

Keynote speaker announced for IOIA's upcoming Annual Meeting: Rikki Held

The name *Rikki Held* has received much media attention in the past weeks, but who is Rikki? And why is she being invited to address major audiences, including the United Nations? She is one of 16 young plaintiffs who were represented by Our Children's Trust in a lawsuit filed in March 2020. Our Children's Trust (OCT) is a non-profit law firm based in Eugene, OR, that provides strategic legal services to youth from diverse backgrounds, to secure their legal rights to a safe climate. OCT filed the suit (*Held v. State of Montana*) against the State of Montana for violating the right to a clean and healthful environment; these rights enshrined in the state's Constitution.

During college as an undergraduate student in Environmental Science, Rikki became interested in the lawsuit and reached out to OCT, asking to be included. As the only plaintiff of age, she was named in the case. Why was Montana the jurisdiction for this landmark case? First enacted in 1889, the state ratified an updated Constitution in 1972. Among new Articles, it included provisions to protect a "clean and healthful environment for present and future generations". The plaintiffs argued that the state's heavy dependence on fossil fuel development accelerates climate change and infringes on that constitutional right. In this case, OCT challenged a provision under the Montana Environmental Policy Act that forbids state agencies from considering the impacts of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or climate change in their environmental reviews. **(Source: Harvard Law Review)**



The case became the first climate-related constitutional lawsuit to go to trial in the United States. The 7-day trial opened on June 12 of this year in the state capital Helena. On August 14, Montana District Court Judge Kathy Seeley ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, that the limitations on considering environmental factors when deciding oil and gas permits violated the right to a safe environment, as recited in Montana's constitution. The court held that

the 2023 Amendment violates Article IX, Sec. 1(3) of the Montana Constitution, which obligates the legislature to provide "adequate remedies for the protection of the environmental life support system from degradation".

Harvard Law School called the victory in *Held v State of Montana* "a significant win for young climate advocates" and said it "could encourage similar actions." The Office of the Attorney General for the State of Montana appealed the judge's decision to the Montana

Supreme Court on September 29th. Legal commentators expect similar suits to be launched in other jurisdictions, if the case is upheld on appeal.

Our 2024 AGM keynote address will combine the Zoom platform (Rikki, live online from Kenya), and her father in-person (in the room with us in San Antonio). Rikki's dad, Steve Held, supported Rikki's actions. In addition, we plan to broadcast this session via the Zoom platform, to ensure all IOIA members can participate in this exciting event. An ambitious undertaking technologically-speaking, the session will be capably facilitated by IOIA Board Member and expert podcaster, Terrance Layhew. See Keynote, page 4

Notes from the Chair by Beth Dominick

Wintertime reflection holds profound significance, offering a crucial pause amidst the rhythm of inspections and farm visits. It's during this season of quietude that the value of introspection and contemplation becomes evident, shaping a more effective and informed approach to the responsibilities ahead.

Winter serves as a natural interlude in the agricultural cycle, allowing inspectors to step back and review the year's activities. This period of relative calm provides an invaluable opportunity to assess and self reflect, identify areas for improvement, and strategize for the forthcoming year. Reflective practice and self assessments are See Notes, page 4

Welcome New Members

New Inspectors

Cristiana Shaw, CA
Rodrigo Lopez Ortiz, Oaxaca

Upgrading to Inspector

Rita Epp, Manitoba
Kirsten Thomson, British Columbia
Michele Schahczenski, UT

Returning Inspectors

William Kazokas, FL

Inspector Emeritus

John Foster, CA

Supporting Individuals

Jay Acker, OH
Margie Brewin, Alberta
Natalie Cross, CO
Connor Day, OR
Shauna Ilse, MN
Ashleigh Knecht, NY
Maulena Licciardo, CA
Patricia Logan, British Columbia
Jacqueline Luna, CA
Thomas W Murray, OR
Hans Dean Peterson, WA
Darlene Ruiz, CA
Levi Travis Sterner, FL

Supporting Business

Strengthening Organic Systems (SOS),
Gwendolyn Wyard

Builder

Quick Organics, Frankie Grundler

IOIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

— CHAIR —
BETH DOMINICK
— VICE CHAIR —
JANINE GIBSON
— TREASURER —
ALLAN BENJAMIN
— SECRETARY —
KATE NEWKIRK
— EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AT LARGE —
KATHE PURVIS
— DIRECTOR —
TERRANCE 'T' LAYHEW
— DIRECTOR —
MARGARITO CAL

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](#)

Webinar Training Schedule

for details & to register go to our [website](#)

December 13, 2023

100 Level IOIA/OMRI NOP Crop Input Materials
This course helps new organic professionals gain an understanding of the compliance requirements of inputs used within the crop production scope through a discussion and learning session with staff from Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI).
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. (Pacific). One 2 hour session.
Trainer: Doug Currier, OMRI.

[Register and Pay Here](#)

February 6 & 9, 2024

100 Level NOP Crop Standards
The course will prepare participants to verify compliance with the NOP Crop Standards.
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific). Two 3 hour sessions.
Trainer: Nate Powell-Palm

[Register and Pay Here](#)

February 13 & 16

100 Level IOIA COR Processing Standards
The course will prepare participants to verify compliance with the COR Processing Standards.
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific). Two 3 hour sessions.
Trainer: Kelly Monaghan

[Register and Pay Here](#)

March 5 & 8

100 Level NOP Processing Standards
The course will prepare participants to verify compliance with the NOP Processing Standards.
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific). Two 3 hour sessions.
Trainer: Garry Lean

[Register and Pay Here](#)

April 9 & 12

100 Level NOP Crop Standards
The course will prepare participants to verify compliance with the NOP Crop Standards.
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific). Two 3 hour sessions.
Trainer: Garry Lean

[Register and Pay Here](#)

April 16 & 19

100 Level NOP Livestock Standards
The course will prepare participants to verify compliance with the NOP Livestock Standards.
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific). Two 3 hour sessions.
Trainer: Garry Lean

[Register and Pay Here](#)

Webinar Discount Reminder

All inspector members are entitled to take 50% off any one webinar during 2024

Self-Paced Learning Courses

Canadian Organic Regime - COR Series Courses 1 & 2 each take approximately 3 hours to complete. Inspector members price: US\$150 each.

#1 Our Organic Certification System - The Regulation

#2 COR Crop Production Standards

#3 COR Livestock Production Standards Note: This is a 10-12 hour course, Member Price US\$275

Remote Inspection Training Free to inspector members; All others \$200.

[Available in English](#) [Tambien disponible en español.](#)

200 level IOIA/American Grassfed Association Grassfed Dairy

Member cost \$325 - \$375 all others.

Online Basic Courses 2024 - [see the IOIA site for full details](#)

Online - NOP - Basic Processing Inspection Training, December 11 - 15, 2023
Course Full

IOIA/Asia Pacific Committee Organic Grower Group Inspection Training, January 8 - 12, 2024

Organic Grower Group Inspection is an intensive 5 day course for inspectors of certified organic programs, to add grower group inspections to their skills base.
Deadline to apply: December 15, 2023

Online NOP - Basic Crop Inspection Training, February 19 - 23

The 4 ½ -day Basic Inspection Training follows IOIA's curriculum requirements.
Deadline to Register and Apply is Friday, January 5, 2024.

