



## Spring Highlights

### ***Partner Spotlight: Center for Arkansas Farms and Food***

The Center for Arkansas Farms and Food (CAFF) was established in 2019 as part of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture to strengthen and expand the food and farming system in Arkansas by providing new opportunities to shape current and future farmers, food entrepreneurs, and food system leaders.

CAFF's mission centers on experiential education, strategic partnerships, and community engagement. The Farm School Program remains a cornerstone of CAFF's work, providing 9-months of intensive classroom and field-based instruction for a cohort of new farmers.



As a core partner for the Midwest Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP), CAFF has been able to significantly focus on expanding organic agriculture in Arkansas by hosting organic-specific field days, facilitating organic farmer mentorships, fostering a community of organic growers, one-on-one technical assistance for farmers, and creating organic training opportunities for agriculture professionals.

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### ***2024 TOPP Impact Report***



The Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) recently released its 2024 Impact Report documenting the program's success as a strategic investment in domestic organic agriculture. Since 2022, TOPP has focused on mentorship, technical assistance, community building and market expansion to help U.S. farmers meet domestic demand for certified organic food. Across the country, TOPP is expanding opportunities for American farmers interested in organic agriculture — while strengthening rural communities.

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# Success Stories

## ***With TOPP Support, Iowa Grass-Fed Beef Operation Transitions to Organic***



The Iowa Organic Association matched Jack Fehr of Clear Creek Acres in northern Iowa as a mentor to Knute and Amanda Severson of Grand View Beef in Clarion as they embarked on their first year of organic transition. The Seversons are integrating organic grain and pasture into their grass-fed beef operation to increase organic and sustainable practices on the farm and to meet consumer demand for those livestock practices. This mentorship offers a valuable support for farmers interested in organic production and for expanding organic agriculture practices across Iowa.

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## ***Michigan TOPP Team Launches Organic Certification Readiness Assessment***



Michigan TOPP partners designed the Organic Certification Readiness Assessment for farmers considering USDA organic certification. This assessment provides feedback for those who have already decided to certify, by evaluating current farming and record keeping practices; and an idea of what kinds of changes an operation would need to make in order to become organic compliant.

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## ***University of Minnesota Forms Organic Agriculture Community of Practice***



A new collaborative effort is taking root at the University of Minnesota in partnership with the USDA's Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) in Minnesota. The UMN Organic Agriculture Community of Practice was developed to bring together researchers, educators, and students with a shared passion for organic farming systems to foster a strong learning network that supports knowledge sharing and collective problem-solving.

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## ***Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association is Training Organic Inspectors***



As the lead Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) partner in Ohio, the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA) has been working on closing a specific gap within the organic sector, the need for more inspectors. The lack of organic inspectors slows down certification timelines and makes an already tough transition for most farmers a little bit harder. OEFFA has been collecting materials and working with organic stakeholders to develop an online inspector course to fill that gap.

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[>>> MORE TOPP NEWS <<<](#)

# Upcoming Midwest Events

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

Jun 14	Field Day: From Field Crops to Organic Cherries: Farming for Soil Health and Diversity   Keota, Iowa	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Jun 19	Organic Farmers Association Virtual Collective Farmer Circle: Irrigation Strategies for Specialty Crop Growers	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Jun 21	Field Day: North End Community Improvement Cooperative-Multi-Urban Farm Tour   Mansfield, Ohio	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Jun 22	Field Day: Pollinators at Rattles Organic Garden   Vilonia, Arkansas	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Jun 23	Field Day: Community-Support Agriculture and Pastured Livestock Oneida, Kentucky	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Jun 25	Field Day: Organic Cereals Field Walk   Madison, Wisconsin	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Jul 9	Field Day: Southern Goods, LLC   Waterloo, Iowa	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Jul 17	Field Day: Organic Grains to Glass   La Crosse, Wisconsin	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Jul 17	Field Day: Organic in the Ozarks   Vernon, Missouri	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Jul 19	Field Day: Transitioning to Organic Berry Farm Tour   Poca, West Virginia (hosted by Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Assoc)	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Jul 27	Field Day: Processing, Storing, and Aggregating Local Vegetables for Schools   Kalona, Iowa	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Aug 12	Field Day: Diversifying an Organic Farm: Row Crops, Small Grains and Holstein Heifers   Manning, Iowa	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>
Aug 19	Field Day: Organic Grain Soil Health, Testing, and an Introduction to Agroforestry   Spring Green, Wisconsin	<a href="#">FIND OUT MORE</a>



CAFF Field Day (May 2025)



OGRAIN Conference (Feb 2025)



IOA Field Day (June 2024)

