

IOIA Virtual AGM - March 4, 2021!

Date and time? March 4, Thursday, 3 p.m. Pacific in the US and the morning of March 5 for our Asia Pacific members. Never has it been so conceivable that every IOIA member could attend.

Format? Our first ever VIRTUAL meeting. The meeting will be hosted via IOIA's GoToMeeting platform, with the capacity for every IOIA inspector member to participate. Typical AGM attendance is about 30-40, similar to IOIA's monthly Town Halls. We are expecting the largest annual meeting to date on March 4. Don't miss it! The platform will allow up to 25 webcams at one time. We will limit participation to 24 to leave space for others to activate and join discussions. Members will have the opportunity to comment by webcam, phone, or chat. Every effort will be made to limit the length of the meeting to 3 hours, with the possibility that it will run 4 hours.

Although we will miss being together in person, we can all celebrate carbon saving and the opportunity to hear from more speakers who won't have to travel. The committee is researching online polling apps that can make this an interactive event where everyone can be heard. NOT just another Zoom meeting, we promise.

The cost? FREE to IOIA inspector members. Donations welcomed, but no advance registration is required and there is no registration fee.

Topics? In spite of a challenging year that came with many disruptions and lots of unexpected work, IOIA's work continues and our role continues to expand. We not only "survived" 2020, we "thrived" in many ways as we served our mission.

IOIA responded to the need for expanded training, such as remote inspection training in English and Spanish. This meeting will expand the membership discussion topics from the last meeting in Texas. The events of 2020 fanned the sparks of the inspectors' cooperative that were ignited at the last Annual Meeting (see page 6 for more). The Asia Pacific Committee will announce the online Grower Group training they are currently developing and discuss their activities in 2020, including their first independent training in Thailand last January. The board will be presenting their Strategic Plan.

How to vote? Another first - you will have the opportunity to vote this year for your board using an online election platform. No bylaws amendments are in the works, but there is a robust slate of candidates for the Board of Directors. Voting will close after the first hour of the Annual Meeting, just to be sure everyone has a chance to vote. Nominations close January 4.

AGM in New Orleans? Postponed, but not dead. Happily, the Accredited Certifiers Association has extended their invitation to us to join them in 2023 in Louisiana.

Please visit <https://www.ioia.net/AGM.html> to find agenda, speaker bios, and candidate bios to see details as they are developed.



ACA/IOIA/NOP Training!

IOIA and Accredited Certifiers Association will hold joint training virtually with NOP, spread over two weeks: January 25 - February 4, 2021, half days 12-5 pm ET Monday- Thursday. This training will be restricted to certification agency staff and independent inspectors as it was for 2020. Full agenda inside on pages 10 and 11.

PLEASE REGISTER HERE FOR JANUARY 25 - FEBRUARY 4 TRAINING!

Welcome New Members

New Inspectors!

Jonathan Skeet Surrency, Durham, NC
 Lauren Gontram, Mont Pocono, PA

Upgrading to Inspector

Don Erb, Selinsgrove, PA
 Pam Erb, Selinsgrove, PA

Supporting Individuals

Paige Benveniste, Alameda, CA
 Robert Custer, Bedford, PA
 Brenda G. Dilgard, West Salem, OH
 Jodi Ehlers, Edgewood, IA
 Caitlin Forchini, Windsor, CA
 Rick Kaye, Healdsburg, CA
 Larissa E. Lichty, Clearville, PA
 Matthew F. Rejewski, Buffalo, NY
 Marjorie Ruggles, Hockessin, DE
 Kristy Timpone, Ventura, CA
 Marisa L. Webster, Paso Robles, CA

Supporting Business Member

Mark Squire, Good Earth Foods,
 Fairfax and Mill Valley, CA
[Click here for a fun video about the history of this store! Good Earth was the first to respond to our 2020 Member Drive.](#)

Supporting Certification Agency

TCO Cert, Art Hesje. Humboldt, SK, CAN

IOIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- LOIS CHRISTIE
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The Inspectors' Report is the newsletter of International Organic Inspectors Association. IOIA is a 501 (c)(3) educational organization. Our mission is to address issues and concerns relevant to organic inspectors, to provide quality inspector training and to promote integrity and consistency in the organic certification process.
 Editor: Diane Cooner webgall@ioia.net

WEBINAR Training Schedule

for details & to register go to: www.ioia.net/schedule_list.html

100 Level Webinar - January 19 and 22, 2021

NOP Crop Standards

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific) Two 3 hour sessions.
 Trainer: Margaret Scoles. Member cost \$325

100 Level Webinar - February 2 and 5, 2021

NOP Livestock Standards

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific) Two 3 hour sessions.
 Trainers: Garry Lean. Member cost \$325

100 Level Webinar - February 9 and 12, 2021

NOP Processing Standards

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific) Two 3 hour sessions.
 Trainer: Garry Lean. Member cost \$325

300 Level Webinar - March 12, 2021

Organic Cosmetics

9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. (Pacific) Two 2 hour sessions with a one hour break.
 Presenter: Gay Timmons. Member cost \$325

100 Level Webinar - March 16 and 19, 2021

NOP Crop Standards

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific) Two 3 hours sessions.
 Trainer: TBA. Member cost \$325

200 Level Webinar - April 13 and 20, 2021

Processing In/Out Balances, Traceability & Recipe Verification under NOP & COR

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. (Pacific) Two 2 hour sessions.
 Trainer: Kelly A. Monaghan. Member cost \$275

200 Level Webinar - June 22 and 25, 2021

Grower Group Inspection and Certification

9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. (Pacific)
 Two 2 1/2 hour sessions.
 Trainer: Luis Brenes. Member cost \$275

100 Level Webinar - September 21 and 28, 2021

IOIA/COTA COR Processing Standards

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific) Two 3 hours sessions.
 Trainer: Kelly A. Monaghan. IOIA AND COTA Member cost \$300

Webinar Discount Note:
 All IOIA Inspector Members are eligible for 1 half-price webinar in 2021.

Accreditation News - Next Deadline to apply:

Congratulations to the following accredited members!

Newly Accredited - Debra Bunn (Crop)

Renewal - Alan Johnson (Crop, Livestock, Processing)

Welcome to Kurt Belser (OTCO) new **Certifier Representative** on the Accreditation Review Panel.

IOIA's Accreditation Program is voluntary. Applicants must demonstrate: Commitment to organics, Education, Work and life experience, Inspection experience (at least 2 years and 10 inspections), and Continuing education.

To learn more, apply or renew, [please see our website.](#)

Next application deadline - March 1.

LIVE Online and Onsite Training Schedules

IOIA's Live Online Training courses require that participants first complete a 100-level Webinar on NOP Standards (2 sessions of 3 hours each) in the respective scope - Crop, Processing, or Livestock. Separate registration is required for this webinar unless previously completed. **Additional Requirements** for the course include participant reliable internet, a computer, and computer literacy. These basic organic inspection courses may also be presented using other standards (please contact the IOIA office).

NOTE: These courses are FULL for 1st quarter but will all be offered in the 2nd quarter.

Detailed Info, Application, Registration for all courses available on our [website](#).

Live Online Basic Crop Inspection Training

February 8 - 12, 2021 - Course Full!

March 29 - April 2, 2021 - Course Full!

Course Description: The course provides basic level training to develop skills required for inspecting and reporting on the management of an organic crop production operations according to a specified set of standards. For courses conducted in the United States, the standard is the USDA, National Organic Program (NOP).