Online COR - Basic Processing Inspection Training, February 26 - March 1

The 4 ½ -day Basic Organic Processing Inspection Training follows IOIA's curriculum requirements which include: instruction on the organic standards with focus on the COR Standards.
Deadline to apply: December 31, 2023

Online NOP - Basic Processing Inspection Training - March 25 - 29

The 4 ½ -day Basic Inspection Training follows IOIA's curriculum requirements.
Deadline to Register and Apply is Monday, February 12, 2024.

Onsite Basic Courses 2024

IOIA Advanced Training, February 2 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

IOIA Advanced Training will be held in conjunction with NOP/ACA Training in San Antonio, Texas. See page 10 for info. The training will be presented collaboratively with the Alliance for Organic Integrity and will focus on **fraud**: fraud prevention, fraud detection (case studies), fraud prevention plans, supply chain audits, and how SOE changes the inspector's role. Lunch is included in registration fee.

Basic Crop and Livestock Training, Albany area, New York
Basic Crop April 29-May 3: Basic Livestock May 6-10

Basic Crop, Farmington, Minnesota. November 11-15 - The training will be held at Mount Olivet Conference & Retreat center, www.mtolivetreteat.org

Basic Crop: November 11-15

Basic Livestock and Processing: November 18-22

Not finding a training you are looking for or all trainings full?
[Please register here](#) to be contacted by IOIA when that training is available.

USDA's Organic Integrity Learning Center Expands Offerings

Growing the Organic Workforce NOP-996: Newly added topics in this course include Organic Education Curriculum Resources, Introduction to Organic Sector Careers, and Organic Inspector Career Snapshot.

NOP-350: Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) Final Rule core course. The course divides the rule's sections into manageable segments for targeted reading and learning and provides excellent resources to help answer your questions about the SOE Final Rule.

Courses in the [Organic Integrity Learning Center](#) are free and open to all.

Notes from the Chair, from page 1

of increasing value and an integral aspect of an inspector's role, entails analyzing past experiences, challenges faced, and lessons learned to enhance the quality and efficiency of future inspections.

Reviewing certifier feedback and constructive criticism constitutes a significant part of wintertime reflection for organic inspectors. This process fosters a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances of organic farming practices, enabling inspectors to provide more nuanced guidance to farmers. Furthermore, winter serves as an ideal period for professional development and education. Inspectors engage in workshops, training sessions, and seminars to stay abreast of the latest advancements in organic farming techniques, regulatory changes, and technological innovations. This continuous learning equips inspectors with updated knowledge, empowering them to offer better support and guidance to organic farmers.

Winter reflection also prompts inspectors to evaluate their communication and relationship-building strategies with certifiers and farmers. Strengthening these ties fosters trust and cooperation, facilitating a more collaborative approach towards maintaining organic integrity. It's a time to assess the effectiveness of communication methods and explore ways to enhance mutual understanding and support between inspectors and farmers.

Moreover, introspection during winter cultivates resilience and adaptability in the face of evolving challenges within the organic industry. It encourages inspectors to innovate and explore novel approaches to address emerging issues, ensuring the continued relevance and credibility of organic certification.

In essence, wintertime reflection serves as a pivotal phase for organic inspectors—a period of self-assessment, learning, and strategic planning. It enhances their expertise, refines their approaches, and reinforces their commitment to upholding the integrity of organic certification. Embracing this reflective practice empowers inspectors to navigate the complexities of their role with greater insight, efficiency, and dedication.

As chair of the IOIA Board I look forward to seeing you in San Antonio for the upcoming annual general meeting.

Keynote, from page 1

Rikki Held, now 22 years old, made Time Magazine's 2023 TIME100 NEXT list, was featured in Rolling Stone magazine and was interviewed by the United Nations high commission on human rights. When asked why she decided to join the lawsuit, Rikki said, "I knew it was the right thing to do. Learning about environmental science and climate change, I understood this climate crisis to be one of the biggest issues facing us today, and this case demonstrates that our governments need to act to protect us and our future. I want to ensure that basic human rights outlined in the Montana Constitution, such as the right to a clean and healthful environment, are upheld."

Our Executive Director, Margaret Scoles, reached out to invite her to participate in our upcoming AGM in Feb 2024. Her response was that she would love to, but in February she would be in Kenya with the Peace Corps, teaching science.

It was uncertain if she would have reliable internet to participate via video conference. However, she agreed to meet with Terrance Layhew, podcaster and Town Hall moderator extraordinaire, for a taped interview. We plan that she join us live via Zoom from Kenya. Her father, Steve Held, will be speaking in person on her behalf.

Steve Held, a successful actor and film maker, was born in North Hollywood, California, then adopted by Jean and Cap Hough in Broadus. He returned to Los Angeles to work as an actor for nearly 30 years after completing his Masters at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. He returned to his childhood home in 2005 to train horses and raise a family. He owns a ranch and a hotel in Powder River County just a few doors from what is currently the IOIA office. He describes his title for speaking engagements on behalf of Our Children's Trust as "Rikki's dad". Learn more:

- Our Children's Trust: <https://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/>

- *Held v. Montana*: A Win for Young Climate Advocates and What It Means for Future Litigation – Harvard Law School: <https://eelp.law.harvard.edu/2023/08/held-v-montana/>

Editor's Note: In lieu of a keynote honorarium, IOIA will make a donation to Our Children's Trust.



Notes from the Executive Director by Margaret Scoles

The last few months of 2023 raced by with intense work on the ACA/IOIA Mentorship Project and a whirlwind trip to NOC/NOSB/TOPP events in Providence, Rhode Island. Drew Gourdie, Business Development Director, joined me for most of the events.

The NOC meeting was very good and informational, with a farmer panel focusing on diversity in organic agriculture. Nate Powell-Palm gave a nice shout out to IOIA in his outgoing report from the chair, as he finished up his 2-year tenure as Chair of NOSB. He closed with a photo from his June wedding with organic inspectors in it (Garth Kahl, Angela Wartes-Kahl, Salix, Nate Lewis and family, and me). It focused on how much the inclusiveness of the organic community had shaped his life and how important organic was from the time he was born. His parents gave birth to him in a house that was inadvertently sprayed with pesticide within his first week of life resulting in asthma for life. He is an amazing inspirational speaker and well-deserved the standing ovation that followed. There were some tears, including a few of my own.

The board continued in the civil and respectful manner we've come to expect under his leadership. No votes were made to change anything on the materials lists. No startling votes were taken, with one exception. There was a split vote on de-oiled lecithin on 205.606 with 2 abstentions. It looked for a moment like it might be coming off the list. Vaccines were also the topic of a very interesting discussion on the board, although the final vote was unanimous to keep them on the list. There is escalating concern about mRNA vaccines becoming the norm in organic as well as nonorganic livestock. Also, a fair amount of discussion about plastics.