## Upcoming Midwest Events-continued

<b>Aug 26</b>	Field Day: UW Organic Research Update   Arlington, Wisconsin	<a href="#"><u>FIND OUT MORE</u></a>
<b>Aug 27</b>	Field Day: Farmer – Distiller Grain Connections   Paxton, Illinois	<a href="#"><u>FIND OUT MORE</u></a>
<b>Sep 9</b>	Field Day: Organic Management Strategies for Flourishing Field and Nutritious Crops   Garwin, Iowa	<a href="#"><u>FIND OUT MORE</u></a>
<b>Sep 10</b>	Field Day: Partnering to Graze Cover Crops and Improve Soil Health Sanborn, Iowa	<a href="#"><u>FIND OUT MORE</u></a>
<b>Sep 17</b>	Field Day: Sinsinawa Mound Collaborative Farm   Sinsinawa, Wisconsin (hosted by Iowa State University)	<a href="#"><u>FIND OUT MORE</u></a>
<b>Sep 27</b>	Field Day: Organic Grazing Pasture Walk   Xenia, Ohio	<a href="#"><u>FIND OUT MORE</u></a>

[\*\*>>> SUBMIT EVENTS HERE <<<\*\*](#)

# News & Announcements

## **University of Minnesota Siehl Prize for Excellence in Agriculture Laureate Carmen Fernholz, Organic Pioneer and TOPP Mentor**



Carmen Fernholz, organic farming pioneer and long-time leader in Minnesota’s farming community, was presented the Siehl Prize in May 2025. Carmen established A-Frame Farm—a 500-acre organic operation, in Madison, Minnesota in 1972, and first certifying organic in 1975. In 1992, Fernholz was a founding member of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) and he has testified at the Minnesota Legislature numerous times to advocate for sustainable agriculture. From the beginning of his farming career,

he has focused on soil conservation and water quality and he continues to be a highly sought mentor by other producers. Carmen helped establish the Midwest Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) mentorship program within OFARM and has been the lead OFARM mentor for mentees in Minnesota.

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## **Save the Dates: National Organic Coalition Hosts Virtual TOPP Gatherings**



NOC is excited to convene two virtual TOPP gatherings to help elevate key outcomes, spotlight opportunities, and strengthen our collective objectives moving forward as the Transition to Organic Partnership Program winds down.

- Mapping Organic Market Opportunities (July 9, 12 - 2 p.m. EST) to share, connect, and build on current research and market insights from the Organic Trade Association, OATS, and Rodale Institute.
- Communicating TOPP's Impact (July 23, 12 - 2 pm ET) to highlight the tangible successes of TOPP and equip partners to tell the story of its impact effectively.

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## **Organic Agronomy Training Service Offers FREE Field Crops Course**



The Organic Agronomy Training Service (OATS) Organic Field Crop Course prepares agriculture professionals to work one-on-one with transitional and certified organic field crop farmers, providing the high-quality information needed to advise farmer clients. This program was designed to help you understand and navigate the breadth of factors organic farmers must balance

in decision-making—not just agronomic considerations, but also marketing, management capability, and profitability—so that you can provide the best advice to your clients.

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## **National Organic Program Releases Microlearning “Retail Toolkit”**



The National Organic Program (NOP) published a new microlearning to the Organic Integrity Learning Center. It explains how retailers can use the NOP Retail Toolkit to educate consumers about the benefits of products labeled and marketed as organic. It examines the four pillars of the organic label and provide insights to help you understand how to use the graphics, signs, and messaging from the Retail Toolkit in real-world situations.

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## **Farmland for Lease in Wisconsin**



Living Lands Trust is now accepting long-term (15 years+) lease proposals for the operation and stewardship of 50 acres of farmland with a house and agricultural infrastructure. The farmland, referred to as the North Farm, is located at W2857 County Road ES, East Troy, WI. Proposals for becoming the next operator and steward of the North Farm are due by September 15, 2025.

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## National Organic Coalition is Hiring a Coalition Manager



NOC is seeking a highly organized and collaborative Coalition Manager to support our small, mission-driven team and coalition of national organic advocates. This role is perfect for someone who thrives on managing multiple projects, enjoys working behind the scenes to keep things running smoothly, and wants to deepen their understanding of food and agriculture policy.

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## The Rodale Institute is Hiring a Midwest Markets Coordinator



The Markets Coordinator will assist farmers across the Midwest region to connect with organic market opportunities and buyers, and work to establish local, regional, and national supply chains, with a particular focus on organic small grain, diverse row crop, and livestock markets.

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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](https://organictransition.org/mentorship-program)

## 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.

# Midwest TOPP Partners

