



March Highlights

Partner Spotlight: *Organic Association of Kentucky*

The Organic Association of Kentucky (OAK) was founded in 2009 by farmers for farmers. OAK works to advance on-farm ecological resilience by promoting organic regenerative agriculture as a means to improve the health of Kentucky communities and to strengthen the economic viability of family farming operations. OAK, with the support of many strong partnerships, continues to offer organic programs and resources to increase organic production, market demand, and awareness about the benefits of an organic food supply.

Over the past 13 years OAK has been leading organic farmer education and technical assistance in Kentucky, reaching 1,500 farmers annually with information and programs about organic certification, production, and markets. With over 450 members and well-established partnerships, OAK is expanding the organic community in Kentucky by fostering a network of support and experience for farmers, agricultural professionals, local food advocates, and communities working to advance regenerative organic production across the state.



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Midwest TOPP 2024 4th Quarter Summary

During Quarter 4 (Oct – Dec 2024), MW TOPP partners continued to make progress on TOPP goals to increase organic production across the U.S. The MW TOPP Organic Mentorship program **supported 88 mentor pairs** across the 11-state region, and helped **18 new operations transition to certified organic on 419 new acres**. The MW Team **offered 1:1 technical assistance to at least 257 producers** and **created 38 new resources**; and **participated in 48 events** providing a wide-range of resources about organic certification, crop production, markets and other related-topics.

Success Stories

CAFF Expands Organic Mentorship and Technical Support in Arkansas



The Center for Arkansas Farms and Food (CAFF) organized an organic track for the Arkansas Grown Conference in Hot Springs on February 1st. The organic sessions focused on: Thinking About Getting Certified? Where to Start, Weed Management the Organic Way, Putting Cover Crops to Work, and Talking Shop, Successes, Challenges, Vendors, and Varieties.

Throughout the different sessions, Searcy farmer, Cory Babb of Firelight Farms, sat in the audience listening intently to each of the presenters.

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Iowa Vegetable Grower Explores Organic Certification with ISU



The sun beats down on a two-acre vegetable farm surrounded by conventional corn and soybeans. The corn is a reminder that this little oasis of diverse, organically managed vegetables is situated in the Midwest corn belt. But there is a difference in the crops grown by Shaffer Ridgeway and the ones typically found in the vegetable gardens of Iowa. ***“The riches are in the niches,”*** says Ridgeway as he walks past rows of purple hulled peas, collard greens, and thirteen other varieties of southern produce.

“We found a niche in our community and it’s worked for us.”

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Michigan TOPP Connects with Organic Producers at Breakfast Social



Grand Traverse Conservation District, in collaboration with the Midwest Transition to Organic Partnership Program in Michigan, organized and facilitated an “Organic Farmer Breakfast Social” for the Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference. Discussions focused on organic farming practices, the transition and certification process, business development, mentorship opportunities, and answering questions along the way.

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2025 OGRAIN Conference Offers Organic Resources and Community



In January, OGRAIN held their annual Winter Conference in Madison, Wisconsin – bringing together 250 farmer participants and 35 industry exhibitors from the Upper Midwest. As a Core Partner to the Midwest Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP), TOPP resources and partnerships contributed to developing a well-rounded program of organic presentations, roundtable sessions, technical assistance, and networking opportunities – strengthening Wisconsin’s organic farming community.

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Upcoming Midwest Events

>>> [VIEW ALL TOPP EVENTS HERE](#) <<<

Mar 15	Michigan Family Farms Conference	FIND OUT MORE
Mar 19	Rodale Institute Webinar: Buyer Perspectives on Livestock	FIND OUT MORE
Mar 26	Iowa Organic Association Webinar: Organic Apples and Cider Production	FIND OUT MORE
Mar 26	Rodale Institute Advisor Series: Organic Markets for Livestock Farmers	FIND OUT MORE
Apr 8 – 9	Harvest of Ideas: “Organics as a Solution to Global Challenges” Madison, Wisconsin	FIND OUT MORE
Apr 9	Rodale Institute Webinar: ROI of Organic Transition for Dairy Farmers	FIND OUT MORE
Apr 16	Rodale Institute Webinar: Buyer Perspectives on Organic Dairy Sourcing	FIND OUT MORE
Apr 23	Rodale Institute Advisor Series: Organic Markets for Dairy Farmers	FIND OUT MORE
Apr 24	Field Day: Cover Crops, Perennials and Diversified Crops-Sustainable Practices for Long-Term Farming Lexington, Kentucky	FIND OUT MORE
Apr 30	CAFF: Organic Weed Control Workshop Fayetteville, Arkansas	FIND OUT MORE
May 7	Rodale Institute Webinar: Markets ROI of Organic Transition for Grain Farmers	FIND OUT MORE
May 14	Rodale Institute Webinar: Buyer Perspectives on Organic Grain Sourcing	FIND OUT MORE
May 21	Rodale Institute Advisor Series: Organic Markets for Grain Farmers	FIND OUT MORE

Announcements

OTA survey shows: Younger, health-conscious consumers are embracing organic



A \$70-billion market now, organic may be maturing, but younger consumers - including new parents and their babies -- are eating it up. A survey released by the Organic Trade Association finds that organic's benefits to personal health and nutrition are resonating deeply with Millennials and Gen Z, making them the most committed organic consumers of any generation.

The results showed that not only do members of the Millennial and Gen Z generations buy the most organic, but that the USDA Organic label garners the deepest trust from consumers of all ages and is synonymous with health in the minds of most shoppers.

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Input from buyers needed: Improved supplier discovery



As the Organic Transition Initiative expands the transitioning and organic domestic supply, U.S. organic buyers need support with improved supplier discovery tools to identify the transitioning and new organic supply and to keep up with growing demand in the marketplace.

If your business is looking to source from organic and transitioning producers and growers in the U.S., please respond to [this short form](#) for future outreach to upcoming events through the Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) supporting market development.

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Find an Accredited Certifying Agent

The [Organic INTEGRITY Database \(INTEGRITY\)](#) created the Organic Certifier Locator. This helpful tool is updated regularly by the National Organic Program and it provides accurate information about accredited certifying agents.

[>>> FIND A CERTIFIER HERE <<<](#)

ORGANIC MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Transition to Organic

[>>> BECOME A MENTOR <<<](#)

[>>> BECOME A MENTEE <<<](#)

organictransition.org/mentorship-program

Midwest TOPP Partners



About TOPP

MOSA Certified Organic is the Midwest Lead Cooperator for the **USDA Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP)**. Our coalition of partners serves producers in Arkansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. Through TOPP, the Midwest Regional Center and its partner organizations will connect farmers transitioning to organic with local, experienced organic mentors; provide farmer training and education; develop and expand access to technical assistance and training; build networks and strengthen the organic community; and support workforce training and development.