The big announcement during the NOSB meeting was that Organic Livestock & Poultry Standard (OLPS) was published. Some sneaked out to send out press releases. Dr Jenny Tucker and Nate were whisked away for a press conference. We attended the ACA Reception one night, celebrating ACA's 20th anniversary. Drew and I maximized our breaks and meals, meeting with Sam Malriat of Rodale (supporting business member). I met with Dr. Dilip Nandwani (TSU) and Dr. Franklin Quarcoo (Tuskegee U) and explored how we could do training with their 1890's universities for college students to become organic inspectors. They both serve on the NOSB. We connected briefly with Brandon Hill, the TOPP person for OCIA, which is the Plains states TOPP lead. Nice surprise – he is the husband of Demetria Stephens-Hill, an IOIA inspector member. A sobering learning at the NOC meeting was hearing that the Rhode Island state government was ending their state organic certification program. RI is the smallest US state and only certifies 50+ growers. Still, it joins the list of state programs that have either lost their accreditation or chosen to stop certifying. Matt Green of the RI Department of Environmental Management has been a supporting individual member as long as I can remember.

We were hosted one night by Frankie Grundler, of Quick Organics, for a delightful dinner at an oyster bar with the ACA crowd (Ellie Hudson and Marni Karlin), the IOIA crowd (Rachel Myers, Rachel's sister Beckah, Terrance Layhew, Drew, and me), plus Phil LaRocca of CCOF. Frankie was a presenter at the NOC training on Recordkeeping Innovation. It was good to connect with John Foster (former IOIA board member and inspector) who is now with Wolf & Associates. He rejoined IOIA individually as our first new Inspector Emeritus member and agreed to write the technical article/op-ed for this issue of the newsletter. I was impressed with his oral comments to NOSB on Oct 17, so I asked him if he would adapt them for an IOIA newsletter article, and he did.

It is amazing how much time can be saved by replacing real-time travel with Zoom conferencing. I spoke on a panel for the Iowa Organic Conference by Zoom on a panel with Dr. Jenny Tucker, Deputy Administrator USDA NOP and Allison Walent, MOSA, Midwest TOPP Regional Center, Program Director. I was interviewed on Iowa Public Radio a few days before the conference, joining conference organizer Dr. Kathleen Delate of Iowa State University and Iowa organic farmers. Check out the online podcast - <https://www.iowapublicradio.org/podcast/talk-of-iowa/2023-11-16/whats-next-for-iowas-organic-farmers>



Margaret and Drew in Providence



DrewAnne caught in the act of de-papering the IOIA office.

Happy Holidays to you and your family

Sector News

Organic Livestock & Poultry Standards - Summary

The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) recently announced an Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards Final Rule (OLPS), designed to broaden and strengthen animal welfare standards for organically-raised livestock and poultry. The rule will come into effect January 2nd, 2024, with compliance for most requirements effective January 2nd, 2025.

The exception to the 1-year implementation timeline is related to certified organic poultry operations, which have four additional years (until January 2nd, 2029) to comply with outdoor spacing requirements for layers, indoor and outdoor stocking density requirements for broilers, and exit area requirements for all certified poultry. While many had hoped for a 3-year implementation timeline, there was relief it was not the longer option (15 years!).

The marketplace consistently shows that many consumers want animals to be raised with ample access to outdoor space, and in natural, humane environments. Most organic livestock and poultry producers already adhere to such standards. However, due to existing regulations, some operations continue to deny meaningful outdoor access to animals. This puts other producers at a cost disadvantage, reducing margins and preventing the industry from offering a fair and level playing field.

The final rule outlines more consistent standards for six key areas, as follows:

Outdoor space requirements: OLPS sets minimum outdoor space requirements for organic poultry and requires ready access to the outdoors. Outdoor areas must be at least 75% soil and include as much vegetation as possible.

Indoor/outdoor living conditions: Shelters must have sufficient space for livestock to lie down, stand up, turn around, fully stretch their limbs/wings, and express natural behaviors (such as rooting in pigs, and scratching in chickens). Bedding areas must be sufficiently large and comfortable to keep livestock hygienic (for the species), dry, and free of lesions.

Poultry stocking densities: The OLPS sets specific requirements for indoor and outdoor stocking densities to align with advisory board recommendations, third-party animal welfare standards and public comments.

Preventative health care practices: Producers must maintain preventative health care practices that include sufficient nutrition and comprehensive parasite prevention plans. Animals must be treated with allowed medicines to minimize pain, stress and suffering. All necessary treatment must be administered, even if the animal loses its organic status.

Physical alterations/euthanasia: Physical alterations are permitted only for identification purposes or the safety of the animals, and certain alterations are prohibited. Alterations must be performed at a young age for the species and in a manner that minimizes the animal's pain and stress. Humane euthanasia may only be used if treatment is not an option.

Transport, handling and slaughter: Operations must describe how organic management and animal welfare will be maintained for transport that exceeds eight hours. Animals must be fit for transport. The mode of transport must be seasonally appropriate to protect livestock from cold or hot conditions. All producers must fully adhere to USDA's Food Safety & Inspection Service (FSIS) humane slaughter standards.

The OLPS creates a more fair, competitive, and transparent supply chain for organic livestock and poultry. This in turn is expected to bolster consumer confidence that expectations for the humane treatment of animals is ensured.

Compliance Dates: All organic operations must comply with the requirements of this rule by January 2, 2025, except:

- Currently certified organic layer operations and layer operations that are certified before January 2, 2025, must comply with the §§ 205.241(c)(2), (c)(4), and (c)(5), concerning outdoor stocking density requirements and soil and vegetation requirements, by January 2, 2029.
- Currently certified organic broiler operations and broiler operations that are certified before January 2, 2025, must comply with §§ 205.241(b)(10), (c)(2), and (c)(6), concerning indoor and outdoor stocking density requirements and soil and vegetation requirements, by January 5, 2029.
- Currently certified organic poultry operations and poultry operations that are certified before January 2, 2025 must comply with § 205.241(b)(4), concerning poultry house exit area requirements, by January 2, 2029.

For more info: [Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards | Agricultural Marketing Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

[Final Rule](#) [OLPS Fact Sheet](#)

Sector News

US Farm Bill Extended 1 year

On 15 November, the US Congress passed a bipartisan one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill. The extension safeguards agricultural programs critical for organic, such as the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) which received baseline funding in the 2018 Farm Bill. It maintains the oversight and enforcement activities of the National Organic Program and provides needed certainty to farmers moving into the new calendar year. The extension also provides funding for so-called "orphan programs" that are important to organic but lack a permanent funding mechanism. These programs include the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative, the Organic Integrity Database, and the National Organic Certification Cost-Share.

The Organic Production and Market Data Initiative collects information vital to maintaining stable markets, creating risk management tools, and assisting in negotiating equivalency agreements with foreign governments, and is key to informing organic farmer planning. The Organic Integrity Database will be utilized to provide oversight of imports when the National Organic Program's historic new Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule comes into effect in March 2024. This oversight is critical to consumer protection and integral to ensuring fair competition for American farmers. Additionally, for organic to continue the growth it has achieved over the last decade, the Organic Certification Cost-Share program is crucial for attracting new, young farmers to organic to help build a diverse and thriving organic agriculture community.