In addition, participants will be introduced to topics such as global organic certification, biodiversity, soil fertility management, and inspecting as a career. These and other topics are meant to provide historical background, more in-depth knowledge and awareness of current trends in the industry.

Live Online Basic Processing Inspection Training

February 22 - 26, 2021 - Course Full!

Course Description: The course provides basic level training to develop skills required for inspecting and reporting on the management of an organic processing production unit according to a specified set of standards. For courses conducted in the United States, the standard is usually the USDA, National Organic Program (NOP). In addition, participants will be introduced to topics such as global organic certification, report writing, and inspecting as a career. These and other topics are meant to provide historical background, more in-depth knowledge and awareness of current trends in the industry.

Live Online Basic Livestock Inspection Training

March 8 - 12, 2021 - Course Full!

Course Description: The course provides basic level training to develop skills required for inspecting and reporting on the management of an organic livestock production unit according to a specified set of standards. For courses conducted in the United States, the standard is usually the USDA, National Organic Program (NOP).

In addition, Organic Livestock Inspection Training follows IOIA's livestock curriculum requirements and includes instruction on applying and using NOP organic livestock standards; understanding the use of input materials; risk assessment; audit trail requirements; report writing; inspector conduct, confidentiality, and ethics; the difference between inspecting and consulting; effective communication; and organic inspection procedures for meat, dairy; fiber-bearing animals; and poultry (meat and eggs). Completion of Basic Crop Inspection Training is a prerequisite.

Onsite Trainings

September 13 - 17, 2021, Saco, Maine - Basic Crop and Processing Inspection Training

IOIA and MOFGA Organic Certification Services will cosponsor basic Crop and Processing trainings at Ferry Beach Retreat & Conference Center in Saco, Maine. Details will be posted as they become available. These courses are concurrent.

October 18 - 29, 2021 - Farmington, Minnesota - Basic Crop and Livestock Training

Basic Crop - October 18-22 | Basic Livestock - October 25-29 | Mt. Olivet Conference and Retreat Center

Self-Directed Learning Courses

IOIA/American Grassfed Association Grassfed Dairy, Remote Inspection Training, and Dairy Feed Audit are now available to take during hours of your choosing! [See our website to sign up.](#)

Coming in early 2021 - COR Standards in all 3 scopes.

Notes from the Chair - by Lois Christie

After 20 years on the road, not traveling has been an amazing reprieve. I love working from home -- doing Zoom inspections, client meetings and most importantly, working with various IOIA committees to create remote audit trainings in English and Spanish. The Town Halls have also been a great source of information and connectivity and I have enjoyed participating on the Town Hall committee with so many amazing IOIA members. My workspace is an important part of that enjoyment (I'm not sure how I ever worked without 3 monitors...). We have become such a heavy carbon footprint society that this seems like a great opportunity to slow things down again and reevaluate how we do things and when travel is really necessary.



I want to wish everyone a wonderful holiday from my entire family, including 8 grandkids.

Lois Christie, IOIA Board Chair

Notes from the ED

by Margaret Scoles

As we stroll through for what many of us has been one of the quietest holiday seasons in our memory, with less travel, gathering, and bustle, there are unusual gifts. Perhaps you aren't calmly strolling at all, but instead embroiled in that horrifying end-of-year rush to submit inspection reports. My last one was a bit of challenge. How is it that we intuitively choose the most complex tracebacks?!

We can all hope that 2021 will be calmer, the pandemic will wane as vaccination becomes available for all, and climate change will rise higher on the list of concerns. I was struck while reading a quick news summary of 2020 that the West Coast wildfires didn't even make the top 3 stories for the year. In Oregon alone, a million acres burned and 11 lives were lost. Here in my own Powder River County, we are ending the driest year on record and wondering if there will be grass for cattle in 2021. Climate change has been pushed to the back perilously far by so many policy makers.

In this issue, I want not to look back or express nervousness about the future, but rather to share with you some of the season's gifts I had the pleasure to be part of.

Gifts of Generosity

The IOIA Board compassionately waived membership dues for some



Reynaldo and Ernesto de la Rosa

of our members who had been especially impacted by 2020. Ernesto De la Rosa lost his brother Reynaldo (also an inspector) to Covid-19. Here is Ernesto's response to this gift.

Recibo su saludo con gran aprecio. Ahora me hizo recordar esos buenos momentos que compartimos en Huatulco con Usted y otros amigos que nos visitaron. Soy afortunado de haber compartido junto con Reynaldo, quien trascendió el 1 de agosto de 2020, la música en aquellas noches memorables y cantar junto con Usted, Lois, Angela, Garth, Luis... y tantos que coincidimos. A nuestro regreso a casa, comentamos con Reynaldo lo bien que la pasamos y la gente bella que el movimiento orgánico tiene, en donde usted y nuestros amigos de la IOIA son bien valorados. Agradezco su apoyo. Sepa que en México tiene amigos y un lugar donde llegar! Mi abrazo sincero y fraterno.
- Ernesto de la Rosa

And in English - *I greatly appreciate your well wishes. It reminds me of the good times we shared in Huatulco with you and the other friends who visited. I am fortunate to have shared with Reynaldo, who passed on August 1, 2020, the music during those memorable nights and sing with you, Lois, Angela, Garth, Luis... and so many who joined us. After our return home, we talked with Reynaldo about the good times we had and the beautiful people of the organic movement, where you and our friends of IOIA are so highly valued. I appreciate your support. Know that you have friends in Mexico and a place to come to! My sincere, fraternal embrace. Ernesto de la Rosa*

IOIA also received a very generous donation from a supporting individual, who took all 3 basic courses in 2019 and 2020.



She took so many inspection assignments in 2020 that she hadn't had time to complete the inspector member application to upgrade. But she took time to give back. *"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to earn money at this stage of my life, in a profession that is honorable, ethical, and beneficial for the entire country. I feel proud to be an organic inspector and to be part of a conscientious and high minded community."*

I feel fortunate just to open my messages!

Happy New Year!

In memoriam – IOIA has lost a valued member – C. Arden Landis, Pennsylvania.

C. Arden Landis, passed away October 22, 2020 at home surrounded by his family after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer. He was married 47 years to his wife, Caroline. He was an organic farm inspector and dairy farm consultant after about 20 years as a dairy farmer. Surviving in addition to his wife are their four children; 16 grandchildren; a brother and 3 sisters. To send condolences mail to: Landis Family PO Box 595 Blue Ball, PA 17506.



An Inspector's Cooperative - An old idea whose time has come? by Angela Wartes-Kahl, Independent Organic Services, Inc., IOIA Inspector Member

At the 2019 ACA/IOIA/NOP training and IOIA annual meeting a discussion emerged regarding an inspectors' guild that could organize and support a group of independent inspectors under one business entity. The collectivization of our individual efforts may lead to health insurance access, liability insurance, and other benefits afforded staff inspectors but without losing our "contractor" designation. An initial meeting of interested inspectors occurred in the spring just as Covid-19 was starting to ramp up. Until Deputy Director Tucker's Human Capital memo, the idea of an inspector guild waited in the wings as we all adjusted to remote inspection work and major internal changes affecting larger certifiers. With renewed interest after the NOSB fall meeting, we began investigating a business structure that would support contract inspectors, offer certifiers a competitive option for inspection services, include quality training for new inspectors and continuing education for current ones as well as include a focus of fraud prevention.



