encouraging all farmers to convert to organic and expand the accessibility of organic food to reach a 25% target by 2030.

Organic products will be integrated into public schools and workplaces through public procurement, into the hospitality sector through incentives and into supermarkets through promotional campaigns. The affordability of organic food for low-income families will also be addressed.

Key points in the report include:

- Organic food and products for all.
- Promoting organic farming and the EU organic logo
- Reinforce the entire value chain
- Encourage conversion, investment and exchange of best practices
- Enhance animal welfare

Real Organic Symposium

The 2021 Real Organic Symposium was held over five Sunday session in January, featuring a list of prominent list of speakers, including: Al Gore, Alice Waters, Elliot Coleman, Francis Thicke, Senator Patrick Leahy, Fred Kirschenmann, Paul Hawken, Vandana Shiva, and our very own IFOAM Board Member, Jennifer Taylor.

Sessions included: Soil Health, Farming & Climate, Health & Nutrition, and What Can We Do?

Students and farmers can still sign up to view the prerecorded interviews and Q&A that made up Real Organic Project's virtual symposium, for Free, at: [Click Here](#).

Transforming Food and Farming in Europe

IFOAM Organics Europe has published an organic roadmap to their *Organic Vision 2030*.

"As organic moves beyond a niche, the organic movement needs to take stock of what organic has become and what the future holds for us all. The movement needs to be prepared to cope with future political developments, environmental challenges and market trends. IFOAM Organics Europe has led a participatory vision and strategy process to prepare the movement to proactively face the future."

The European organic movement is looking to stimulate and rewards the further development of organic systems, improving the resilience and environmental performance of organic production systems, while innovative tools for upholding the integrity of the supply chain promote trust.

For more details: [Click Here](#).

Calendar

IFOAM 2021 Organic World Congress

On September 6-10 2021, more than 2,500 organic stakeholders, farmers, researchers, and citizens will come together at the world's largest organic gathering to address questions around resilience, societal transformation, ecosystem regeneration, health, and food sovereignty.

The 2021 Organic World Congress will offer a global, diverse space that inspires positive change through knowledge exchange, learning, and the formulation of organic, sustainable solutions, for a better tomorrow. 600 speakers have been selected, and thanks to our members from around the world, we are able to prepare a programme as rich and

engaging as the movement it reflects. The Organic World Congress will be both an in-person and virtual event. Starting in mid-January 2021, tickets will be able for purchase for the in-person For more details: [Click Here](#)

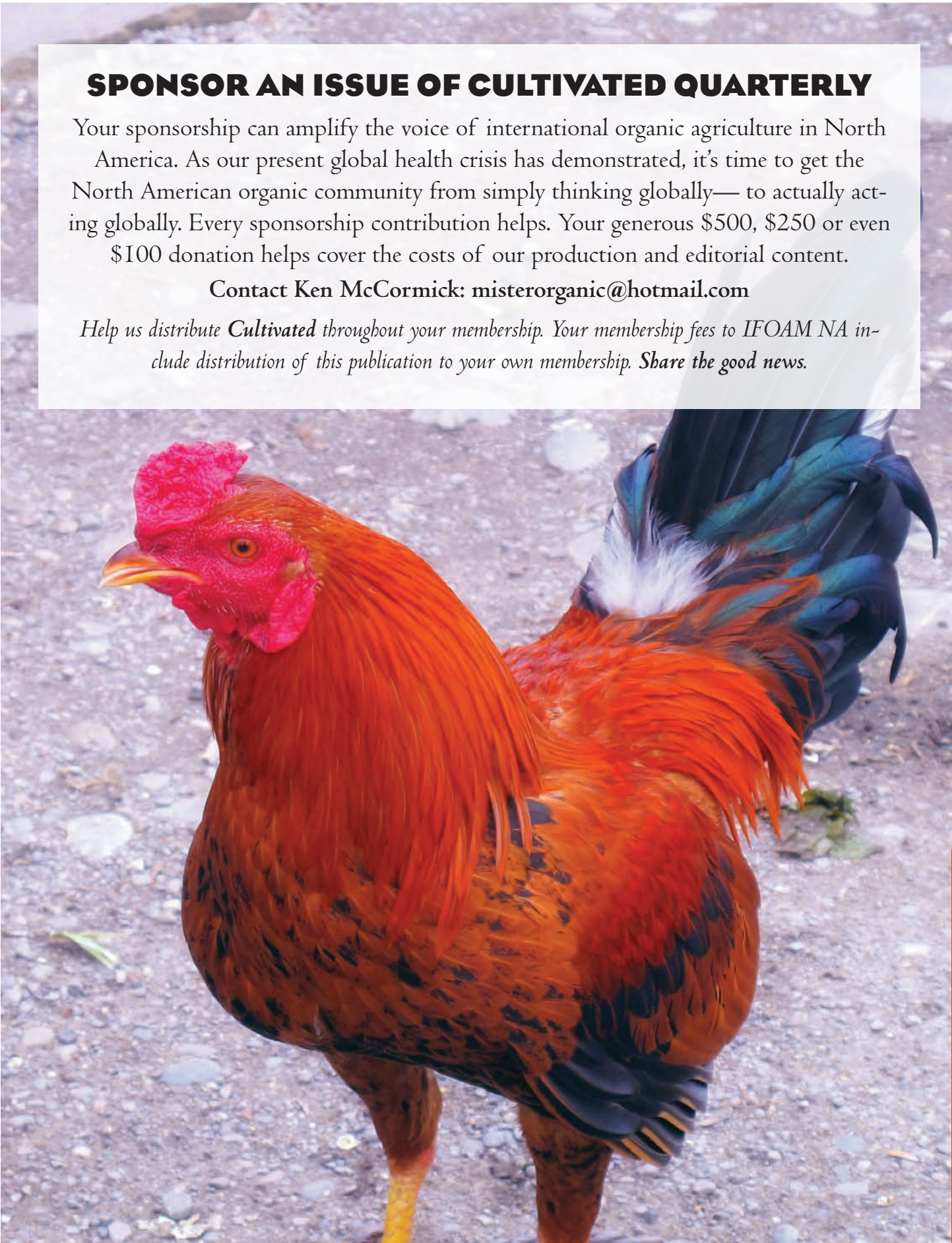


SPONSOR AN ISSUE OF CULTIVATED QUARTERLY

Your sponsorship can amplify the voice of international organic agriculture in North America. As our present global health crisis has demonstrated, it's time to get the North American organic community from simply thinking globally— to actually acting globally. Every sponsorship contribution helps. Your generous \$500, \$250 or even \$100 donation helps cover the costs of our production and editorial content.

Contact Ken McCormick: misterorganic@hotmail.com

*Help us distribute **Cultivated** throughout your membership. Your membership fees to IFOAM NA include distribution of this publication to your own membership. **Share the good news.***





**There are Indian
states that have
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organic farmers.**

— Louise Luttikholt