The Organic Trade Association worked hard to get this extension passed. "Through our advocacy efforts and in collaboration with other groups who are concerned about fair competition and rising costs for farmers, we will continue to make permanent funding for the "orphan programs" a high priority for the next version of the Farm Bill," said OTA CEO Tom Chapman. "We thank the leadership of Chairwoman Stabenow and Chairman Thompson, as well as Ranking Members Boozman and Scott, however, Congress cannot take the full year to complete a new version. The Farm Bill charts the course for agriculture, and organic farmers need updated policy and the stability and certainty that the Farm Bill provides." Organic Trade Association statement on Farm Bill extension <https://ota.com/news/press-releases/22977>

Lawsuit on producer group certification and organic imports

A recent [lawsuit](#) threatens the use of producer group certification, an important resource for organic producers around the globe, alleging the system allows for loopholes in the certification process and creates an entry point for fraud. The loss of producer groups in the organic certification system would impact the availability of key organic products and ingredients such as chocolate, spices, sugar, coffee, tea, and tropical fruits. USDA's Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) rule codifies the long-standing practice of grower group certification (updated to producer groups to be scope neutral). The producer group system has enabled very small producers, especially in the developing world, to enter the organic marketplace and provides an important income for them and their communities.

The SOE rule, which goes into effect on March 19, 2024, addresses the certification of grower groups and, for the first time, adds specific requirements for group certification to the NOP regulations. SOE not only spells out the specific eligibility criteria needed to qualify for certification as a group, but also requires a strong Internal Control System to oversee and ensure compliance of group members with organic regulations. It establishes tougher standards for surveillance, training, inspection, auditing and sanctions of group members and the producer group operation. It also clarifies the higher qualifications for organic inspectors, tightens USDA's authority over certification companies, creates uniform organic certificates, and increases access to organic data to verify foreign exports match foreign production. The rule includes substantial detail for producers groups, but does not limit the number of producers in the group or the size and scale of the individual producers.

Read [OTA's statement in response to the lawsuit](#).

An excellent overview by Gabi Soto and Michael Sligh of the Alliance for Organic Integrity is available in The Organic Standard issue #190.

IFOAM - North America has written a position statement and has submitted it to IFOAM - Organics International.

Stay tuned.

News from Latin America

by Luis Brenes

IOIA has been busy this year with Basic Online trainings offered online in Spanish language.

A **Basic Crop Inspection Training** was held September 11-14 and 18-21 with Luis Brenes as trainer. This is the second training of its kind after the first one was conducted in 2021 during Covid. Eleven participants from Mexico, Guatemala, Panama and Peru interacted through two weeks where they met four days a week, Monday - Thursday, for 4 hours per day in the afternoons. Meeting online allowed this schedule as a pilot run for a slower and more digestible way of going through the topics and homework.

A recorded virtual field trip to La Pavilla, an organic vegetable growing farm, was possible thanks to the kind cooperation of Jonathan Castro, a certified organic farmer who also successfully participated in the 2021 training as student.



Primer Curso Basic de Inspeccion de Proceso en línea... En Español!

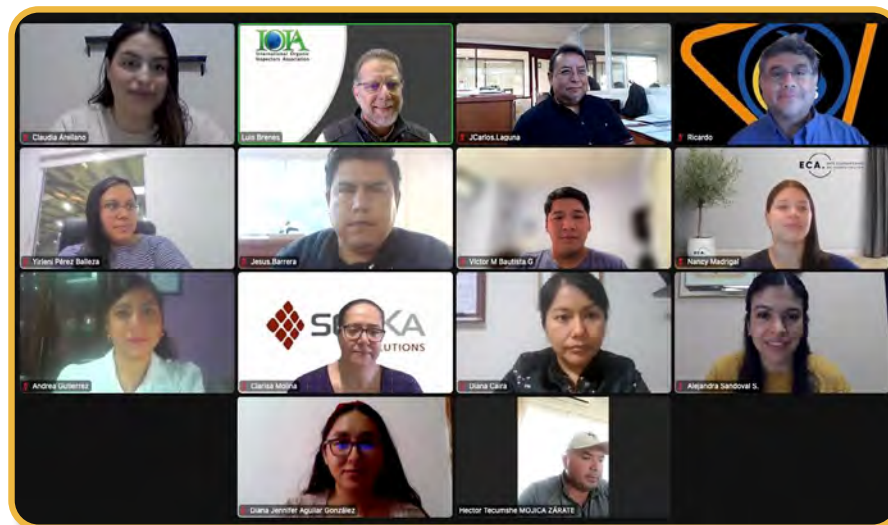
Durante este mes de noviembre AgriVita (Costa Rica) llevó a cabo el primer curso sincrónico en línea ("Live on Line") de inspección de proceso orgánico en español. Es un hecho relevante dado que las últimas veces que este curso se impartió, de manera presencial, fue hace muchos años, en 2014 en Costa Rica y 2016 en México.

El curso fue adaptado para ser presentado en su formato virtual a lo largo de dos semanas, martes, jueves y viernes, por seis horas diarias. Este formato de dos semanas con días de por medio permite a los participantes acomodar mejor sus otras obligaciones laborales y de paso les da más tiempo para digerir el material y hacer las tareas.

La práctica de auditoría virtual se llevó a cabo en Yerba Buena Inc, una empresa canadiense que fabrica sopas orgánicas. El video educativo fue desarrollado por Kelly Monaghan para ser impartido en cursos sincrónicos en línea bajo la norma de COR, y fue adaptado al español y a la norma USDA NOP por el entrenador Luis Brenes y un equipo de colaboradores.

El curso contó con trece entusiastas participantes de Estados Unidos, México, Guatemala, Costa Rica y Perú, incluyendo consultores, profesionales de empresas de proceso de alimentos inspectores y personal de las agencias certificadoras.

El desarrollo de este curso abre nuevas posibilidades de capacitación en español, en un momento donde la norma 7CFR 205 ha sufrido cambios significativos por la publicación de los cambios conocidos como SOE por su siglas en inglés (Strengthening Organic Enforcement).



News from Canada

Organic Week - Canada by Drew Gourdie

IOIA recently participated in Organic Week in Canada (<https://organicweek.ca/>); a robust week of in-person and virtual events from coast-to-coast, organized by Canada's Organic Trade Association (COTA) <https://canada-organic.ca/en/organic>; a robust week of in-person and virtual events held from coast-to-coast, culminating in the Canadian Health Food Association's eastern conference, CHFA Now <https://www.chfanow.ca/toronto/>. Both COTA and Canadian Organic Growers (<https://cog.ca/>) are the sponsors and organizers of Organic Week, in addition to commercial sponsors and provincial organizations (Organic Council of Ontario, the Manitoba Organic Alliance, SaskOrganics and Organic Alberta).

COTA's Executive Director Tia Loftsgard facilitated and presented at many sessions, and moderated panel discussions. On the data side, Canada's organic market reported \$10.26 billion in sales last year, representing 3.3 per cent of total market share. Of that total, \$7.94 billion were for organic food and beverages. Canadian organic sales increased by nine per cent compared to 2021 making it the fifth largest consumer market in the world. On average, Canadians spend \$184 CAD per week on organic grocery products.