The working title is Organic Integrity Cooperative. We chose not to limit ourselves to only inspection work. There is a career path emerging after 30 years under the Organic Foods Production Act – Apprentice Inspector, Established Inspector, Consultant/ Mentor. Inspectors naturally move through this cycle over time and as a collective we plan to focus on the needs of these three groups to support the organic industry's continued growth and longevity.

The inspectors' cooperative plan will develop through assistance from the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives. A Technical Advisor is provided and guides us through the formation of bylaws, business plan and the incorporation process. Membership in the Federation connects us to the broader cooperative movement in the US and overseas. USFWC assistance begins in January 2021, with creation of the membership criteria and draft bylaws.

Please send membership inquiries to organic.integrity.coop@gmail.com. To review the presentation given during IOIA's December 17 Town Hall, please use [this link](#).

December 17 Town Hall Recap



A lively group of 35 inspectors plus a few special guests made it to the last Town Hall of 2020.

- Topics covered included:
- Better and more consistent forms between certifiers
 - Inspector Co-op
 - Staff and Independent Inspectors
 - Insurance for inspectors

After the serious stuff, we had some fun with Special guests Dr. Jennifer Tucker of



NOP, and the newly retired Dynamic Duo, Jim Riddle and Joyce Ford, who demonstrated the correct way to make a [Nor'easter cocktail](#) (in light of the 16" of snow on their doorstep the night before - Plus Lois Christie demonstrated a [Spicy Chile Margarita recipe](#). Both recipes of course made with only the finest organic ingredients! Click the links to see the recipes!

Kudos to those that shared their Zoom Bottoms - no prizes awarded but honorable mentions to **Justin Hurley** (nice blue kilt), **Brian Magaro** (a skirt, we're not sure the origins), and emcee **T. Layhew** (very natty in his bow tie and red plaid jammies).

Organic News from Around the IOIA World

IOIA - Canada

- **Welcome New Supporting Certification Agency!** [TCO Cert](#), Humboldt, Saskatchewan.
- COR based 100-level webinars are under development for Self Directed Learning format. IOIA plans to have the OPR, Crop, Livestock, and Processing Standards courses available in the first quarter of 2021.
- IOIA will offer the first basic Live Online Crop Inspection Training April 12-16 using a Zoom platform.

The 2020 Canadian Organic Standards are published!

On December 11, the Canadian General Standards Board published the 2020 Canadian Organic Standards - Organic Production Systems:

General Principles and management standards

[CAN/CGSB-32.310-2020](#)

Permitted Substances Lists

[CAN/CGSB-32.311-2020](#)

From the date of publication, all operators have one year to comply with the revised clauses of the 2020 Canadian Organic Standards.

To make it easier for operators, the Organic Federation of Canada (OFC) has prepared documents presenting the 2015 and 2020 standards side-by-side with the 2020 modifications highlighted.

[Click here](#) to access the 2015-2020 comparisons!

The OFC has also published [a series of articles](#) informing the industry of the main changes to the standards.

The [Final Q&As issued by the Standards Interpretation Committee](#)

have been updated to comply with the 2020 COS.
Source: OFC online

ONLINE EVENT HOW TO CERTIFY NON FOOD PRODUCTS

January 26 2021

Part of Guelph Conference's Virtual Workshops

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/guelph-organic-conference-how-to-certify-non-food-products-tickets-133257415517>



IOIA - Latin America

In January, IOIA will expand its membership recruitment initiative to reach more Spanish speaking inspectors. Board member Philippe Descamps has volunteered to moderate a

Spanish language inspector forum, which will be open to non-member inspectors as well as members. With the cosponsorship of Interamerican Organic Agriculture Commission (CIAO – its acronym in Spanish), IOIA's self-directed Remote Inspection Training will become available in Spanish as well as English.

And IOIA's first Spanish language newsletter will announce both of these new initiatives, as it also invites new members. IOIA membership dues for inspectors in Latin America is \$60/year.

IOIA and Eco-LOGICA will sponsor Live Online Basic Crop Inspection Training in Spanish language.

Please watch our website for details.

IOIA - Asia Pacific

IOIA's Asia Pacific Committee is developing Grower Group training for online delivery in 2021. The team, under the leadership of IOIA Trainer Mutsumi Sakuyoshi, represents 6 countries in the Asia Pacific region and a wealth of experience in the inspection and certification of grower groups. An agenda has been finalized and curriculum is under development.

IOIA Basic Training - ALIVE and Well - ONLINE!

The fall training season included trainings in Japan, Korea, and the USA. Spanish language live online crop training is under development for early 2021. IOIA has made a big effort to reformat the basic in-person courses to online delivery without losing the key interaction opportunities with experienced inspector trainers and by replacing the field trip with robust mock inspection exercises.

On September 15-18, Trainers Mutsumi Sakuyoshi and Yutaka Maryuama led 3 days of Japan Organic Inspectors Association (JOIA) cosponsored Crop inspection training with 6 participants, with plans to complete the field trip aspect later. On November 10-11, JOIA and IOIA also cosponsored 2 days live on-line Processing inspection training with 9 participants. Trainers Mutsumi Sakuyoshi and Yoko Mizuno led this training, with plans to complete the field trip aspect later.

Three Crop inspection trainings were delivered to the USDA NOP standards to meet the growing demand for new inspectors accompanied by a surge of interest from potential inspectors. For the September 14-18, Crop Inspection Training, Margaret Scoles and Luis Brenes assisted Lead Trainer Garry Lean with 6 participants. On October 26-30, for basic Crop, Garry Lean and Margaret Scoles had 7 participants. And on December 7-11, Jonda Crosby assisted Lead Trainer Garry Lean with 11 participants.

Nine participants completed the basic Processing course October 5-9 with Trainers Garry Lean and Luis Brenes.

Isidor Sustainability Institute and IOIA cosponsored 3 online courses in November in Korean language with Isidor Yu as trainer. The first was a basic Crop inspection training, followed by two trainings on the EFA update process. The basic Crop training will be followed by one-on-one field training for those who plan to become inspectors.

Trainers from around the world met in December for a think tank to share ideas on how they are adapting trainings when onsite field trips were not possible and to plan a review of IOIA's basic curriculum.



Basic Processing Training, October 5 - 9. From the evaluations:

"Garry was very informative and clear." "Luis was great, he had excellent real world examples."

IOIA Basic Training - ONLINE!



October 26 - 30, Basic Crop Training with Garry Lean and Margaret Scoles. From the evaluations: *“Since entering the organic certification field, I have always held high regard for the work organic inspectors do. It seems to be the least straight forward aspect of the industry having to apply various sections of the regulations to different aspects of the operation. This class has made the work of an inspector more clear to me and adds to the respect I have for good inspectors.”*



December 9 - 11 Basic Crop Training with Garry Lean and Jonda Crosby. From the evaluations: *“My biggest take-away is to be thorough in observations and inspection but brief, succinct, and to the point in reporting. I’ll be thinking about how to give CBs enough information with good documentation and without over-explaining or being opinionated. Several of us in the course honed in on issues in ways that made mountains out of mole hills. It takes real skill and experience to know the level of significance issues may have. Mostly, I’m looking forward to continuing my education through apprenticeship activities and have a positive attitude about being involved in the organic movement as a would-be inspector. Thank you!”*

ACA/IOIA/NOP Training Agenda

IOIA and Accredited Certifiers Association is planning joint training virtually, spread over two weeks, starting with NOP training on January 25 and 26, and running through February 4, 2021. Half days 12-5 pm ET, Monday- Thursday.