Canada exported 180,000 tonnes of organic raw materials in 2022, ranking top-10 in the world. Pulse production was fourth, cereals sixth, and oilseeds ninth. There were 7,702 certified organic operators in Canada in 2022, with growers making up 79 per cent of total operations. However, after years of steady growth, there was a 3.7 per cent decline in the number of certified organic operators compared to 2021. Quebec had the largest share of organic operators in Canada with 44 percent, followed by Ontario at 19 percent. The Prairie provinces collectively had a share of 23 percent.

COTA released a statement in September asking Health Canada to reverse its decision to allow disclosure of GM seeds and food to be on a voluntary basis. This comes after an investigation revealed closed-door negotiations between the federal government and CropLife, a multi-national agrochemical trade association. COTA wants to see regulation and policy determined by an independent third party. (<https://canada-organic.ca/production.canada-organic.ca/web/en/news/decisions-gene-editing-regulation-canada-must-be-made-independently>) "The organic sector continues to ask for a mandatory government registry of all gene-edited products in order to co-exist with non-organic growing systems," the statement reads. "This request to uphold transparency and traceability should not be overlooked once again as the organic sector seeks a way to co-exist with non-organic farming systems in Canada."

Tia and her team (as always!) did a great job with all the Organic Week activities, continuing their crucial role in upholding COTA's mission: To promote and protect the organic sector, and encourage the universal adoption of organic foods across the country.

Kelly Monaghan renamed to Canada's Organic Technical Committee

Monaghan, an IOIA accredited member and trainer, holds IOIA's voting member seat on Canada's Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture.



Organic BC Conference - IOIA Social

IOIA's Canadian Committee sponsored a social at the Organic BC conference that was recently held in November. Thank you to Chuck Mitchell and Jolene Swain for organizing.

Guelph Conference, January 24 - 27

[Follow this link for more conference information.](#)

- Online programming: Jan. 23rd to 27th
- In-person workshops: Jan. 28th & 29th
- Free-to-the-public Trade Show: Jan. 28th & 29th
- Regenerative Organic Training — Rick Clark
- Keynote — Paul Holmbeck (Danish Change-Maker)
- Organic Dinner: Jan. 27th



Bring Organic Home
Jan 24 - 27, 2024

guelphorganicconf.ca

Since the 2020 conference and during the pandemic, the Guelph Organic Conference shifted to online programming and in 2022, the Organic Council of Ontario became the primary organizer. Over the decades, Tomas Nimmo was the conference's key organizer and has been a passionate advocate for organics and the conference.

2024 NOP Training, ACA Conference, IOIA Advanced Training and AGM January 29 - February 3

IOIA will be meeting in conjunction with the Accredited Certifiers Association and the National Organic Program, in San Antonio, Texas. The events will be held at the Drury Plaza Hotel on the San Antonio Riverwalk. The Drury provides a complimentary breakfast each morning and an evening happy hour with heavy hors d'oeuvres.

The ACA Conference - **SOE Rodeo 2024** - will be held January 30 - February 2. Sessions include a day of presentations by NOP, SOE roundtables, compliance enforcement, inspector training, and more! A happy hour will be hosted at the famed Alamo on January 31.

Two days of IOIA events are planned for Feb 2-3.

Please see the [IOIA website](#) for links to hotel reservations, events registration, and full event agendas.

Key Dates:

- NOP training January 30
- IOIA Advanced training February 2
- ACA training January 31 - Feb 1
- IOIA AGM February 3

The **IOIA Advanced Training** will be on Feb. 2 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The training will be presented collaboratively with the Alliance for Organic Integrity and will focus on fraud: fraud prevention, fraud detection (case studies), fraud prevention plans, supply chain audits, and how SOE changes the inspector's role.

Lunch is included in registration fee.

The **IOIA Annual Meeting** will be on Feb. 3 at 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. followed by lunch (included in the meeting). The cost is \$25 for IOIA Inspector members and \$50 for supporting members. It is open to IOIA members and invited guests.



ACA Event Schedule: Wednesday, January 31

Opening, Welcome, and Keynote
· John Foster, Wolf & Associates

Existential Questions in Organic
· Nate Powell-Palm, Organic Integrity Cooperative Guild

Reviewing the Organic Fraud Prevention Plan (from the desk, field, or facility)
· Gwendolyn Wyard and Kim Dietz, Founding Partners, Strengthening Organic Systems, LLC

Livestock Healthcare Products: From Material Review to Use
· Lindsay Stinson, QCS

NOSB Listening Session
· Kyla Smith, Certification Policy Advisor, PCO (and new NOSB chair)

The Practices and Struggles of Staffing in a Post-SOE Climate
· Emily Fowell, Ecocert

APHIS Best Practice

Inspector Training: An approach to building and supporting an exemplary workforce
· Allison Dermond, Inspector Coordinator, WSDA Organic Program
· Brenda Book, WSDA Organic Program

Internal Review: Krista Wanser, OTCO

Empowering Staff to Make Decisions
· Nicole Dehne, VOF

Thursday, February 1

Compliance Enforcement: Gathering Hard Evidence
· Adam Maxwell, QCS

New Personnel Requirements
· Silke Fuchshofen, Organic Insights, Inc.

SOE Roundtables

Compliance Case Studies
· Brenda Book, WSDA Organic Program

NOP Expectations Panel
· Marni Karlin, Consultant, ACA

State of the ACA
· Ellie Hudson, Executive Director, ACA
· Gayle Mitchell, ACA

Nurturing Organic Excellence: Overcoming Talent Challenges in the Organic Community
· Nicole Dehne, VOF
· Connie Karr, Certification Director, OTCO

Committee News

Update on the IOIA Credentialing Working Group

by Silke Fuchshofen

We started out to work on a credentialing program for organic inspectors but after several months it became clear that the goal is unrealistic within the timeframe. This can only be developed in cooperation with the organic certifier community. Getting ready for the implementation date of SOE poses enough challenges. So, at the same time as IOIA created the facilitator position that I am holding, we decided to step back and focus on something that will be of more immediate value for inspectors and certifiers alike.

The SOE includes substantial changes to the inspector/reviewer personnel requirements for organic certification agencies. The idea of an "Express Pass" has been floating around soon after the ACA section H workgroup started meeting.

The IOIA was originally founded to provide the organic movement with qualified organic inspectors, and supporting the SOE requirements is a new frontier for us. The new regulation explicitly calls for specific numbers of training hours for inspectors and reviewers. The Preamble states that "Certifying agents must maintain policies, procedures, and records regarding inspector and certification review personnel training and evaluation." In discussions with certifiers, it became obvious that the vetting and hiring process will add strain to certifiers resources. At the same time, the IOIA has a membership database in place that can be built upon to provide a "clearinghouse" service between independent organic inspectors/reviewers and certification agencies.

So, we shifted to working on a program that will allow IOIA to create a database of inspectors and reviewers, already trained or fulfilling the qualifications for inspector/reviewer trainings. Certifiers will be able to access a pool of potential contractors or employees through this service. No longer called the "SOE Express Pass", the new name is Organic Professionals Qualifications Database (OPQD).

This program will also allow inspectors and reviewers to state their special qualifications as well as provide a platform for professional development.

Please share your thoughts about this and - stay tuned!



Town Hall - a conversation about hydroponics

On November 27 we held our first Town Hall in some months and are glad to report it was well attended, with 28 members in attendance. Panelists were Garth Kahl, Harriet Behar, and Sam Welsch. The discussion started with an overview of language and how it affects the discussion (grown in liquid? in sand? in a container?).



Garth Kahl has worked as an organic inspector half to full time, working on 3 continents, including inspections of crops, processing, wild harvest, livestock, agriculture, grower groups and textiles.



Harriet Behar has been involved with organic agriculture since the mid 1980s, as an organic farmer, marketer, inspector, advocate and educator. She served a term on the National Organic Standards Board and was the chair in 2020.



Sam Welsch has been an advocate of organic farming for over 50 years. He began work in organic certification in 2001, founding OneCert in 2003, and OneCert Asia in 2005. Sam served on the NOSB's task force on hydroponics in 2015-2016.

Brian Baker announced as New Ethics Chair

We are pleased to announce that Brian Baker, Ph.D., will be chairing our Ethics Committee. Brian brings decades of knowledge and experience in organics.



Asia Pacific Committee News

IOIA
2024 APC Webinar

Washington DC 21:00
25th Jan

Brisbane 12:00
Tokyo & Seoul 11:00
Taipei & Manila 10:00
Bangkok 09:00
Kathmandu 07:45
New Delhi 07:30
26th Jan

USEFUL CONCEPTS FOR ORGANIC INSPECTORS

This seminar will present on concepts aligned with organic certification that are useful for an organic inspector to have basic understanding of. Let's listen to the presentations and discussions with

Welcome Introduction to Topic Mutsumi Sakuyoshi
Agroecology for Organic Farming Isidor Yu
Organic Pest Management Maheswar Ghimire
Regenerative Agriculture Ben Copeman
Social /Ethical Compliance and Fairtrade Kathe Purvis
Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Strategies Jim Pierce
Quality Management System and Record Keeping Sandeep Bhargava
Credentialing Organic Inspectors Margaret Scoles
And the Moderator Vitoon Panyakul

Asia Pacific Committee of International Organic Inspectors Association
All rights reserved. www.ioia.net ioia@ioia.net

REGISTER NOW

IOIA's Asia Pacific Committee (APC) announces 2024 Webinar: "Useful Concepts for Inspectors"

APC presents their third annual industry webinar, to be held January 25th / 26th (depending on time zone). Following the success of the first two online events, the Committee is pleased to offer this event at no charge.

Session presentations are closely aligned with topics common to organic inspectors in all walks of life.

Moderated by Vitoon Panyakul, the agenda includes:

- Welcome Introduction (Mutsumi Sakuyoshi)
- Agroecology for Organic Farming (Isidor Yu)
- Organic Pest Management (Maheswar Ghimire)
- Regenerative Agriculture (Ben Copeman)
- Social /Ethical Compliance & Fair Trade (Kathe Purvis)
- Gender Equality, Diversity & Social Inclusion Strategies (Jim Pierce)
- Quality Management System & Record Keeping (Sandeep Bhargava)
- Credentialing Organic Inspectors (Margaret Scoles)

Washington DC (Eastern Time) 21:00 Jan 25th
 All other locations Jan 26th:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Brisbane 12 :00 | Bangkok 09:00 |
| Tokyo & Seoul 11:00 | Kathmandu 07:45 |
| Taipei & Manila 10:00 | New Delhi 07:30 |

[Register Here](#)

Policy Committee Update

by Rachel Cherry Myers, Policy Committee Facilitator

For all you policy wonks out there....what a year this has been!!

In 2023, we have seen the publication of two major regulation changes and the implementation of a third, all of which have huge impacts on organic integrity. Origin of Livestock is in full swing and both Strengthening Organic Enforcement and Organic Poultry and Livestock Standards will be implemented within the next year! It really is amazing to see our voice shine through and know that we are making a difference in organics!

This fall we submitted comments on two topics to the NOSB and Margaret made an oral comment. The comment season concluded in Providence where IOIA board member Terrance Layhew, Margaret, Drew, and I were able to represent IOIA at the NOSB meeting!



Our first comment was in response to the NOSB request for comment on "Residue Testing in a Global Supply Chain". The NOSB requested input on current and suggested practices surrounding sampling and residue testing. IOIA shared an important perspective, the inspector's perspective. Our comment primarily focused on the importance of an industry wide Sampling Policy or Best Practice. We shared the need for a risk-based approach to testing, sampling throughout a supply chain, and the methodology and logistics of sample.

Our second comment was a second round of comments on "Inert Ingredients in Pesticide Products". Brian Baker was instrumental in both this comment the previous comment on the matter submitted in December of 2022. IOIA advocated for a full disclosure of all ingredients, including inerts, both so that was more transparency in what was used in organic production and so that inspectors could feel safe doing their job at an on-site inspection.

As always, Margaret did an amazing job of answering the board's questions during the comment session over zoom.

I will be honest, my favorite "job" with the policy committee this year was attending the fall NOSB meeting in Providence. It was the first meeting I've been to since before the pandemic, and truly, there is no substitute for growing relationships like being in person. It was a pure joy to not only spend some quality time with Margaret and Drew, but to strengthen our bonds with some friends in the industry.

TOPP - Work Opportunities for Organic Inspectors/farmers and much more

Transition to Organic Partnership Program - work opportunities for organic inspectors/organic farmers and much more.

Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) is a network assembled by the USDA's National Organic Program to support transitioning and organic producers with mentorship and resources. It is one of three parts to USDA's Organic Transition Initiative (\$300 million total, \$100 million for each part).

- TOPP - farmer to farmer mentoring with payments for the mentors, technical assistance, community development, workforce development, data and reporting.
- Direct Support - Conservation Support for Transitioning Farmers (NRCS) and Crop Insurance for Transitional Organic Growers (RMA)
- Pinpointed Organic Market Development Grants - applications are currently in review and announcements of recipients expected in early 2024.

For more info on how to become a farmer mentor, www.organictransition.org

Online Basic Crop Training, August 21 - 25



Trainers Nate Powell-Palm, top row second from left, and Garry Lean, top right corner.

“Just wanted to say thanks for a great week. I thought the training was really excellent and exceeded all my expectations.”

~ Brianna Lee Biddle, International Participant

Online Basic Processing Training, September 25 - 29



Trainers Garry Lean and Nate Powell-Palm, top row left and center.

Basic Farm Course, Japan, October 3 - 10



In the past 2 to 3 years, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery (MAFF) has strongly promoted organic, which in turn has increased the demand for JOIA/IOIA inspection trainings.

Online Basic Crop Training, October 30 - November 3



Trainers Garry Lean and Nate Powell-Palm, top row left and center.

ACA/IOIA Mentors for Organic Inspectors

In our last issue, Margaret Scoles described the mentorship project, which is part of a larger cooperative agreement between ACA and the NOP. The goal then was to complete at least 15 apprenticeships by October and analyze the data gathered to create a Job Task Analysis for Organic Inspector Mentors. Since then, the NOP extended ACA's funding and completion deadline for the project for one more year. This has allowed completing more apprenticeships and will allow for better analysis of the information gathered.