This training will be restricted to certification agency staff and independent inspectors as it was for 2020.

Please register here: <https://www.accreditedcertifiers.org/2021-aca-ioia-nop-training>

The deadline is January 23, 2020 by midnight. [Click here for the full schedule.](#)

Wednesday, January 27, 2021 (Eastern Time Zone) 12:00 – 4:15 pm

12:00 - 12:15 pm Welcome video

12:15 - 1:30 pm **Sharing Our Perspectives** (Intro & Breakout session 1). Facilitated by Brenda Book – WSDA. Live session that is not recorded.

1:45 - 2:30 pm **Sharing Our Perspectives** (Breakout session 2). Live session that is not recorded.

3:00 - 3:45 pm **Sharing Our Perspectives** (Breakout session 3). Live session that is not recorded.

3:45 - 4:15 pm **Accredited Certifiers Association Annual Meeting.** Moderated by Meagan Collins- ACA

4:15 - 5:00 pm **State Agencies Meeting.** This meeting will only be open and available to State Agencies.

Thursday, January 28, 2021 (Eastern Time Zone) 12:00 – 5:15 pm

12:00 - 1:00 pm - **Overview of Sharing Our Perspectives Conversation Results.** Presenter: Brenda Book- WSDA

1:15 - 2:45 pm **No Missing Links Here: Traceability, Mass Balance, & Supply Chain Audits.** Presenters: Ken Commins- Alliance for Organic Integrity and Callie Uhan- OTCO. Moderators: Meagan Collins- ACA and Kelly Korman- Common Ground Organic Consulting. Pre-recorded video presentation followed by live Q & A. Michael Sligh from Alliance for Organic Integrity will participate in the live Q & A portion.

3:15 - 4:45 pm **Concurrent Sessions**

Livestock Hot Topics: Poultry, Swine, and Apiculture. Moderated by Kelly Korman- Common Ground Organic Consulting. Live recorded session with live Q & A between each topic.

Inspector Field Training and Mentoring. Presenters: Amanda Birk- Independent Inspector, Trish Dougherty- OTCO, Jonda Crosby- IOIA, Lois Christie- Christie Organic Consultants, Inc, David Hettenbach- NICS. Session format TBD Moderated by: Meagan Collins- ACA

4:45 - 5:15 pm **Cocktail/Mocktail Virtual Soirée**

Monday, February 1, 2021 (Eastern Time Zone) 12:00 – 5:00 pm

12:00 - 1:15 pm **Hope you have a sense of humus? Updates from the Materials Working Group.** Presenters: Jen Berkebile- PCO, Jackie DeMinter- MOSA, Doug Currier- OMRI, and Erin Bardagjy- OTCO. Moderators: Meagan Collins- ACA and Kelly Korman- Common Ground Organic Consulting Pre-recorded session followed by live Q & A.

1:15 - 2:15 pm **Concurrent Sessions**

Moderated Dialogue: Recruiting, Training, and Retaining qualified personnel

Panelists: Kurt Belser - OTCO, Margaret Scoles - IOIA, Terrance Layhew - Independent Inspector, and Katie Peck – CCOF. Live recorded session. Moderated by: Meagan Collins- ACA

We can work it out! Conducting Meaningful Mediations and Establishing Effective Settlement Agreements.

Presenters: Kelly Lehman Goswamy- CCOF, Jenna Muller- California Agricultural Mediation Program, and the Legal Team

ACA/IOIA/NOP Training Agenda

from CDFA. Pre-recorded video presentation followed by live Q & A. Moderated by: Kelly Korman- Common Ground Organic Consulting

2:30 - 3:30 pm **Concurrent Sessions**

Is that an Equivalency Agreement or Are You Just Selling Domestically? International Issues. Panelists: Beth Rota-QCS, Nathan Lehrman- Idaho State Department of Ag and Antoine Faure- Ecocert SA. Pre-recorded video presentation followed by live Q & A. Moderated by: Meagan Collins- ACA

Logistics of records, remote, and hybrid inspections. Presenters: Rachel Cherry Myers- IOIA, Trish Dougherty- OTCO, Alexis Spoor- NOFA- NY and Ty O'Connor- O'Connor Crops & Cattle. Pre-recorded video presentation followed by live Q & A. Moderated by Kelly Korman- Common Ground Organic Consulting

4:00 - 5:00 pm - **Concurrent Sessions**

Inspection and supervision of port facilities and bulk vessels. Presenter: Garth Kahl- Independent Organic Services, Inc. and Pedro Landa- Organización Internacional Agropecuaria. Live recorded session with live Q & A. Moderated by: Meagan Collins- ACA

Verifying Compliance is Risky Business! Establishing and implementing risk assessment techniques. Presenters: Patrick Arndt- CCOF and Elizabeth Figueredo- QAI Pre-recorded video presentation followed by live Q & A. Moderated by: Kelly Korman- Common Ground Organic Consulting

Tuesday, February 2, 2021 (Eastern Time Zone) 12:00 – 5:15 pm

12:00 - 1:30 pm **Concurrent Sessions**

If there's a Bustle in your Hedgerow, it's Biodiversity! Assessing Natural Resources, Biodiversity and Soil Health. Presenter: Ben Bowell- OTCO Live recorded session. Moderated by: Meagan Collins- ACA

Got Milk...From Compliant Organic Dairies? Presenters: Jeff Stiles- CCOF, Kristen Adams- MOSA, Ariel Russell- CCOF/IOIA, and Mary Capehart- Organic Valley. Pre-recorded video presentation followed by live Q & A. Moderated by Kelly Korman- Common Ground Organic Consulting

1:45 - 3:15 pm **Concurrent Sessions**

Certification of Grower Groups: Quality Oversight and Organic Control Points. Presenters: Carrie-Anne Palmeri- OTCO and Luis Brenes- IOIA Pre-recorded video presentation followed by live Q & A Moderated by: Meagan Collins- ACA

Livestock Hot Topics: Slaughter, Meat Labeling, & Livestock Emergencies. Presenters: Margaret Scoles- IOIA; Johanna Phillips- Ecocert; Jeff Stiles- CCOF. Pre-recorded video presentation followed by live Q & A between each topic. Moderated by: Kelly Korman- Common Ground Organic Consulting

3:45 - 5:15 pm **That Fraud isn't getting past this Cross Check: Strengthening Connections Between Certifiers to Detect Fraud.** Panelists: Jaynie Loeb- CCOF, Dave Apple- CCOF, and Stephen Grealy- QAI. Prerecorded presentation with live Q & A facilitated by Brenda Book- WSDA.

Wednesday, February 3, 2021 (Eastern Time Zone) 12:00 - 4:30 pm

12:00 - 1:00 pm **Oy Vey! Inspections during COVID: Lessons learned and Safety.** Presenters: Marni Karlin- Karlin Strategic Consulting, Brenda Book- WSDA, and PJ Weibusch- Independent Inspector. Pre-recorded video presentation followed by live Q & A. Moderated by: Meagan Collins- ACA and Kelly Korman- Common Ground Organic Consulting

1:15 - 2:15 pm **Concurrent Sessions #1 Budding Industry: Hemp Processed Products** Panelists: Lauren Tonti- NOFA-NY, David Gould- Bioagricert, Kristen Adams- MOSA, Annie Berical- OneCert. Live recorded panel session. Moderated by: Meagan Collins-ACA

#2 Audit Techniques- ISO based. Presenter: Suzette Edwards- Independent Inspector Pre-recorded video presentation followed by live Q & A. Moderated by Kelly Korman- Common Ground Organic Consulting

2:45 - 4:15 pm **This Land is Your Land: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice** Presenters: Jennifer Taylor- IFOAM North America, Leslie Touzeau - QCS, and TBD Live recorded session with Q & A.