This project is a critical step toward accessing public funding to support inspector apprenticeships. Mentors and apprentices were matched and asked that they complete shadow inspections where the apprentice observed the mentor and complete at least two inspections where the apprentice was observed by the mentor. The mentor would stay available over the following months to review up to 6 additional reports. Each mentor tracked their activities and their time for each, with the goal of identifying the high stakes tasks and those frequently done. Mentors were compensated. Most mentors found the job tracking templates somewhat challenging, not to mention the challenge of completing an inspection while coaching an apprentice and tracking everything in detail. But they did it! Additional information has been gathered by interview of each of the eight mentors as they complete all their tasks. A survey will also be conducted of the apprentices, after they have begun completing solo inspections.

IOIA and ACA were very pleased to have a wide diversity in both apprentices and mentors for richer and more informative data. Mentors included independent contract inspectors and staff inspectors. Apprentices included all three scopes; those who had taken basic training in the scope and those who had not; and those who had already inspected in one scope and were adding another.

Most matches involved only local travel. However, Fay Pemberton of Texas traveled to Wisconsin for a week of apprenticeship with Mariann Holm. Mariann says they worked together on the reports and the first joint report she submitted got feedback from the certifier as *"the best crop inspection report ever!"*



Lau Ackerman, California

Next issue will feature more mentors and an article by Tanya Bagley. She is one of the few who experienced both methods of apprenticeship. She completed the Crop Apprenticeship Intensive last year and this year she is one of the apprentices in the ACA/IOIA Project for adding the livestock scope.

Tanya says, *"After my IOIA training in crops was complete I found it difficult to get an entry point into the industry. I applied to many certifiers, tried contacting local*

(and some not so local to me) inspectors to see if they would provide mentorship, and asked organic producers to point me to a path to inspecting. Since contact in the industry is typically the entry point, I did not have success in my efforts for a year. Having kept my eye on the IOIA website as a means of finding contacts or additional training, I saw an announcement for the IOIA Organic

Crop Inspection Training/Apprenticeship Intensive in Frankfort, Kentucky. It was a

lucky minute because attendance at that event gave me real-world exposure to inspecting, much ongoing training, a chance to practice skills, strategies for breaking into the industry and much-needed encouragement to continue."



Benjamin Lewis, California



Matthew Molyneaux with Caroline Vogl

Thank you to the eight mentors! In addition to those mentioned here - Leonard Pollara, MI (2 apprentices), Allan Benjamin, MO (2 apprentices), Darren Maum, NY (2 apprentices), and Sean Mulla, MT (2 apprentices).

Membership News

Membership Strategy Summary by Drew Gourdie

The IOIA Board of Directors recently approved the implementation of an updated Membership Strategy for 2023 and beyond. IOIA has maintained a steady membership base throughout the years, and has kept member numbers in check during the pandemic era. That's an achievement that not all member-driven associations have managed to accomplish. However, as an organization, we realize that we must do more to attract and retain members going forward.

To that end, we have devised a Membership Strategy that will support the goals of the organization as relates to Inspector Members, patron donors, and other industry supporters. Our strategy is broken into several key components that link to broad program areas, such as pricing, benefits, and member outreach. Some specific areas include:

Membership Levels: We've created new member categories such as Inspector Emeritus, for inspectors who may not be active currently, but who wish to stay connected to the IOIA organization and its members. We established a category for certifier staff inspectors who don't need all the benefits of full inspector status but who wish to participate in Town Hall and the Forum. We're also now differentiating between regional Certifiers and those larger firms that might operate nationally or internationally. For most member levels, we've also introduced a monthly pricing option, in addition to our standard annual pricing.

Donor Levels: In concert with changes to Inspector member levels, we've also introduced new tiers to better accommodate potential corporate donors. We're reexamining the benefits associated with each tier, and exploring new opportunities to serve forward-thinking donor organizations who envision supporting the on-going integrity of the organic inspection process.

With newly-expanded capacity, IOIA intends to expand its presence at in-person events nation-wide, including organic conferences, trade shows, and other industry-related events. We're also further embracing new technology tools and social platforms, as we expand our promotional opportunities into new and existing markets.

Member surveys, positive testimonials, and an updated New Member Package are other projects that our team is exploring. Collectively, we believe a renewed focus on these activities will support our continued growth, and help ensure that IOIA offers quality inspector training well into the future!



Coming In December Watch for the upcoming Election Runner email with the ballot for IOIA's Board of Directors.

Post-training Survey Winner

Congratulations to Alexa Schieferecke of California, who was the winner of the October 1 drawing for our post-training evaluation survey program. Alexa received a check for \$250 for participating in a post-training survey. The information gathered in these surveys will inform the work of the Training Advisory Council, one of IOIA's strategic initiatives. If you receive a request to complete a survey, **please take a few minutes to take it, and earn a chance to win \$250!**

Coffee with IOIA

A regular monthly gathering of **anyone and everyone - not just IOIA members** - interested in talking about organic - inspection, certification, materials, whatever is on your mind!

*Remember -
Coffee with
IOIA is
Not Recorded!*



IOIA Forum

A great place to ask questions of fellow inspectors! If you are an inspector member and aren't using the IOIA Forum, you are missing out on a great benefit of IOIA membership! Contact the [Forum Admin](#) to get signed up.

Guest Op Ed - Commercial Availability

John Foster, *Chief Operating Officer, Wolf & Associates*

I've always been a fan of the underdog, the unlikely, the implausible, even the impossible. And of getting new things going. The inside joke at Wolf & Associates is that my title really should be Chief *Instigation* Officer, a monicker I proudly wear. As all of you know there's plenty of sexy, exciting things for me to work on in the organic space, so naturally at the moment my attention is on, wait for it ... Commercial Availability. (Oh baby.)

Those of you who know my history know I'm a fan of an inclusive National List, an accommodating National List, a National List that serves to get more ground in organic instead of conventional production, whatever that is. Wolf & Associates and I as an individual have commented often on this priority, and we'll keep at it.

Of interest to me for the next few hundred words is the need for adding commercial availability sensibilities more broadly in §205.605. I'd love to see a blanket clause at the top of the subsection, but the demands of petitioning such an addition seem overly daunting (even for a guy like me). So, let's take baby steps.



Joe Dickson, John Foster, and Mark King in Providence at the ACA reception.

There are precedents, so we can build on such clauses already in place for flavors, yeast, and collagen gel. Adding such clauses provides regulatory incentives to increase percentages of organic ingredients in manufactured products, which demand organic ingredients, which demand organic crops, which require organic ground.

One impediment to broader use with organic ingredients on 205.605 is that many are produced by ingredient manufacturers only to order, since the typical sales volumes are small compared to the total product offering of most supply houses. Additionally, lead times for custom production runs often exceed the timeline constraints R&D or Procurement teams work under, so the net result is that minor organic ingredients are not available in the timelines required.

Novel production methods are becoming more readily available and feasible to make organic ingredients which were once considered impossible to produce as an agricultural product, let alone in an organic form.

For example, citric acid and some gums are now available in organic forms but without commercial availability clauses in place, few incentives exist to drive manufacturers to source them. Creating and reviewing supporting documentation for lack of commercial availability claims is already a familiar process to both handler and ACAs respectively, so no process learning curve exists.

Two recent examples in certified organic flavors, where commercial availability clause was added in years past, shows just such promise. Adding this clause drove unprecedented innovation in organic flavors over the last several years and incentivized the recent (and remarkable) organic certification of an operation producing benzaldehyde and ethyl acetate. Benzaldehyde is the core flavor for almond-cherry type flavors, and the flavor industry is following this development closely. Ethyl acetate is not only a flavor (think red wine) but an excellent extractant with unique and useful applications where organic ethanol hits limits. The latter innovation creates exciting new organic *extraction* opportunities, which creates new ingredient opportunities, which creates more organic supply opportunities, and we are back to more organic ground. If it weren't for the commercial availability clause in natural flavors, creation of the novel organic ethyl acetate would not have been feasible.

Having been a professional inspector, reviewer, instigator and gadfly, for over a decade and years more in certification management, believe me, I get it's a hassle to deal with all the paperwork and the inevitable suppliers who don't fill them out right. I get that sourcing and procurement types loathe the need to manage stuff like this (I did that for another decade as a certified processor—it's a headache). I know this is the last thing anyone wants to be dealing with, especially as SOE looms large on our collective doorstep. I know all of this, and I still say, "Zoom out." We have larger roles and responsibilities than just the role that pays the bills (or tries to—recall I was an independent inspector for over a decade...I know that scene all too well.) If we can move the needle a little bit in the right direction, we should; we'll all be better eventually because of it.

I mentioned in my public comments to NOSB last month that we're actively looking for partners to help get this work done through the existing petition process. I trust that process now just like I trusted it when I was on the NOSB ten or so years ago. If you happen to hear of someone looking to join in this kind of effort, please pass my name along.

And keep up the good work out there; we all need you. Fifty thousand inspections aren't going to do themselves. Onward.

Since 1995, Wolf & Associates has advised more than 500 companies, helping to navigate what can feel like a confusing maze, from organic compliance, to building an organic and sustainable work culture.

Board of Directors Minutes Highlights

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

July 20, 2023 Conference Call

Attendance: Beth Dominick, Chair; Janine Gibson, Vice-Chair; Allan Benjamin, Treasurer; Kate Newkirk, Secretary; Kathe Purvis, Executive Committee at Large; Terrance Layhew, Director; Margarito Cal, Director. Others: Margaret Scoles

Treasurer's Report: Motion to approve 2nd Qtr report and financial reports by Kathe, no objections.

IOIA Training/Mentorship Discussion: Discussion with Nate and Garry re: issues/opportunities. Industry and role of inspector changing, movement to staff vs independent, to attrition and turnover. Online obstacles, ratio instructor to student, reliance of student on IT from instructor, instructors looking for pay increases, fee structures are being evaluated. In-person challenges, venue selection, open enrollment trainings are more time consuming. Being in the room has many advantages. This is the gold standard. In house training for certifiers might be a promising format to market. In-person training builds camaraderie. Aggressively look at international training, costs and fees more complex. Turnover with ACAs is an issue and they prefer LOL vs In-Person. Training Advisory Council may need facilitator!

Ethics Committee: Advertised for a facilitator to revitalize the committee, and are reviewing applicants for the position. Kathe agreed to be Board Liaison.

Canadian General Standards Board Committee on Organic Foods (formerly known as the Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture). Approved Kelly Monaghan to continue on as IOIA representative. Motion by Janine. No objections.

September 21, 2023 Conference Call

Attendance: 6 BoD members present. Others: Margaret Scoles, Drew Gourdie. Regrets: Janine Gibson

IOIA Membership Strategy & Setting 2024 Dues: Drew presents strategy. Retaining members is always lower in cost and effort than gaining new members. Includes offering a monthly benefit to incentivize members to join or renew. Drew reviewed **FY24 - Potential Revenue Increase; Outreach List- IOIA Membership Drive 2023**. Board members should send potential members not listed in 'Outreach List - IOIA Membership Drive 2023' above to Margaret that may be a New Business Member.

IOIA web domain IOIA.bio: Kathe motion to investigate this change to ".bio". All approved.

October 19, 2023 – Conference Call

Attendance: All 7 BoD members present. Others: Margaret Scoles

Confirming Membership Dues Strategy vote: Email exchange re: Membership Strategy Proposal with amendment to change Inspector dues to \$220 from the proposed \$240; reduced dues categories with monthly options; and the amount of monthly options. Kathe motion to accept. All in favor.

Treasurer's Report: IRS 990 - Allan will send an email on when he is intending to sign/approve the 990 and to comment to him. If no comments he will ask our accountant to submit. 3rd Qtr Financials presented by Allan: Motion to accept Treasurer's report and financials by Janine. All in favor.

IOIA Credentialing, Section H, Impact on IOIA Certificates, Express Pass: Margaret proposes adding training hours to IOIA certificate and whether meets 2000 hours SOE requirement. No opposition. Haven't figured out how to administer and pay for program. Not a quality assessment only qualification as to whether or not it meets SOE.

Strategic Plan Review and 2024 Budget: Board members to meet in teams to review the 3 major objectives of the strategic plan and bring the full board up to date on status at the Nov meeting. Fundraising and credentialing also need to be discussed.

Open Discussion: Future of Town Hall, a discussion of hydroponics policy as an opportunity on what actually needs to be done. "Coffee with IOIA" is great. Low stress planning and delivery, has most of the benefits of Town Hall. Open to everyone. Use Town Hall content differently. Put out multi-purpose content, (ask Speakers in advance if some can be taped); take relevant Town Hall sections to podcast feeds. Use our Google Group - post podcast feed episodes (content)? This can be quarterly. Would make accessible to global community. **ED evaluation.** Executive committee meeting to do.



IOIA
PO Box 6
BROADUS, MT 59317 USA
WWW.IOIA.NET
IOIA@IOIA.NET
406 - 436-2031



Nate Powell-Palm, IOIA inspector member, with Margaret Scoles, Executive Director at The Leadership Center, Aurora, Nebraska at the close of a transition to organic agriculture workshop on Aug 19. IOIA held one of its organizational meetings at this same location in 1991 and our first annual meeting in 1992. That makes IOIA and Nate just about the same age!

KEEP IOIA STRONG – LEND YOUR STRENGTH AND GET INVOLVED!

2024 Calendar

January 17-20 [Ecofarm](#), Asilomar, Pacific Grove, California

January 24 - 27 [Guelph Conference](#)

January 29 - February 2 NOP/ACA/IOIA training, see page 1

February 3 [IOIA AGM](#), San Antonio, Texas

February 13 - 16 2024 [Biofach 2024](#), Nuremberg, Germany

February 22 - 24 [35th Organic Farming Conference: Roots and Rhizomes: Growing Together](#). La Crosse, Wisconsin

April 29 - May 1 [NOSB Spring Meeting](#), Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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