4:15 - 4:30 pm **Closing Remarks** - Connie Karr, Brenda Book, Margaret Scoles, Meagan Collins, and Kelly Korman

National Organic Standards Board – Organic Inspectors a Key Focus

by Margaret Scoles, Executive Director

The USDA National Organic Standards Board met live online October 28-30. The meeting resulted in 71 votes. The meeting included reports from the USDA on [Compliance and Enforcement](#), an overview of NOP activities (available through the Organic Integrity Learning Center) and a [presentation](#) from Customs and Border Protection.

IOIA member Nathaniel Powell-Palm will take over as the new Chair of the Certification, Accreditation, & Compliance (CAC) Subcommittee in January, as Scott Rice, WSDA, completes his board service in the certifier seat. Kyla Smith, PCO, will assume that position on the board in January.

Human Capital: The discussion document most interesting for inspectors was, “Request for Discussion and Recommendations: Human Capital Strategy for Organic Inspectors and Reviewers August 11, 2020”. [Click here to see the discussion document.](#)

Scott Rice gave an introduction to the topic and summarized comments received. IOIA was among those who submitted extensive comments. *“Certification and inspection work isn’t easy and requires a high degree of technical skill and understanding. IOIA put a fine point on it when they said in their comment, we’re facing a potential and imminent crisis of an adequate number of qualified, trained, and ready inspectors.” – Scott Rice*

Some key points:

- **Need for funding** - the initiation of a credentialing system for inspectors, an inspector cooperative, or a central database of inspectors and evaluation all require funding.
- **Need for data** - how many inspectors there are, scope, geography, etc.
- **More operations will require certification under the SOE rule.**
- **Geographical shortages** were identified, particularly in the southeast U.S.
- **Pipeline development** - focus on apprenticeship. Retiring inspectors present an opportunity to cultivate mentorship and apprenticeships with new inspectors. A lower cost option was an open office hours concept that provides an open forum for Q&A outside of a formal training and allows some good dialogue between inspectors as well as inspectors and reviewers. Some commenters pointed to IOIA as a natural fit to host an apprenticeship program (Scott acknowledged IOIA is already working on this).
- **Important to reach folks at a younger age** to present the organic sector field, through career options, through organizations such as FFA, 4-H, and others. Recruitment sources outside the organic sector.
- **Broad support for the idea of an inspector registry.** Comments cautioned the need to be mindful of confidentiality and walk a careful line when it comes to sharing evaluations of rating of inspectors.
- Some noted the potential of **overly prescriptive qualification requirements** to limit otherwise promising and talented individuals, especially those who may be socially disadvantaged and who may not have had access to education but have gained experience from other life experience. Some caution that over prescriptive requirements could tighten an already tight pool of inspectors. Need for specialized audit training and traced back and mapped out auditing, investigation, and interviewing. Very essential soft skills that make good inspectors, such as curiosity, critical thinking, good communication, knowing how to kind of read a room and when to stop talking and let the other person keep going. Foundational skills that’s for anyone going into the business themselves such as time management, budgeting, accounting, information technology and software also very crucial
- **A lot of comments on compensation.** Many comments reflected the challenge of compensating inspectors or as inspectors securing compensation themselves that reflects the expertise, training, and experience level which they operate.
- **Credentialing.** Some pointed to the need for an industry-wide credentialing system similar to licensing but this requires funding and likely as to be standardized would need to be accredited itself.
- **Opportunities to engage with the universities** including supporting curriculum that mirrors training for certification reviewers and inspectors. A natural focus could be on land grant universities with outreach to historically black land grant colleges and as well to regional technical schools.
- **Professional support as independent contractors.** Inspectors do not have access to a common source for liability and health insurance. For apprenticeship training and insurance, some commenters pointed to the role of an inspector cooperative or broader association to meet those shared needs.
- Some concern about the term “human capital” as possibly dehumanizing.
- Positive themes of **collaboration.**

*“Lower compensation is a risk to organic integrity for the inspector feels rushed to complete an inspection in order to keep their margins at a level that offers them a living wage who are at a rate that the operation is paying.”
– from Scott Rice summary*

Continued on page 13

NOSB – Organic Inspectors a Key Focus

Sanitizer Panel: The NOSB met [November 12](#) via Zoom for a panel discussion of sanitizer materials. Three panelists, IOIA member Bob Durst, from the Linus Pauling Institute; Dr. Joseph Morelli, corporate scientist for Ecolab; and Dr. Angela Anandappa, executive director of Alliance for Advanced Sanitation, made brief presentations then the bulk of the two hour session was devoted to questions from the board members. Panelists discussed the difference between cleaning and sanitizing. It was clarified that just about any substance could be used for cleaning under the NOP Rule because cleaners are rinsed away so that no residues are left behind. Sanitizers, on the other hand, are not rinsed away, as rinsing or removal could reintroduce pathogens. The board will continue to work on how to better evaluate sanitizers for organic systems, and a recording of the meeting will be [posted online](#).

These are **GREAT** resources:

Bob Durst: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/DurstBobSanitizerPanel.pdf>

Dr. Joe Morelli: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MorelliJoeSanitizerPanel.pdf>

Dr. Angela Anandappa: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Anandappa.Angela.pdf>

Other key votes:

- Voted to remove from 205.606 - **kelp; Starches, Sweet potato starch; Turkish bay leaves; Whey protein concentrate; black currant juice color; blueberry juice color; carrot juice color; cherry juice color; grape juice color; paprika color; pumpkin juice color; turmeric extract color.**
- **Voted against adding new materials to 205.601 or 205.603, including a “no” vote on fenbendazole for poultry.**
- Biodegradable mulch film discussion will continue. Paper pots was referred back to subcommittee for clarification of annotation.
- Voted to amend the annotation for 205.601(j)(8) as follows (underlined sections reflect changes): (8) Liquid fish products—sourced only from fish waste, bycatch, or invasive species—can be pH adjusted with sulfuric, citric or phosphoric acid. The amount of acid used shall not exceed the minimum needed to lower the pH to 3.5.

All 1482 pages of the full transcript are available at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/TranscriptsNOSBOctober2020.pdf>

Thank you, Scott Rice, for your service on the NOSB, for representing the full breadth of the “certifier seat”, and for acknowledging inspectors as a valued and respected part of the certification process.

Mentorship Commmittee

In late summer, an ad hoc **Mentorship Committee** was struck to address the urgent need to attract qualified prospective organic inspectors, onboard them to be inspection-ready more quickly, provide support for working inspectors, and appropriately compensate mentors. The lack of enough mentors has been identified as a barrier to bringing on new inspectors. The old model by which the mentor is often not compensated at all simply isn't viable.

The committee dived into a full review of the 1998 IOIA/OCC Apprenticeship Program. That program never came to fruition primarily for lack of a viable business plan. However, it was a great starting point to develop a new IOIA Apprenticeship model.

After researching potential funding opportunities, IOIA applied for a modest grant for a pilot program that proposes to apprentice newly trained inspectors in all three scopes. Their current focus is identifying and exploring potential funding sources.

Members of the committee are Amanda Birk (PA), Terrance Layhew (IA), Lois Christie (CA), Janine Gibson (MB), Angela Wartes-Kahl (OR), Pam Sullivan (NH) and Trish Dougherty (WI).

IFOAM North America News – WeShare Webinar

by Diane Cooner, Supporting Member

After learning about IFOAM in 1991, I finally joined as a member in November of 2020. What took me so long?

Back in 1991 I was working for a CCOF-certified farm in Northern California. CCOF at that time was debating whether to join the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, aka IFOAM, and a big sticking point was the social justice aspect, namely paying farmworkers a living wage. The farmer I worked for said, “I am all for social justice, but I don’t know how I’m supposed to pay people a ‘living wage’ when I barely am making one myself.” His thoughts echoed those of many other people I knew.

Founded in 1972, IFOAM - Organics International is a membership-based organization working to bring true sustainability to agriculture **across the globe**. Four decades later, they have over 800 members from about 120 countries and territories.

But what got me to finally join? All it took was one webinar. On December 10, the IFOAM North America chapter hosted the **WeShare** webinar, the first in a series of community-building efforts in lieu of the annual World Congress that had to be cancelled due to Covid. **WeShare** featured 5 farmers from around the world discussing how they have adapted their operations to deal with the pandemic. It was fascinating to learn first-hand from the farmers themselves what they were doing to keep their businesses afloat. Of note is how much these farmers are using technology to grow their businesses during totally insane times. In some cases, these farmers have been able to grow their businesses (not without a lot of hard work!), much like inspectors have had to do with remote training. The creativity and inventiveness of these people really impressed and inspired me. At the end of the webinar, I navigated to the IFOAM site and joined.



In Brazil, farmer **Thales Mendonça** of EcoVida Network, presented a slide show and discussed their loss of regular farming sales venues, for both their farm products and onsite farming classes – and then explained how they adapted, moving much of the business all online, including their CSA, which has grown, and also video productions of classes they used to offer live on their farm that are now for sale online.

Athula Priyantha, Organic Movement of Sri Lanka, told us about the challenges facing farmers there. He has been involved in organics since 1990. He had a short video to share that showed crops from farm to plate and how his country is dealing with the pandemic (lots of home delivery!).



In the US, **Jennifer Taylor**, vice chair of the IFOAM NA board, and advocate for under-represented farming communities, owner/operator of an organic farm in Glenwood, Georgia, presented a video about her farm and discussed some of the many hats she is currently wearing in support of organic farming.

In Africa, **Daniel Wanjama**, Coordinator of Seed Savers Network in Kenya, discussed his groups’ efforts of promoting food and seed sovereignty and agrobiodiversity. Seed saving is very important there; they are building community seed banks and having seed fairs so they can share heirloom seeds between towns.

Organic in Africa doesn’t have the luxury of going to a store to buy seeds let alone certified organic ones, as he explained that most people live hand to mouth on the continent. He also presented a short video about their efforts.

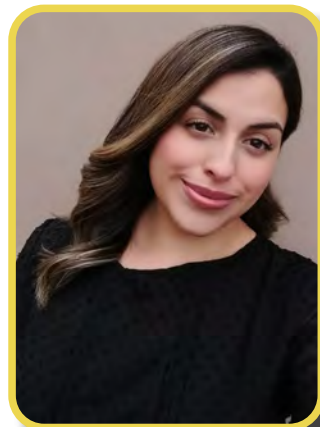
Last but not least, **Hans Bartelme**, Germany, an organic farmer since 1991 and also vice president of Naturland, shared about his involvement with Naturland, and the various support or lack thereof from the government for growers in light of the pandemic.

Getting to hear these farmers *tell their stories* – kind of like inspecting. You can view the 1.5 hour recording [here](#). Join IFOAM [here](#). Don’t wait 30 years to do it!

IOIA Scholarships - Awardees Announced

2021 Rutherford Award winner - Claudia Arellano, Sonora, Mexico

I am a Bio Food Processes Engineer. Before I began this work, I knew very little about organic, but slowly I began to learn about it and it opened an impressive and fascinating world. I understand that *organic* is not the same as *artisanal* like many have thought or believe - the organic world goes beyond the artisan. A little while ago, I knew only the essential and necessary ideas about organic, but never the less I took a course and it changed my expectations totally. I understood that even more, there is a great world of organic production out there and that we should all know about.



I worked directly with certifying organizations for 7 years approximately, in these years I was in charge of giving trainings about certification to the staff in production and in the field, including doing mass balance exercises, audit trails for our product. For 2 years I worked directly with CCOF, where I was in charge of filling out applications and answering corrective actions, and keeping informed about whatever was happening that would do whatever was necessary involving with our organic product.

I would like to join a certifier body or agency as an auditor, where I can continue to develop my understanding and continue my trainings and broadening my knowledge of the food industry. The next trainings that I will take will help me to increase my knowledge and will be able to apply in my future employment, like being able to better analyze and perform an audit, which is one of my goals to fulfill.

2021 Organic Community Initiative Scholarship winner - Laura Gutiérrez, Jalisco, Mexico



I graduated in July of 2019 with a Bachelor's Degree as an Agricultural Scientist from the University of Guadalajara, in Jalisco, Mexico.

I developed great interest in nature and everything related to it since my childhood, even though I grew up in a city and not in the country. The last semester of my university career I left the city to do an internship with an agricultural company. This allowed me to be a part of real agriculture in which the main objective was to have high productivity, which is understandable, but not when done with unsustainable practices. As I became interested in what seems to me like a good alternative (organic agricultural practices), I began to investigate other types of management.

Some of those come from my country and many others from other countries, which led me to think about the importance of technology and knowledge exchange in these times of globalization.

All this led me to set some objectives to develop myself as a professional. First objective is resource preservation, always keeping respect for ecosystems in mind, starting with an education oriented towards sustainable management practices, and in this way be a part of conscientious and rational decision-making by farmers. Second, but not less important, is to form a community of people interested in the preservation of resources (farmers) and healthcare with pesticide and GMO-free food (consumers).

Luckily, interest in healthy food consumption is growing over time. With this premise and good management, including each entity's diversification of exportation products, less intermediaries, and no concentration of exports to a single destination, we can make the organic market a more attractive alternative for producers.

Self-Directed Learning Courses

The IOIA Training Institute is pleased to offer organic inspection courses through our online Self-Directed Learning (SDL) program. **For full details and to apply, visit our site, www.ioia.net.**

Remote Inspection Training

This is a 200 level course geared toward working inspectors and reviewers. This training will help inspectors gain confidence to perform remote inspections based on the ACA Best Practices; save time and money for inspectors, certifiers, and certified operators by increasing technological proficiencies; and keep inspectors working. It was born out of the need for inspectors to adapt their inspection techniques and protocols in the time of Covid-19.

Cost for the webinar: Free for all IOIA Inspector Members. \$200 for all non IOIA Inspector Members.

Other Course Offerings

Qualifications vary by course, but all 200 level courses and higher require:

- completion of IOIA's 100-level in-person basic inspection course in the same scope of the course you wish to take (crop, livestock, handling), and
- completion of a minimum of 20 organic inspections over a 2 year period.

200 level Dairy Feed Audit

The 200 Level Dairy Feed Audit training is geared for livestock inspectors, reviewers and organic program managers. This course is focused on organic certification requirements to the NOP Standards.

Participants are eligible to take this course who have completed course work from IOIA including the 100 Level Livestock Standards Webinar, Basic Livestock Inspection Course, and Livestock Inspection Field Training. Others that would qualify for the course include current inspectors and those with knowledge of the National Organic Program regulations, auditing, a background in livestock husbandry and crop production.

The course includes five hours of recorded presentations, a pre-course and mid-course assignment, practice exercises and a final exam. Once started the course must be completed within 60 days. The course focus is organic certification requirements to the NOP Standards.

IOIA's Dairy Feed Audits online course is taught by experienced organic inspectors Nate Powell-Palm and Jonda Crosby. Nate and Jonda are dairy inspectors and have experience as certified organic operators - Nate with a multi-species livestock operation and Jonda as a crop farmer and livestock feed handler.

Cost for the course is \$300 for IOIA members, \$325 for non-members.

200 level IOIA/AGA Grassfed Dairy Inspection

This online course was developed by IOIA with the American Grassfed Association (AGA) to prepare experienced organic dairy inspectors to perform an "add-on" AGA inspection at the same time as an organic inspection, or as a stand-alone AGA inspection.

This course would also be useful in understanding the resources and activities related to any grass-based livestock operation. The course focuses primarily on dairy cattle. Participants will learn AGA meat standards, since some organic dairies may also want to sell cull females and male animals as AGA meat. Dairy farm transition, production and animal handling standards are discussed as well.

It is expected that performing these add-on inspections at the same time as the NOP inspection will take approximately an extra hour.

This course is presented by experienced IOIA Trainer Harriet Behar.

Cost of this self-directed course is \$350 for members and \$375 for non-members.

For more information, please contact ioiaonlinetraining@ioia.net

Board of Directors Minutes Highlights

(full minutes available to inspector members on the IOIA website)

August 18, 2020 -4:00-7:20 p.m. EDT via GoToMeeting

Attendance: Lois Christie, Janine Gibson, Heather Donald, Ryan Sitler, Rachel Myers, Chuck Mitchell, Philippe Descamps, Others: Margaret Scoles, ED; Lisa Spicka (for Strategy Planning item)

Strategy Planning with Lisa Spicka - Committee Reports - Lisa requests the chairs consider developing a member survey to get feedback on the strategic plan points.

- Vibrant Membership – **Rachel** The group discussed how Credentialing and the new Mentoring Committee might fit into NOP's call for comments regarding Human Capital and the SOE Proposed Rule. **Ryan** recapped the interest of some Inspector Members to develop an Inspector Co-Op and how that may work into this pillar. The Group did not get to talk about Advocacy or Membership Drive.
- Sustainable IOIA Future – **Janine** The ED evaluation - first priority to be worked on.
- Global Community & Enhanced Training - **Lois** and **Chuck** are working on scheduling.

Membership / Accreditation Joint Committee: The Committees met and recommended no changes should be made to how IOIA evaluates Inspector Member and Accreditation applications from inspectors who do not have IOIA training. Some IOIA inspector members do not have IOIA basic training, but IOIA training is still required for IOIA Inspector Accreditation. **Celebratory Note!** ~ We have achieved 250 Inspector Members!

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Policy Committee would like something bigger than a statement from the organization, but preferred the BOD determine the actions.

Foundation Search: Janine presented the topic and proposed that IOIA subscribe. This organization would provide IOIA with access to a database of foundations and organized by values, as well as guidance, lessons and information on how to access money from foundations. Decision postponed.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer presented the 2nd Quarter Financial Reports. Budget vs Actual report included a projection to end-of-year. **Janine** moves to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Passes unanimously. **Janine** moves to keep the dues at the current rates and reconsider them in 2021. Passes unanimously.

October 13, 2020 4:00-6:45 p.m. EDT via GoToMeeting

Attendance: BOD: Lois Christie, Janine Gibson, Heather Donald, Ryan Sitler, Rachel Myers, Chuck Mitchell, Philippe Descamps, Others: Margaret Scoles, ED

Treasurer's Report & 3rd Quarter Financials: **Ryan** and **Margaret** will be meeting to put together the draft budget to be reviewed by the Finance Committee. We may need to revisit the strategic plan in relation to the budget, and consider amending the priorities as they were set at the March '20 BOD retreat. Discussion Item: Should IOIA offer a discount to participants to retake LOL trainings or webinars? General agreement with the idea, but wariness of participants taking courses until they pass and that the parameters to qualify for a retake need to be clear in the policy. Trainer recommendation would be needed for the participant to be offered the opportunity. **Janine** moves to accept the Treasurer's Report & 3rd Quarter Financials, **Rachel** seconded. Motion carries.

ARP Committee – Certifier Representative: **Rachel** moves to appoint Kurt Belser to the ARP Committee as the Certifier Representative. Motion carries.

Membership Recruitment: **Margaret** and **Lisa** have drafted a membership recruitment plan including all categories of membership, current members and their probability of leveling up, and the potential increase in income. Now is a good time to utilize the plan and reach out to members. **Lisa** developed Spanish materials. Hope to send a Spanish newsletter with the announcement of the Spanish remote training website and a member recruitment flyer at the beginning of 2021. - **Janine** moves to adjust the Basic Training Course to include a membership for one year, and to invoice for membership the following year. Motion carries.

Fundraising Investment: **Ryan** is in support of building a fundraising plan before committing to hiring a position for fundraising or investing in a program. The plan can guide the organization in next steps, including who to reach out to for funds (foundations, organic companies, membership, training, etc.). **Lois** suggests Lisa works on developing a plan during the last months of the year with Janine's support, to present at January BOD meeting. **Janine** agrees. **BOD** is in support.

Spanish Remote Inspection Training: **Lisa** is working with CIAO on the translation of the website. 

In Memoriam to an Organic Giant - Amigo Bob

One of the most experienced, astute, opinionated, and influential players in the Organic Farming Movement, Amigo Bob Cantisano was a rare ninth-generation Californian, directly descended from a Spanish lieutenant in the 1775-76 Juan Bautista de Anza expedition that led and created the first land route between New Spain and Alta California.

Just as his ancestors were pioneers in their own right, Cantisano distinguished himself by being a singular powerhouse in the organic horticulture field for nearly half a century. A San Francisco native, as a child, he first learned how to garden from his grandmother, and in the late 1960s began growing pesticide-free food while living on communes in the City's Haight Ashbury district and in Mendocino County. He worked at Good Karma, an early San Francisco vegetarian café, and at the City's first natural foods emporium "New Age," both owned by Fred Rohé, whom Cantisano has called "the founder of the whole natural foods movement." It was these experiences, along with exposure to Rodale Press's Organic Gardening magazine and a speaker at San Francisco's first Earth Day celebration in 1970 on the impacts and hazards of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and large mono crops to human health and the environment, that set him off on his life-long crusade for organic.

In 1972, Cantisano helped start a natural foods buying club that became "We the People Food Coop" in Tahoe Vista near the shores of Lake Tahoe. That experience introduced him to many organic growers and producers in California and beyond. Recognizing the dire need for quality tools and soil amendments, he, Todd and farming partner Richie Marks established the wildly successful ag supply company Peaceful Valley Farm Supply in 1977 in Nevada City. In 1999, Todd and Cantisano founded Heaven & Earth Farm on the San Juan Ridge in the Sierra foothills of rural Nevada County, where he still lived until he passed on December 26, 2020.

Cantisano was pivotal in early efforts to certify organic farms and products, helping in 1973 to found California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), and he collaborated in the production of an early organic-products trade journal. In 1981, recognizing the need for better communication and networking among organic growers in California, along with Capay Valley Organic Farmer Martin Barnes and Community Activist Elizabeth Martin, he organized an unprecedented gathering at the Winters, CA Firehouse that featured a talk by pioneering beneficial-insect purveyor Everett "Deke" Dietrick. That event subsequently evolved into the annual Ecological Farming Conference, now held in Monterey. It celebrates its 41st anniversary in January 2021 and is the largest sustainable agriculture gathering in the Western United States.

In the late 1980's he created a consultancy service, Organic Ag Advisors, one the first organic agriculture advising businesses in the nation. For more than three decades, he consulted with hundreds of small and large growers of fruits, vegetables, wine grapes, grains, and other crops, on the West Coast, in Arizona, Central America and Hawaii, advising both organic farmers and those making the transition from conventional farming.

Amigo Cantisano was one of the first pest control advisors in California to serve the needs of organic farmers. Cantisano was responsible for the reduction and elimination of pesticide use on tens if not hundreds of thousands of acres of horticultural crops all over the world and shared his knowledge and experience freely with a new generation of farmers, students, researchers, and consultants. His unconventional approach and challenging skepticism gained the respect and admiration of those who once questioned his approach. Cantisano recognized early on the need for scientific validation of his own field observations and worked with researchers to develop new innovative agroecological approaches to horticultural crop management.

Cantisano authored nearly 150 technical articles and bulletins and was the inventor of 16 products and techniques for organic farming that are in use throughout the US and Central America. He helped craft the successful California Organic Foods Act of 1979 and AB 872, The University of California Sustainable Agriculture Education Program Act, both of which were enacted by the California Legislature. In 2001 he founded and continued to run until his death, the Felix Gillet Institute, which is dedicated to the identification, preservation, and propagation of heirloom perennial food-producing plants and trees of Northern California.

Cantisano's overall assessment of the state of the Organic Farming Movement was that there have been huge changes in the past 50 years, "it has evolved from a backyard hippie phenomenon into a gigantic corporate hybrid. It is ironic that very group that ignored us, corporate agribusiness, has now swallowed us," he said. "The origin of the organic farming movement was not particularly motivated by profit as much as focused on benefiting the earth. Today business in organic is busier because of the profit mentality. This different motivation has attracted a whole different crowd of players."

Another interesting phenomenon he observed is the increasing trend of organic businesses being swallowed up by

In Memoriam to an Organic Giant - Amigo Bob

much, much larger firms, businesses that didn't have any interest in organic until it became profitable. He grew quite concerned that organic farming has largely become dominated by large businesses, and felt that the corporate concentration of the original organic marketplace took the very same path and followed the very same model as the conventional food industry.

"Big business has learned how to invest in people who can effectively impact the decision-making process. Lobbyist's jobs are to protect and improve the position of the businesses they represent, and those lobbyists are able to attend all the National Organic Standards meetings that have limited comment periods and have one-on-one connections with all the individual federal organic regulators. The smaller players simply do not have the resources to play as great a role anymore. Generally there is little representation of small farmers or consumer' concerns and perspectives at meetings that have such a great impact on the Federal Organic Standards," he observed.



Cantisano reflected that at the beginning of the Organic Farming Movement, it was the small producers who designed and developed standards and oversight regulations, long time players like California Certified Organic Farmers Association, Organic Trade Association, and later OFPANA (Organic Foods Production Association of North America). "That's all reversed now. CCOF was at it's beginning totally farmer driven. Today there's barely a farmer in the room working to influence the regulatory process and behind the scenes, major changes are taking place."

Cantisano also felt the quality of some certification businesses is suspect. "The enforcement of rules already in place about biological control and diversity, these rules are rarely enforced. When it comes to soil quality, biological control, the creation of windrows, I feel the certifiers are not doing an adequate job of enforcement, so we have a significant problem," he said.

Cantisano was quite concerned that some of the rules in the Federal Organic Standards are not consistently followed and enforced. "Today," Cantisano surmised, "the motivation, as the Organic Movement has become the Organic Mega Industry, is now profitability. Yes, there is now far more access to organic produce and products, but at the same time, the heart and the soul of the Organic Movement has been replaced by the bottom line, and that is the reality."

He felt that there are very few groups providing accurate information about Federal Organic Standard violations. The Watsonville-based Wild Farm Alliance is one source for background monitoring this issue, and another organization active in this arena is Organic Eye, which follows the increasingly suspect relationship between corporate agribusiness and government regulators that he feels has eroded the working definition of organics.

Cantisano was also concerned about how domestic farm economics have so radically changed with the global growth of organic production and foreign competition. "Mexico can now produce organic food with labor costing about \$14 a day, while in California it is \$14 an hour, so even with a level playing field, the cost of production is dramatically different and the quality of produce from Mexican farmers has dramatically improved," he said. "It is very difficult to compete with cheap foreign labor. Agriculture production is all about labor costs. Vegetable crops are becoming completely dominated by foreign producers."

He felt that unless consumers ask specifically for locally farmed products, and until there is greater demand and marketing of locally produced foods, this trending impact of the global organic industry will continue to hurt small and medium domestic organic family farmers who have been dependent on wholesale, "It is important to support people working at the lower level with living wages," Cantisano said.

At the end of the day, Cantisano concluded that the good news is organics is a major industry. "What has occurred is great, the changes have provided more consumer access to organic produce, more organic products, better soil management, stricter requirements regarding pesticide management, increasing use of biological control and soil benefiting crop rotation." That's something to celebrate, much as the life and legacy of the singular Amigo Bob Cantisano.

Amigo Bob passed away on December 26, 2020, at age 69.



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KEEP IOIA STRONG – LEND YOUR STRENGTH AND GET INVOLVED!

2021 Calendar

*Most live events have moved to a virtual platform at this time.
Please check your favorite event's website for updates.*

Sundays in January - the **Real Organic Project** is hosting a Virtual Symposium featuring interviews and live panels with more than 60 prominent organic farmers and other advocates for soil health. Speakers include Cornucopia International Policy Consultant Anne Ross, Dr. Jennifer Taylor, Anaïs Beddard, Dr. Joan Dye Gussow, Dr. Frederick Kirschenmann, and Dr. John Ikerd. Each session will be unique and focus on a different topic as it relates to organic farming.

The symposium runs Sundays in January, 3-5 pm ET (January 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31).

[Registration ends 2:45 pm ET Sunday, January 3.](#)

Organicology Conference - cancelled for 2021. Future being developed.

<https://www.organicology.org/>

January 20-23 - EcoFarm Conference 2021 - Virtual! *Reimagining Our Future*

See their site for info, full slate of events - [Virtually!](#)

Guelph Organic Conference <https://guelphorganicconf.ca>

Jan 26 - 30 - Virtual Workshop Program including an 26 - [How to certify non food products](#)

January 25-28 & February 1-4 ACA/IOIA/NOP Virtual Annual Training, see pages 10 & 11

February 22- 27 - [MOSES Organic Farming VIRTUAL Conference](#)

Feb 17 - 19 [Biofach eSpecial Event](#)

February 27 & 28 [COABC - Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia](#)

March 4 - IOIA Virtual AGM - See article page 1.

September 8 - 10 [20th IFOAM Organic World Congress, Rennes, France.](#)

*PLEASE SEE PAGES 2 & 3 FOR THE CURRENT LIST OF
IOIA LIVE ONLINE, ONSITE, WEBINAR AND SELF-DIRECTED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES*