

## IOIA's 2022 Online AGM - March 3

This is a COMMUNITY gathering. IOIA's Zoom platform can accommodate all of our members and allows for unlimited webcams to be visible at a time. Every member could potentially attend - something that has never happened yet. We are celebrating both our 30th anniversary and the "Year of Organics", as declared by IFOAM—Organics International in recognition of their 50th anniversary in 2022. Expect fun, surprises, inspiration, and networking!

The AGM presents a timely opportunity for us to share what we're doing and resources available to help continue our work in protecting organic integrity. Ellie Hudson, Green Door Workshop will facilitate a mind mapping interactive exercise on ideas that members propose as new business and new topics for discussion. We will briefly address the 2023 AGM and update the membership on what is happening with IOIA's NOP-funded project on Apprenticeship. Will we be in New Orleans with the ACA for another collaborative conference similar to 2020? That's the proposed plan.

Keynote by Bernward Geier of Germany is open to all supporting members, friends, and colleagues. Agronomist, journalist, lecturer, author, and past dairy farmer, Bernward Geier was Executive Director of IFOAM International 1986-2005. Appropriately for this anniversary celebration, he was the keynote speaker two decades ago at IOIA's 2001 AGM in Guelph, Ontario. He will speak on the topic "*Is a 100% organic world possible?*" and as he describes it, "a short reflection on my view of the role of inspecting



**Bernward Geier,**  
**Keynote 2022**

Organic nowadays". Among Geier's varied and inspirational career, he was the writer for the documentary "The Farmer and his Prince" about Prince Charles's organic farm in the UK. [Link to the documentary trailer here.](#) He also produced the documentary KAMUT Khorasan Wheat - [Ancient Grain for Future Farming](#) with organic pioneer Bob Quinn of Big Sandy, Montana. Among the organic farmers appearing in the film is Senator Jon Tester, certified organic farmer from Big Sandy, Montana, who has also been invited our AGM.

**Date and Time of the Annual Membership Meeting:** Thursday, March 3, 2022. 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM (Pacific Standard Time)

Advance Registration is not required. However, to ensure a quorum, please plan to attend or send a proxy with another member. The proxy form is available on our [AGM page.](#)

Elections for the Board of Directors is currently running on the online voting tool Election Runner. Inspector members have received an email message with a unique link to vote their ballot. Please note that if you have not paid your 2022 dues, you will not be sent a ballot.

Information about the Annual Meeting, including agenda, board candidate bios, and proxy form, is posted on our website.

Watch the IOIA website [Annual meeting](#) page for updates.

## Notes from the Chair

by Rachel Cherry Myers

Never could I have imagined what the last 3 years would hold when Eric called me up while on an inspection trip to NYC in the first few days of 2019 to ask if I would run for the board. A pandemic. Almost 2 million dollars invested by the USDA focusing on and an industry spotlight on recruiting, training, and retaining organic inspectors. The development of an actionable strategic plan with clear deliverables and budgets. I remember getting off the phone with Eric thinking – huh.....how did they know my name? But cool – maybe I'll get to hang out with inspectors!!!

We accomplished a lot to be proud of over the last 3 years.

We created a policy committee and submitted comments at NOSB meetings each year. In addition, we [See Notes, p 4](#)

Welcome New Members

Inspectors:

Lau Ackerman, Chico, CA  
 Juliana Gardel Goulart, Danbury, CT  
 Carmen Heer, Vancouver, B.C.  
 Carl (Greg) Robertson, Panama City, FL  
 Megan Robertson, Santa Rosa, CA  
 Eva Nely Santiago, Oaxaca, MX  
 Jolene Swain, Hazelton, B.C.

Supporting Individuals:

Ashley Baker, Maple Valley, WA  
 Aaron Bogart, Forksville, PA  
 Courtney Brod, Portland, OR  
 Kyle Christensen, San Diego, CA  
 Austin Clark, Penngrove, CA  
 Kyle Ingram, Huntington Beach, CA  
 Megan Little, Lake City, FL  
 Lisa McCrory, Randolph, VT  
 Jennifer Montgomery, Natrona Heights, PA  
 Riley Reinke, Beatrice, NE  
 Courtland Rocco, West Salem, OH  
 Patrice Sanchez, Grover Beach, CA  
 Julie Smith, Sophia, North Carolina  
 Ellen Stephenson, Houston, TX

IOIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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](#)

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

April 26 & 29, 2022

100 Level Webinar - NOP Crop Standards  
 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific)  
 Two 3 hour sessions. Trainer: Margaret Scoles

[Register and Pay Here](#)

May 2 & 5, 2022

100 Level Webinar - NOP Processing Standards  
 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific)  
 Two 3 hour sessions. Trainer: Garry Lean

[Register and Pay Here](#)

May 3 & 6, 2022

100 Level Webinar - NOP Livestock Standards  
 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific)  
 Two 3 hour sessions. Trainer: Garry Lean

[Register and Pay Here](#)

May 31 & June 3, 2022

100 Level Webinar - NOP Crop Standards  
 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific)  
 Two 3 hour sessions. Trainer: Garry Lean

[Register and Pay Here](#)

June 21 & 24, 2022

100 Level Webinar - NOP Processing Standards  
 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific)  
 Two 3 hour sessions. Trainer: Garry Lean

[Register and Pay Here](#)

September 13 & 16, 2022

100 Level NOP Processing Standards  
 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Pacific)  
 Two 3 hour sessions. Trainer: Luis Brenes

[Register and Pay Here](#)

**Webinar Discount Note:**  
 All IOIA Inspector Members are eligible for 1 half-price webinar in 2022.

Accreditation Deadline to apply - March 1

Applicants to our voluntary Accreditation Program must demonstrate: Commitment to organics, Education, Work and life experience, Inspection experience, and Continuing education. Additional criteria apply. [See our site for details.](#)  
 Accredited members receive:

- A Certificate of Accreditation
- A laminated wallet-sized card which displays their accredited status
- Recognition of status in the online Member Directory and this newsletter
- Eligibility for work as IOIA Peer Field Evaluators

Onsite Training Schedule

May 16 - 20, 2022, Saco, Maine - Basic Crop and Processing Inspection Training

IOIA Basic Training on the beach?! Yes, really. IOIA and MOFGA Certification Services (MCS) will cosponsor basic Crop and Processing trainings, running concurrently, at Ferry Beach Retreat & Conference Center in southern Maine. Each course includes 4 days of instruction including a field trip to a certified organic operation, plus ½ day for testing. A minimum of 12 participants is required for each course or it will be cancelled. The courses are limited to 18 participants for training quality. Trainers for the Crop course are Nathaniel Powell-Palm and Jonda Crosby. Garry Lean will lead the processing course. The venue will provide a secluded and natural setting to maximize focus on the course, encourage peer to peer learning, and provide opportunities for building collegial relationships. Field trips to certified operations in small groups feature a practice inspection followed by guided report writing. The field trip is often cited as one of the most valuable parts of the onsite course. The location was chosen with the help of MCS largely due to proximity to many field trip options. To learn more about MCS: <https://mofgacertification.org>. To learn more about the venue: <https://www.ferrybeach.org>.



The trainings follow IOIA's curriculum requirements which include instruction on the organic standards (USDA National Organic Rule); understanding the difference between inspecting and consulting; approved input materials; working with organic system plans; how to inspect organic operations; inspector conduct, confidentiality, and ethics; audit trail requirements; report writing; risk assessment; effective communication; and investigative skills.

IOIA's basic Organic Inspection Training courses are recommended for inspector trainees, certification agency staff, regulatory agency staff, farmers, quality control personnel, consultants, and technical service providers who want to better understand the organic inspection and certification process. If you are interested in this training, please visit the IOIA website or email [ioiassistant@rangeweb.net](mailto:ioiassistant@rangeweb.net).

Register here for the Crop Inspection Course: <https://www.ioia.net/onsite/onsite-details/?trainingid=52125>

Register here for the Processing Inspection Course: <https://www.ioia.net/onsite/onsite-details/?trainingid=52481>

May 23 - 27, 2022 - Hopkinsville, Kentucky - Basic Livestock Inspection Training

This course provides entry level training to develop skills required for inspecting and reporting on the management of an organic livestock production unit according to the USDA NOP standard. The 4 ½ -day Basic Inspection Training follows IOIA's curriculum requirements which include: applying the organic standards (focus on the USDA National Organic Rule); working with organic system plans; how to inspect organic farms and livestock; audit trail requirements; risk assessment; investigative skills; report writing; approved input materials; assessing natural resource management; inspector conduct, confidentiality, and ethics; understanding the difference between inspecting and consulting; and effective communication. It includes a field trip to a certified organic livestock operation, a practice inspection, and a report writing assignment.



Photo credit: Jesse Scott

Completion of the Basic Crop Standards course and the NOP Livestock Standards Webinar are prerequisites. Application forms, detailed info, and a course outline are posted at <https://www.ioia.net/Kentucky/>

Registration Fee \$2300, includes lunches and snacks but no lodging. IOIA Member discounts available.

Registration Deadline - April 11, 2022

## Live Online Basic Training Schedule

IOIA's Live Online Basic 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.

Basic NOP Processing Inspection - March 21-25 - **FULL**

Basic Crop and Aquaculture Training to Hong Kong standard  
May 30 - June 15

Basic Crop Inspection Training - June 13 - 17 - **FULL**

Basic Livestock Inspection Training - Fall 2022, date TBD

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

## Self-Paced Learning Courses

**Canadian Organic Regime - COR Series** Trainer Lisa Pierce. Each course takes approximately 3 hours to complete.

Inspectors members cost US\$150 each.

**#1 Our Organic Certification System - The Regulation**

**#2 COR Crop Production Standards**

**#3 Coming Soon! COR Livestock Production Standards**

**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,**

Trainer Harriet Behar. Member cost \$325 - \$375 all others.

**200 level Dairy Feed Audit,** Trainers Jonda Crosby and Nate Powell-Palm.

Member cost \$325 - all others \$375 [See our website to sign up.](#)



### IOIA Caps! Available in 5 colors!

Up your professional appearance in the field with one of our truly organic cotton caps! \$24 each, see our website to order yours in color choices of black, avocado, sand, olive, or brown.

## Notes from the Chair, from page 1

commented on the proposed rule change Strengthening Organic Integrity, the largest regulation change since the start of the NOP, AND a memo from Dr Tucker regarding human capital.

At the onset of the pandemic we started a town hall to meet people in the fear and uncertainty of a new disease that impacted every aspect of their livelihood. We were instrumental in writing a best practice and then providing the resources and training to assist people in the many changes.

We created a pilot program for mentorship that better equips new inspectors while compensating seasoned ones. We were awarded a cooperative agreement for 250 thousand dollars for this as well as being partnered in several other projects.

We implemented a new membership/training database system and website.

We did a deep dive into where our organization has been, where it is, and where we want it to be. We came together as group, board and consultants, to have some tough conversations and really came out on the other side, unified in our goals and how to accomplish them.

We did good, REALLY, REALLY, GOOD and I was honored to be a small part of it.

But all in all, my favorite part wasn't that far off from those first few thoughts on the streets of Brooklyn – I got to hang out with inspectors!! *Rachel*

## Notes from the Executive Director – Multi-tasking in the digital age by Margaret Scoles

Wow, conference season is nearly over, and I slept in my own bed for every conference. February 3 marked my 2-year anniversary of not getting on a plane. I attended the NOP and ACA training on Zoom. That's a lot of Zoom. The NOP training was free, and the ACA training an amazing bargain (just \$250 US ACA member rate). For the first time since 2020, IOIA was again a sponsor of the Guelph Organic Conference – all virtual. IOIA had simultaneous virtual trade show booths – at the Guelph Conference and the Organic Association of Kentucky conference. I recorded videos about IOIA for each audience and learned how to manage and staff a virtual trade show booth. I even attended the "Guelph Organic Trader's Breakfast" – a longstanding tradition and a Guelph highlight. It was *Bring Your own Breakfast*. Paddy Dougherty, BC, moderated. About 50 people attended – almost as many as usual. We each got our usual 2-3 minutes of airtime to talk about what was important and timely to us. I announced the self-paced COR courses now available through IOIA, the two COR-based Live Online Crop courses in 2021, and the upcoming Livestock and Processing courses under development.

IOIA got two nice shout-out's during the NOP/ACA training. Dr. Jennifer Tucker, Deputy Administrator of the USDA NOP, referenced her regular meetings with the IOIA board of directors. The ACA/IOIA Best Practices on contingency plans for when onsite inspections are not possible (AKA "Remote Inspections") was commended during the NOP training. Connie Karr, Chair of the Accredited Certifiers Association, opened the ACA Annual Meeting with a warm acknowledgment of the collaboration between IOIA and ACA over the past 3 years. She noted that until three years earlier, there were very few independent contract inspectors at the NOP training because they "were not allowed". The 2020 ACA training marked the first time independent inspectors that could register under the IOIA banner, rather than that of a certifier. (Inspectors still have to be working for an NOP-accredited certifier to join the training.) The number of independent contract inspectors was about double this year compared to last year. And in 2023, IOIA and ACA will collaborate on joint training in-person again in New Orleans, Louisiana! This decision was made previously but will be reaffirmed at the IOIA Annual Meeting on March 3.

I just purchased my first airline ticket in two years – for Portland, Oregon working meeting with one of the NOP-funded RFA projects – March 11. And I plan to register for Organic Week in Washington, DC.

## Reynaldo De la Rosa Memorial Scholarship by Angela Wartes-Kahl and Garth Kahl, Scholarship Patrons

Reynaldo de la Rosa was an organic inspector, passionate organic advocate, father, brother and active member of the broader Mexican organic community. Some of you may remember him helping to teach the beekeeping class during the 2019 IOIA AGM, held in Oaxaca, Mexico. Although he was only in his forties, ate well and worked outside much of his life, he succumbed to Covid-19 in August 2020, leaving behind a wife, two adolescent sons and a gaping hole in our lives and the broader Mexican organic community. We miss him terribly.

Many people do not realize it, but Mexican organic inspectors face a unique and sometimes dangerous set of working conditions. To have cherry tomatoes on a salad in winter or dried mangos in the United States means there is an inspector visiting dozens of farms on the organic coop in Baja or the mango groves and coffee plantations of Sinaloa or Chiapas. Most often this simply means long, exhausting days driving dirt roads, eating bad food for dinner and grabbing breakfast at Oxxo (Mexican equivalent of 7-11), but sometime it means getting held up by narcos at a highway checkpoint en route to the tomato fields, or contracting cholera from tainted water on a coffee inspection. For brothers Ernesto and Reynaldo de la Rosa, these have been the costs of working for many years as organic inspectors in Mexico.

But how to honor his work in the long term? We wanted to establish a scholarship for new organic inspectors from Mexico. There are so many hurdles to entering and succeeding in this profession and we felt the cost of training shouldn't have to be one of them. Each year the Reynaldo de la Rosa Memorial Scholarship will be awarded to a Mexican inspector to cover the cost of an IOIA basic training, plus a stipend to cover lodging and transportation. This can include the webinar courses as well as in-person trainings. Oregon Tilth and several other inspectors contributed to the scholarship to seed the fund.

We are honored and humbled to be able to see this scholarship become a reality and to be able to contribute enough to get it well established. Just as the De la Rosa family children each graduated and contributed to their siblings' education, we hope that future organic inspectors will reach back and contribute to the education of others who follow in their footsteps. The application process is under development. *Reynaldo de la Rosa....presente!*



Reynaldo with his wife Narda

## Meet Onyekachukwu Akaeze, IOIA's first intern

As part of the USDA NOP funded project led by Organic Farmers Association, several organizations including IOIA offered internships and accepted applications in late 2021 through early 2022. Mr. Onyekachukwu Akaeze, originally from Nigeria and now living in Michigan, applied for and was chosen for the IOIA internship. The internship will cover the cost of the basic crop standards webinar and 4.5 day basic crop inspection training, plus ongoing mentorship support through IOIA.

### Biography - Onyekachukwu Akaeze

Onyekachukwu Akaeze was born in Benin City, in the southern region of Nigeria. He is the third of four children. Onyekachukwu and his siblings had a regular childhood and were raised by loving parents. While growing up, he had a deep passion for cars and plants. However, his love for plants was greater. At a time when every child looking to go to college wants to be a doctor, pharmacist, engineer, or lawyer, Onyekachukwu chose something different. He applied to and was admitted to the Department of Crop Science, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Benin. Upon graduation, he furthered his education by obtaining a master's degree in Crop Protection (Phytopathology) from Nigeria's premier university- the University of Ibadan. For the next three years, he worked as a Research Assistant at the Plant Pathology Laboratory of the Department of Crop Science, the University of Benin. In this role, he was involved in many experimental studies, particularly those that involved non-chemical control of plant diseases. In August 2018, he was admitted into the doctoral program in Biological Sciences at Tennessee State University. He was also offered a Research Assistant position at the Organic Agriculture Production Laboratory in the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. From 2018 to 2021, Onyekachukwu conducted dissertation research titled "yield performance, nutritional, and sensory qualities of watermelon (*Citrullus lunatus* [Thunb.] Matsum and Nakai) influenced by humic substances in organic production system" at the Certified Organic Farm of Tennessee State University. During his time, he attended organic certification workshops and witnessed three annual certification exercises of the farm where he conducts his research. These sparked his interest in someday pursuing a career as an organic inspector. Soon after the completion of his doctoral program, he applied for and was awarded the IOIA internship. And here he is, on his way to becoming an organic inspector!



IOIA is delighted to have an intern of his caliber and looks forward to assisting him in becoming an organic inspector. IOIA members who are interested in helping to welcome and/or mentor Mr. Akaeze, please volunteer to connect with him by contacting Margaret Scoles [mscoles@ran.geweb.net](mailto:mscoles@ran.geweb.net).

## 2022 Rutherford Scholarship Award Recipient

### Victoria Plasse, Idaho, USA



*I am a long-time Teton Valley, Idaho resident. I completed my level 100 IOIA training for Processing and Crops this summer and would like to complete the third scope of Livestock this year as well. I have been lucky enough to begin shadowing with the Montana Department of Agriculture Organic Program and I am optimistic that by next year, I will be ready for contract work and can begin my course as a full-time inspector.*

*While on my shadow inspections this summer, I quickly realized that yes, I have a solid foundation of real-life experience and I know my way around a farm but that also being an inspector is a complex role. Inspectors need to not only be effective and well educated but diplomatic in their course of action.*

## Canada

### Demand mandatory genetic engineering (GMO) safety assessments

Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) are proposing to exempt many new genetically engineered (genetically modified or GM) foods and seeds from regulation. If approved, the proposals would remove government oversight of many new genetically modified organisms (GMOs) produced through the new genetic engineering techniques of genome editing (also called gene editing) that have no foreign DNA. This would mean unregulated GMOs on the market: GMOs sold without government approval and no mandatory notification to government, the public or farmers.

#### YOUR VOICE IS NEEDED!!

Express that you are against the proposed changes to the Seeds Regulations that would exempt genetically modified (GM) plants from an environmental assessment by the federal government.

Without government oversight, there will be no regulation of what is allowed into our environment and our food system. Farmers will not be able to identify organic seeds from GE/GMO seeds, contamination will increase in our environment and food supply risking organic markets, increasing the chance of patent lawsuits and making it very challenging for consumers to know what is in their food supply.

#### ACTION NEEDED!

Take action and [please circulate this link](#) to your networks by the end of February to prevent the proposal from moving ahead! This link goes to a COTA page where you can submit your comments to CFIA.

### Guelph recordings available

We have published recordings of all the sessions that took place at this year's conference. You can find them here:

<https://www.organiccouncil.ca/organic-climate-solution/watch/>



To continue learning about the climate benefits of organic and regenerative farming practices, we encourage you to check out OCO's Organic Climate Solutions campaign. The campaign website includes a resource library, videos featuring the efforts of local Ontario farmers and a list of financial and mentorship supports available to Ontario farmers that ease the uptake of climate-friendly practices!

Use this link to explore the Organic Climate Solutions website:

<http://www.organicclimatesolutions.ca/>

## Advanced Organic Inspector Training - Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

Tentatively back in the planning stages for fall 2022, in conjunction with the Organic Connections Conference.

### New courses this year! Live Online COR Livestock and Processing

#### Livestock:

- Live Online COR Livestock Inspection Training is in development for delivery in spring 2022.
- COR Livestock Production Standards is in development in the **Self-Paced** format. See page 6.

#### Processing:

- COR Processing Standards is scheduled as a webinar Sept 12 & 15 with Kelly Monaghan, Trainer.
- Live Online Processing Inspection course is scheduled October 3-7, 2022 with Garry Lean, Lead Trainer.

#### Crop:

- COR Crop Inspection Training was delivered twice in 2021 and depending on the level of interest, might be offered again in 2022.

Watch our Live Online Training Schedule for dates as these become available: <https://www.ioia.net/upcoming-trainings/>

## IFOAM News - 2022 is the Year of Organic! - and more!

Announcing the IFOAM North America Online Annual Meeting March 16 at 10 a.m. Pacific on [Zoom](#). Everyone is welcome!



**Keynotes -**  
Growing Together – The Next 50 Years of IFOAM”  
Karen Mapusua (Fiji), President IFOAM Organics International

“Organic Youth Inheriting the World”  
Julia Lernoud, Vice-President (Argentina)  
IFOAM Organics International



### Announcing the World of Organic Agriculture Statistics Yearbook

The 2022 edition of “The World of Organic Agriculture” gathers the latest data on organic agriculture and organic markets worldwide. The book is published by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and IFOAM – Organics International.



[Downloadable PDF version available here.](#)

### The Year of Organics Toolkit - Now Available to Download!

In 2022, IFOAM - Organics International will turn 50, IFOAM Organics Europe 20, and IFOAM Organics Asia 10. To mark these milestones, we’re celebrating 2022 as the Year of Organics! With over 700 members from about 100 countries and territories, there is so much to celebrate which is why we have dedicated 2022 to the Year of Organics.



To mark their 50-year anniversary, IFOAM is raising awareness of organic and its benefits for global food systems, our health, and the planet. Help spread the word by using the official Year of Organics toolkit!

The toolkit curates free-to-use visuals and messages you can download directly to your

device. On social media, in your presentations, as part of your communication campaigns, on your website, or on any other channel: let’s spread the word on how organic can be a pathway to building a sustainable future!

#### How does it work?

Simply visit the [Year of Organics toolkit](#), click on the card of your choice, find the content relevant to you in its attachments, and save the free videos and visuals directly onto your device.

You can also directly download all available content in a zip file from the Toolkit page.

## Inspector Retention Working Group

IOIA and ACA have joined forces to form the **Inspector Retention Working Group** to develop Best Practices or Guidance to address the human capital issues facing the organic industry. Specifically, the Best Practice will focus on retention of qualified inspectors and consistency in inspector expectations and further inform the organic community on various structures, methods, and approaches to support long-term inspector retention.

Expenses of the working group will be shared equally by IOIA and ACA. ACA members generally contribute their time on working groups without pay, including their staff inspectors. However, losing significant work hours means independent contract inspectors are at a disadvantage to participate. Therefore, a significant portion of the budget will go to modest stipends for participating inspectors. ACA working groups are always open to all certifier members, so all ACA members will be free to participate in this group. Another chunk of the budget has been allocated for facilitation. Jacklyn Sleeper, Corvallis, Oregon, former organic and animal welfare inspector and certification staff, currently working part-time as a consultant, will fill this essential role.



**Jacklyn Sleeper**

The working group will commence meeting as a full group on March 7 and then every 2 weeks, on Mondays through May 23 from 8:00-9:00 a.m. Pacific via Zoom. The core team (Jacklyn, ACA rep Connie Karr, IOIA rep Rachel Cherry Myers, and IOIA Executive Director Margaret Scoles) will meet every Monday with the group as well as alternate Mondays as a smaller team, beginning Feb 28. The goal is to have a written product finalized by the end of June.

This will be a large working group. To ensure that the inspectors represent a broad range of years of experience, scopes, staff and contract, full-time and part-time, IOIA members and non-IOIA members, as well as recently retired inspectors, IOIA implemented an open application process. ACA assisted by forwarding the application info to their members with a request for them to, in turn, distribute to their inspectors lists. We are excited about the overwhelmingly positive response! Nearly 75 inspectors applied for the opportunity to participate. We were pleased to have applicants from that broad range of key characteristics and also from 8 countries. IOIA is in the process of selecting the 20 inspectors who will receive a paid stipend. Some staff inspectors have indicated that they do not require the stipend. Drafts will be developed via Google and input collected in Google.

Some key topics have been identified. Others may be added once the working group is convened. Identified topics include inspector compensation; travel and quality of life; liability insurance; business structures; inspection forms and consistency; quality of inspections; impending SOE changes; defining a full-time inspector; comparing the advantages/disadvantages of each type of inspector (contractor, staff, cooperative); and inspector evaluation.

It is unlikely that one approach will solve the human capital/inspector retention problem. Both the USDA NOP and the NOSB have recognized the problem. The entire pipeline needs to be addressed – recruiting the right candidates, training and onboarding them efficiently and effectively through access to rigorous training and robust apprenticeship options, retaining talent and experience in the inspector pool, and growing organic at the producer level by ensuring enough technical assistance is available. Many of the NOP-funded projects in response to the Human Capital issue focused on preparatory training and recruiting potential organic professionals. Not many projects focused on Inspector Retention. IOIA’s Apprenticeship project both creates a reliable model for onboarding new inspectors and creates a new position for experienced inspectors as Mentors. The Organic Integrity Cooperative Guild is building a model that allows inspectors to work part-time and maintain balance. Seeking that elusive life balance is often cited by inspectors as the reason they exit full-time inspecting. Hopefully, many minds coming together on the working group can produce a document with multiple solutions that work. The industry needs to retain both independent contractors and staff inspectors. Not every experienced inspector wants to inspect full-time. Many of us live in areas with too few inspections to support full time inspecting without excessive travel.

## APC Grower Group Inspection Training: March 14 - 18

### IOIA/Asia Pacific Committee presents Organic Grower Group Inspection Training

Asia Pacific Start Date: March 14 2022  
End Date: March 18 2022

USA Start Date: March 13 2022  
End Date: March 17 2022

Organic Grower Group Inspection is an intensive 5 day course for inspectors of certified organic programs; to add grower group inspections to skills base.

This course may also be useful for Technical staff/Certifying Body Reviewers. The course comprises five 4-hour sessions + self-paced exercises after daily online sessions. Training materials are customised to USDA NOP regulations, also addressing EU regulations and IFOAM Norms.



Kathie Purvis

**START TIME:**

Japan JST 10:00 - 14:00 sessions  
Western Australia AWST 9:00-13:00  
Thailand 8:00- 12:00  
Montana MST 18:00 – 22:00

Enrollment is limited to 12 participants.

Prerequisite to this course is prior experience in certified organic inspection/review.

Each day includes 4 hours remotely delivered morning session-training and afternoon after-course exercises with remote support.



Vitoon Panykul

Formal assessment exercises must be completed by nominated due date to receive a Certificate of Completion.

[Course Agenda](#)

**Trainers include:** Kathie Purvis, Australia - 30 years working as an international organic inspector including grower group inspections across Asia Pacific region + tertiary qualification in training design, delivery & assessment.

Vitoon Panykul, Thailand – tertiary qualified, experienced trainer and grower group consultant, working with groups in South East Asia, in Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Indonesia, to support organic agriculture and supply chains.

With support from various technical experts per topic.

**Cost for Online Workshops:** \$475 for non-IOIA members | \$450 for IOIA Members

[To register, please click here](#) and follow the directions to register for the course.

If there is sufficient interest, IOIA APC will run a second course with variation in start time, so please contact us with an expression of interest if these timeframes don't suit you.

## Town Hall Events and Schedule 2022

Town Hall meetings are open and free to all IOIA inspector members! Throughout the year, they will continue to occur about one per month on the third Thursday of each month. Two reminders will be sent out, once about two weeks prior and one a few days prior. **Mark your calendars now** and set aside time to join fellow inspectors in one of the best outcomes of the pandemic for IOIA members – Town Hall. Initiated just short of two years ago, this has become a much-appreciated and essential IOIA membership tradition.

In 2022, IOIA will diversify opportunities via the Town Hall with **more podcasts** in the busy summer months, moderated by Terrance Layhew. Also Town Hall is diversifying with “Ask Me Anything” sessions with identified experts on specific topics – so plan to bring your questions! The podcasts we have lined up are:

- Jackie Sleeper will be interviewed on the outcomes of the ACA/IOIA Inspector Retention Working Group.
- Elizabeth Whitlow will do an interview on Regenerative Organic Certification.
- Nathaniel Powell-Palm and Garth Kahl will discuss the major outcomes and learnings from the NOP funded Apprenticeship project after all trainings are completed in Kentucky.

Also, later this year IOIA will take a survey of members to select courses from the Organic Integrity Learning Center that members would like to see us host discussion groups on to further diversify Town Hall offerings as we move into 2023.

And as always – every Town Hall features the Book Report with Terrance Layhew, *The Intellectual Agrarian*, and The Inspector Comments Section, Moderator, Margaret Scoles.

### The 2022 Schedule

**February** – Town Hall: ACA/IOIA Inspector Retention Working Group with Jackie Sleeper, facilitator. (see page 9 for more)

**March 17** – “Ask Me Anything about my work in rural sociology, and how inclusion and building equity for everyone is essential to move our industry forward” Dr. Marcus Bernard, Kentucky State University. Dr. Bernard served as the Director of the Rural Training and Research Center for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund in Alabama. He completed his doctoral studies at the U of KY in Rural Sociology and Medical Sociology. He is also a member of IOIA’s NOP-funded RFA project team that is developing intensive apprentice training and toolkits.

**April 21** - Town Hall: Prepare Your Taxes Better – Tips and Tricks, with veteran inspectors Al Johnson, Allan Benjamin, & Rachel Cherry Myers.

**May 19** – Town Hall: Why does Biodiversity Matter? JoAnn Baumgartner, Wild Farm Alliance, and Tony Fleming. Tony and JoAnn are working with IOIA to transform the on-farm Advanced “Assessing Biodiversity & Natural Resources on Organic Farms” trainings piloted in 2018 and 2019. Jo Ann is Executive Director of Wild Farm Alliance and an author. Before joining WFA in 2001, she received her Master’s researching birds eating codling moths in apple orchards and was an organic farmer. Tony Fleming is a professional hydrogeologist and naturalist with a longstanding interest in the relationships between ecosystems and their physical and cultural environments. He worked as an organic inspector from 1998 to 2010, served as the technical editor of The Inspectors’ Report from 2011-2017, and continues to collaborate with Wild Farm Alliance on developing resources for expanding, measuring, and assessing natural resources and biodiversity in the agricultural landscape. He holds a BS in Geology and graduate degrees in Geology and Water Resources Management from the U. of Wisconsin-Madison.



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### June - July - August = Podcasts!

**September 15** – Town Hall: Report out on IOIA’s NOP - funded Apprenticeship Project – what does it mean for IOIA and you?

**October 20** – “Ask Me Anything about Inspecting Mushrooms”, Pam Sullivan.

**November** – no Town Hall planned

**December** - Online Holiday Party (a tradition since 2020!)

## IOIA Strategic Plan – Continuous Improvement, Accountability, Investing in the Future, Investing in Inspectors

The 2021 Board of Directors established strategic priorities to guide IOIA’s focus over next three years in a planning retreat with the board meeting in-person in Colorado Nov 17-18. The Strategic Plan was approved on January 20, 2022. It articulates three key priorities (Training, Membership, and Operations) and outlines the objectives and strategies that will be pursued to impact these priorities in the next year, and beyond.

These priorities are steeped with intention to have a global impact and to position IOIA to act proactively rather than reactively. The board has developed a one-year work plan and a strategy to move the plan forward the next two years by annually developing a work plan in tandem with the budget. Guiding principles for the work plan are accountability and continuous improvement. When fully implemented, this plan promises to keep IOIA in the forefront of organic training, provide compelling membership benefits and incentives for members to join IOIA as their professional association, amplify the voice of inspectors, and create a more resilient organizational structure.

A summary of key points follows: To read the full Strategic Plan, please [click here](#).

### Objective 1 - Training

**Design IOIA training products to evolve with the sector, expand capacity, and grow skills for organic inspectors and other stakeholders**

**Key Performance Indicator 1:** 50% of IOIA basic training participants report a 75% or higher satisfaction rating no later than 6 months after training; 25% of IOIA basic training participants report a 75% or higher continued satisfaction rating no later than 12 months after training. Some identified strategies include: Develop and implement a mechanism for gathering training participant feedback electronically, including post-training surveys; create a plan for establishing a Training Advisory Council; successfully develop an apprenticeship program model funded by the \$250,000 cooperative agreement with USDA NOP; develop and launch press strategy to increase enrollment; host training for livestock and processing in Canada; grow number of training registrations by at least 150 participants for “beyond basic” trainings in 2022; develop virtual training calendar for monthly professional development; create Residue Sampling webinar; and host a one-day advanced training in Saskatchewan in conjunction with the Organic Connections conference.

### Objective 2 - Membership

**Advocate for the inspector profession to the organic sector, while engaging stakeholders, to increase membership benefits and grow the community**

#### Objectives and Strategies

One newly formed and active working group focused on pressing issues for the inspector profession; create and lead a human capital working group in collaboration with key industry partners; respond to 100% of requests for written and/or verbal public comments that meet the criteria of the IOIA comment policy; increase inspector member engagement by at least three interactions per member with unique IOIA content; develop virtual training calendar for monthly membership engagement;

eliminate barriers to forum participation; partner with an NOP Human Capital project partner to host a cultivation event for prospective members; and establish 3 new strategic partners to evolve industry conversation on credentialing.

### Objective 3 - Operations

**Implement a clear and structured operations protocol that holds IOIA accountable for continuous improvement within the organization and advances the IOIA mission**

#### Objectives and Strategies

Enable new board members to effectively participate in BOD meetings and make strategic decisions within 45 days of BOD election appointment. Strategy - Create, edit and publish new Board of Directors onboarding packet. Evaluate 100% of staff annually. Write a procedure for implementing reviews, analyzing results, and providing feedback. Increase capacity to successfully implement the strategic plan. Strategies include evaluating current capacity and identify needs; reviewing and updating all staff position job descriptions; and hiring an external consultant to 1) perform a needs assessment that evaluates existing staff competencies; 2) identify skill gaps and create job descriptions or requests for proposals to fill gaps; and hire necessary position(s). Key performance indicator --100% of 2022 strategic plan strategies are implemented, with track and report progress on strategic plan objectives quarterly. Conduct bi-annual reviews of IOIA information management system. Identify a subject matter expert for information management system who is chiefly responsible for the system and its utilization. Determine how IOIA’s new information management system is being used and evaluate opportunities to expand efficiencies with the available technology. Consolidated workplan and budget approved for 2023 strategic initiatives. Create a structure so that 2023 workplan decisions are made prior to 2023. Collaboratively develop 2023 workplan and budget.

## Bad Press for Organic – NYT on Cotton Fraud

On November 15, 2021, The New Yorker printed, “The Great Organic-Food Fraud” about Randy Constant, the largest organic fraud scheme in US history. It painted a fairly critical picture of organic that was untrustworthy and lacking integrity. IOIA’s response didn’t make it to print.

And now, a few months later, Sunday morning (2/13) readers of the New York Times were hit with another hard-hitting fraud article, “That Organic Cotton T-Shirt May Not Be as Organic as You Think”. The saddest fact is that many consumers don’t read past the headlines. The message seems to be “don’t trust the Organic label”.

However damaging the optics, the fraud problem is real. The demand for organic cotton products is booming, and that boom is a key risk factor for fraud. But the press needs to get the facts straight.

The USDA National Organic Program does not oversee the certification of textiles. India’s organic certification standard, NPOP, does provide for certification of organic textiles, but it is voluntary, not mandatory. Both programs certify farm production of cotton and organic fiber processing facilities. Certification of organic textile products occurs through non-governmental certification schemes such as Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS).

Here we share a link to the original New York Times article, and some responses from the community:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/13/world/organic-cotton-fraud-india.html#commentsContainer>

**NYT excerpts** - “The largest single producer of the world’s organic cotton supply is India, which accounts for half of the organic cotton sold globally, and where the organic cotton movement appears to be booming. According to Textile Exchange, a leading organic proponent, organic cotton production in India alone grew 48 percent in the last year, despite the pandemic.”

**IOIA Clarification/comment:** Not all this increase is fraudulent. Growth in Indian cotton farms is also due to acceptance of in-conversion cotton into the GOTS and Textile Exchange (TE) system. Therefore, the data available is not only for 100% Organic cotton, it includes in-conversion and new farms too. Also, the total area under organic certification increased.

**NYT** - “In 2009, India’s agricultural export agency discovered wide-scale fraud in the country’s cotton belt, with entire villages certifying genetically modified cotton as organic.”

**IOIA Comment:** The Indian regulatory body implemented the Tracenet-based traceability system in 2010 which is recognized and respected by EU and USDA. Since 2013 the Indian Regulatory body has been trying to implement mandatory Textile standards but it was opposed by private standards, brands and many other stakeholders. This means the Tracenet system is not required for fiber.

The NYT article says that no one responded to them from OneCert or Control Union. “Neither Control Union, which performs an estimated 70 percent of facility inspections and certifications in India, nor the Indian office of OneCert responded to requests for comment.”

According to IOIA’s sources, neither organization was actually contacted by NYT for comment.

“Nobody contacted me for interview. 2020 was the last year that OneCert certified any organic cotton ginning. APEDA [the government program overseeing organic in India] tried to implement Indian organic textile standards since 2013, but it was opposed by many stakeholders.”

**Sandeep Bhargava, IOIA Inspector Member, and OneCert staff in India.**

**NYT** - “This problem is not confined to India, experts say; questions have been raised about organic cotton from China and Turkey, which account for another quarter of the global supply.”

[Resource: OTA Fact Sheet on Organic Cotton...pdf](#)

#### And if that wasn’t enough...

Just 3 days later, the Daily Beast published an article suggesting that the organic community should get on board with bioengineered foods, because they are not only necessary to feed the world, but more carbon friendly and sustainable. [Click here for a bad read....](#)

## NOP/ACA Training January 2022

January 24-25 was the third annual NOP certifier training that was open to all inspectors working for NOP-accredited certifiers. The training was virtual and free to participants. More than 700 attended, of which 40-50 were inspectors joining under the IOIA banner. Dr. Jennifer Tucker, NOP Deputy Administrator, opened the training and used an app to ask “*what do you do?*” The graph displayed on the screen showed that 25% of the people online identified as Inspector! - illustrating the trend toward more staff inspectors. The now 70 NOP staff mostly work remotely. Marni Karlin is the recently appointed Senior Advisor on Organic and Emerging Markets in the USDA. Rulemaking is a priority of this administration. **Goals: Climate Smart Agriculture; Diversity & Equity; Market Development; Training & Technical Assistance.**

### Update on Rulemaking - Dr. Jennifer Tucker

- SOE – Lots of interest from trade office, SBA, Customs & Border Protection, “a long and very complex rule, going to take time”. She has stopped making projections on final rule.
- OOL – “has left the building” - at Office of Management & Budget since the end of December. OMB has up to 90 days, but it can take a little longer.
- OLPP – “has also left the building”. Couldn’t speak directly to changes in the new OLPP because it was in clearance.

**Accreditation and Compliance/Enforcement:** NEW! Trademark of the USDA Organic Seal Creates New Enforcement Tools– fraudulent shipments can now be destroyed.

**Special Acknowledgment** – New Mexico Dept of Agriculture – exited the program of certification transitioning from oversight to technical assistance. “*Good for New Mexico DA!!!! For every certifier/inspector we need 100 extension agents. For every extension agent we need 100 organic farmers.*” – Luis Brenes in the chat.

**Key points from some presentations by NOP staff are below. Training sessions will appear in the Organic Integrity Learning Center.**

**Risk Based Oversight – Robert Yang:** NOP is piloting a risk-based audit and accreditation program for overseeing certifiers including satellite offices and materials review oversight. Based on their work and certifier feedback, they established 5 certifier compliance risk factors: **compliance history; administrative capacity** – personnel qualifications, number of staff sufficient? financial stability; **organization complexity;** and **enforcement actions & growth.** Their **Risk Assessment Tool Prototype** incorporates risk categories and risk factors; weighted categories and consistent value for individual risk factors; assigns a score based on answers to individual risk factors and category weights. They will be evaluating how well this works – based on categorizing the certifiers as to low, medium, high risk. Will return to on-site audits this year, but travel restrictions will mean that might not be able to go everywhere. This is a pilot. **Materials Review Audits** - focused material audits this year, will hire NOP Materials Specialist.

**Audit Updates and Priorities – Lars Crail:** Take-away of the audit findings – the annual Program Review is a **powerful tool.** A few of the findings of special interest: material input review; inspection report and OSP templates; and natural resources and biodiversity; and Traceback and In/Out Balance exercises inadequately recorded or nonexistent. In some cases, more traceback and in/out needed - sometimes totally lacking. Often in mixed scopes (Crop/Livestock), crop was the only scope audited. **Performance evaluations – field evaluations.** Enough staff to conduct activities? Insufficient training records. Often certifiers are giving more than 4 hours notice for an unannounced inspection. **2022 Audit Program: FOCUS** – Natural Resources and Biodiversity Conservation – Policy and Procedures; Sufficient Expertise for staff; and Sufficient Records to support decision.

**Import Certificates – Jenny Tucker:** There is already an Organic Import Certificate in an OMB approved form. SOE – 2018 Farm Bill mandated electronic import certificates. Requirements will be specified in SOE. SOE will increase the number of certified importers and exporters. All certified US importers and exporters will be required to use import certificates, mandatory in 2023. Volunteers have been piloting since 2020. NOP will add Import/Export Certificate Module to OID. **Certifiers** will be verifying the certified status of any product on the certificate they issue – it’s about the control system, not the certificate! Rule publication will start an implementation period (likely 1 year). NOP is constructing the Module in OID.

**Imports Recap, International Investigations – Brett Merkel and Shannon Nally:** Goal is to develop proactive, early warning – assess emerging trends. NOP uses risk-based decision-making. Market impact is a primary driver. Of top 10 countries exporting to US, only Italy is outside North/South America. Mexico is #1 and Canada is #9. Organic Import trends – (1) US only produces an estimated 15-30% of the organic soybean demand in the US. (2) A big decline in imports from India within the last year (85%+).

## NOP/ACA Training January 2022

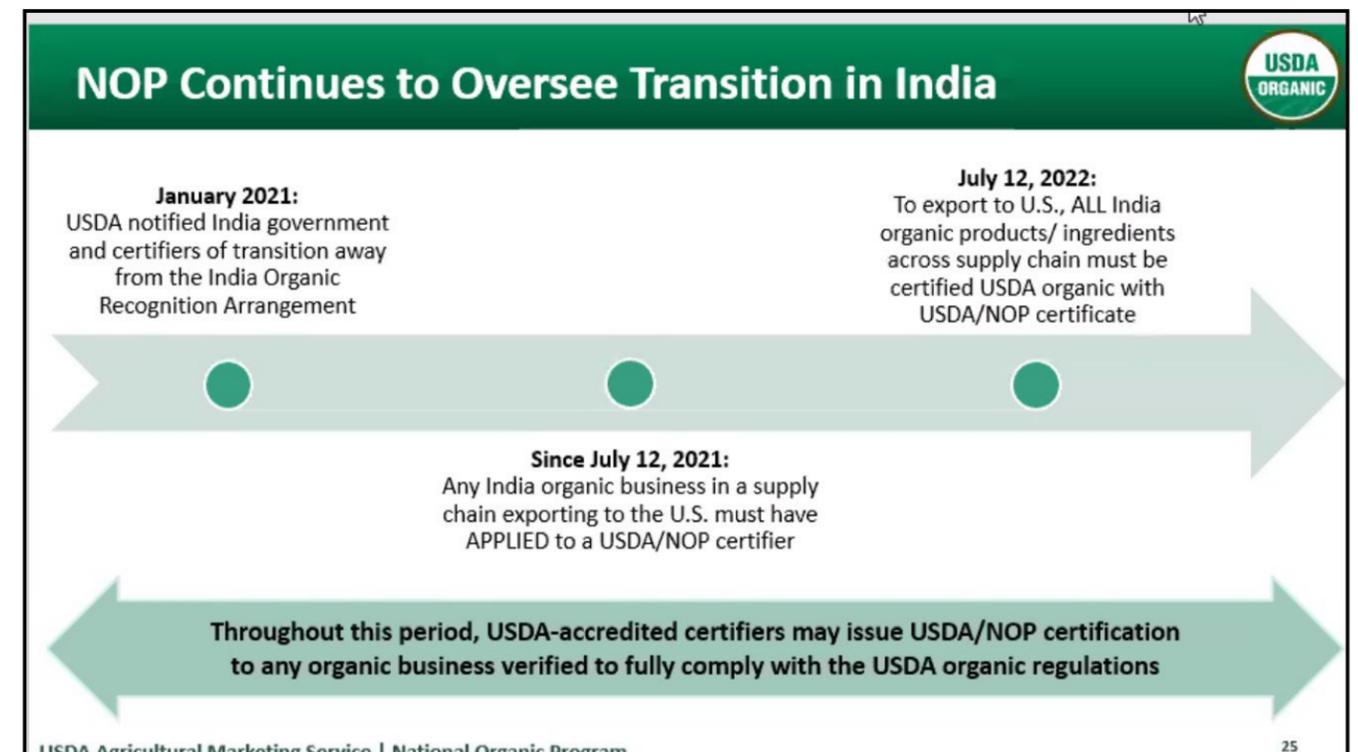
### Livestock Compliance Program – Emily Prisco and Owen Brown

Emily Prisco - Improvement noted! – better OSPs and inspection reports. Dairy Surveillance mistakes noted: Some certifiers are still assuming that cows only have to be on pasture 120 days; not all certifiers are reviewing the DMD and DMI annually; not all certifiers are using actual Feed Fed amounts - some are basing on interview. Must do DMI for all classes of animals!

Owen Brown – Livestock Traceability – fraud complaints of non-organic livestock sold as organic. NOP has found that certifiers are not looking at compliance with livestock standards and are certifying auction and slaughter based on reviewing only handling. **Fraud** – NOP has seen that some livestock producers and handlers are not disclosing all transactions to their certifier. Some certifiers are not reviewing split operations sales of non-OG sales. Collaborative Investigations – certifiers are authorized to share confidential information as necessary to verify compliance with OFPA – sharing information with other certifiers is vital to a healthy market. NONCs and resolutions are posted on the NOP website for certifiers – this allows certifiers to see what the NOP is looking at. LOTS of good questions were raised.

### International Reminders – Bridget McElroy

- **Taiwan – new T-11 process:** All USDA certifiers can now issue TM-1 for US product to Taiwan.
- **EU** - Certificate of Inspection (COI) must be issued before shipments leave US port of origin, minor corrections allowed within 10 days – EU 2020/25. No requirement for hard copy documents.
- **UK** - USDA products to Great Britain – Complete Great Britain COI and send electronically.
- **Korea** - New NAQS system – as of Jan 1, the Korea certificates will be issued via Korea’s new electronic system, printed, and sent to exporter/importer.
- **India** - July 12, 2022: all exports from India must be certified by USDA accredited certifier. TraceNet certificates required for all products from India. India operations must be listed in OID. Status may be “Applied”; “APEDA Certified” or “Certified”. This will transition to just “Certified” by the deadline.

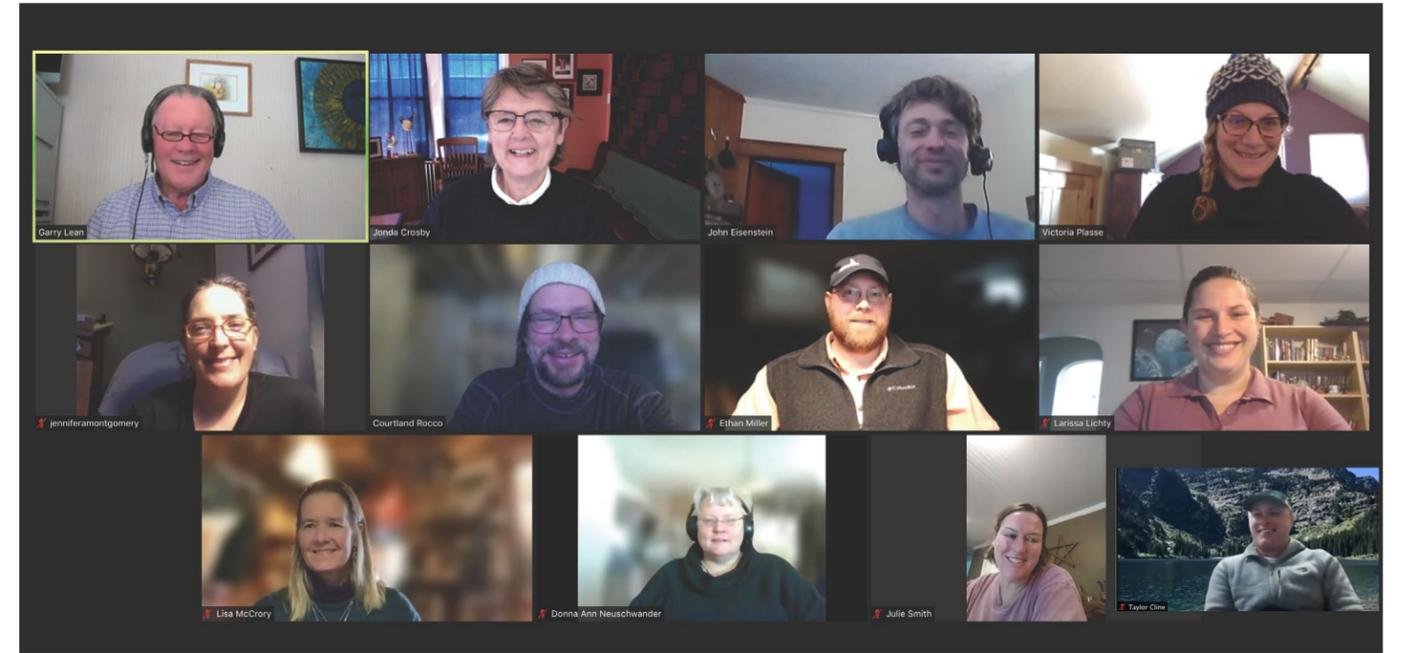


# Basic Live Online Training

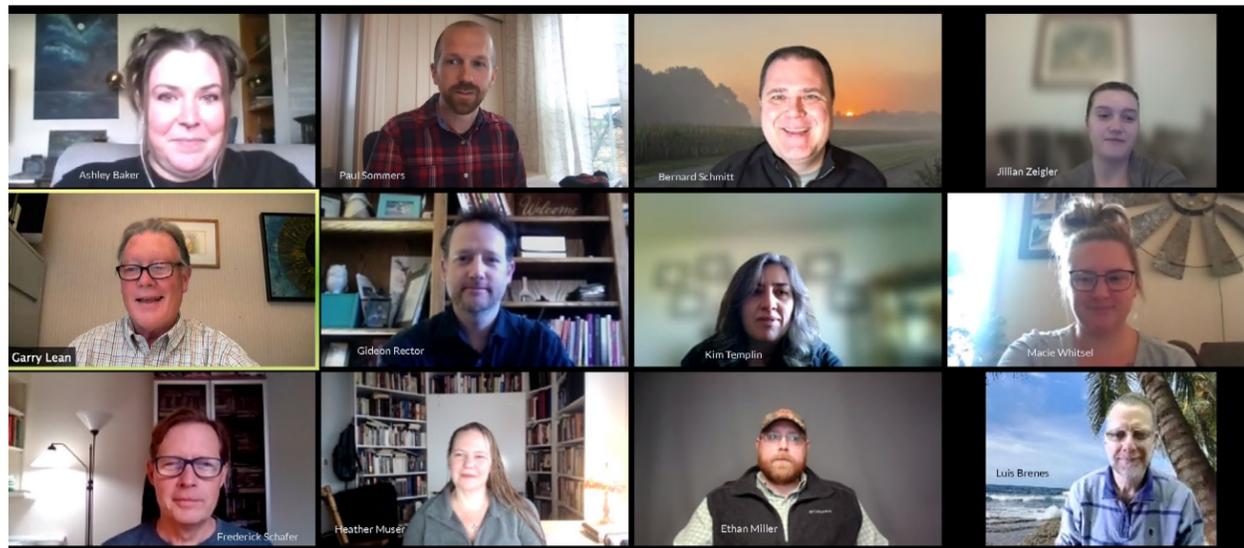


Basic Online Canada Organic Regime (COR) Crop course, December 2021. Trainer Garry Lean, top center.

# Basic Live Online Training



Basic Online Livestock Training, Jan 31 - February 4, 2022. Lead Trainer Garry Lean (top left) and Assistant Trainer Jonda Crosby (top, second from left).



Basic Online NOP Processing Inspection training. Lead Trainer Garry Lean, center row far left; Assistant Trainer Luis Brenes, bottom row far right with palm trees! December 2021



Basic Online Crop Training, February 14 - 18, 2022. Lead Trainer Garry Lean, top left, and Assistant Trainer Jonda Crosby, top second from left.

## Board of Directors Minutes Highlights

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

### October 21, 2021 6:00-8:00 p.m. EDT

**Attendance:** Rachel Cherry Myers (Chair), Terrance Layhew, Beth Dominick, Allan Benjamin, Heather Donald, Chuck Mitchell, Janine Gibson, Margaret Scoles, Executive Director and Monique Marez, Guest

**Treasurer's Report – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Financials – Allan:** Allan –Pretty strong financials. The PPP money helped make bottom line look better. 990 – running on time to be submitted by Nov. 15. 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr. Financial reports (Budget vs. Actual and Balance Sheet) presented. Reports include a list of standing expenses that would need to be approved for payment in January if a budget has not been finalized until sometime in January, as was requested at last meeting. Rachel asked Allan if enterprise accounting could be done. He responded yes, but that it takes time and resources and how much do we want to spend. Board concluded during discussion that it would like to see modest enterprise accounting take place to determine where the IOIA income comes from and how the expenses are determined. The BOD would like Margaret to present a spreadsheet with enterprises and how they correlate to the finances. Current year, 2021, numbers would be used, excluding Payroll Protection Program funding income and the Information Management Expense (although they are unrelated, they are roughly equal).

**IOIA Projects for 2021-2022: Margaret** reviewed the Excel spreadsheet with details on each of the 6 active projects. Four are RFA funded. One is an NCAT project funded by the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher program. The 6<sup>th</sup> is with Organic Valley to deliver a livestock apprentice intensive in WI. An application to Organic Farming Research Foundation was made, that one was pulled out because we have no indication that it might be funded. Margaret – reminder that most of the money coming in is also going out to pay partners and contractors; there is not much left for IOIA. The projects are all great projects that would otherwise need to be funded out of our own accounts.

**BOD Strategic Planning – November 15 – 18, 2021: Monique** led the topic. Strategic Planning discovery report in Google Drive was presented. Membership, Training, Administration, Strategic Partnerships are the main areas. Monitoring Human Capital projects might be another significant area. Credentialing was not a big topic that was brought up by any of the people she connected with. Membership – There is more that could be done for IOIA to be a stronger advocate, specifically for the inspector role. Training – Mixed views on training platforms. Everyone had creative ideas to move the program forward. Strategic Partnerships – Many ideas about the direction IOIA should move forward. Summary of BOD Survey – All 7 Board Members responded to Survey. Rachel –Will send a survey out to the board requesting a dollar amount they think is fair to spend on implementation.



**Transitional Working Group – Janine:** Mentorship Committee has folded. It first morphed into a Transitional Working Group with the goal of making recommendations to the BOD. She will present the letter that was written by Amanda (Chair of the Committee). Recommends hiring of talent to assist. Training Advisory Committee recommended. Director of Operations (new staff position) recommended. Rachel – That is perfect timing for the strategic planning. Will forward the letter to Monique. Amanda acknowledged for her volunteer commitment to the Town Hall and Mentorship Committee.

**2022 Annual Meeting:** Slate of candidates needs to be ready 60 days in advance, as per bylaws. Margaret suggests Annual Meeting will be March 3, 2022, tentatively. Same length and time as last year. AGM committee – Terrance will part of the committee. Margaret will solicit in newsletter for more members of the committee. Bylaws specify that it is among the Vice-Chair's role to assist the Nomination Committee, unless the Vice-Chair is on the slate of candidates. Janine is Vice-Chair, and is planning to run again, so we need another BOD member. Allan will assist Eric Feutz on the membership committee to get information to potential candidates.

## Board of Directors Minutes Highlights

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

### December 16, 2022, 5:00-6:00 p.m. EST

**Attendance:** Rachel Cherry Myers (Chair), Chuck Mitchell, Terrance Layhew, Janine Gibson (recorder). Regrets: Heather, Beth, Allan (in and out, mostly out)

In camera discussion on IOIA staff bonuses and considerations in the decision for 2021. As we appreciate all the dedication and hard work demonstrated by our staff team, moved by Janine, with no objections- the BOD approved (within the \$4K budget) bonuses for all staff.

Moved by Terrance, with no objections, ED has BOD support to pay all IOIA bills as needed in January and up to 10K on implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The meeting scheduled for Dec 23rd from 3-4 was cancelled. Adjourned-on to the Townhall Christmas Party!

### January 20, 2022, 6:00 – 8:10 p.m. EST

**Attendance:** Terrance Layhew, Rachel Cherry Myers, Allan Benjamin, Heather Donald, Chuck Mitchell, Margaret Scoles, Executive Director. Beth arrived in last hour of meeting.

**Agenda:** Addition – potential training of Non-ACA member certifiers (Chuck)

**Treasurer's Report – Allan:** No differences from figures in draft budget to proposed budget. Some explanatory notes had been updated. Balance Sheet – Strong Cash Reserve in CD's and Savings Account. IOIA has not had an official financial review in a long time. Policy says it should be decided every year by BOD if it should be completed. This will be addressed in Budget discussion. Treasurer's Report approved.

**ACA/IOIA Human Capital/Inspector Retention Working Group:** Budget was discussed with ACA – total budget for the working group would be about \$25,000, half paid by both ACA and IOIA. Project would start in February and end in May or June. The working group will meet using a facilitator for discussion to establish open communication and best practices between the inspector and certification agencies. Application process for inspectors that will get paid.

There needs to be a good mix of staff and independent inspectors. Allan would like to see not only a diversity of inspectors, but a diversity of certifiers. An email blast for Inspector employers/certifiers for encouraging inspectors to participate. That will be forwarded to ACA to reach certifiers and more non-IOIA member staff inspectors. Janine made motion for IOIA to fund project - \$12,500. No opposition.

**BOD Strategic Planning:** Chuck – is there enough information on website to tell people who IOIA is without providing the strategic plan? Terrance volunteered to assist Margaret and Diane in editing the "About" section of the website. Allan would like to build some flexibility into the timelines due to IOIA acquiring some big projects (RFA) in the next 12 months. Margaret thinks it is workable, especially if we are willing to be flexible. Janine moved to adopt Draft 6 of the Strategic Plan understanding that we embrace flexibility. No objections.

**2022 Budget & Finance Committee Recommendation – Allan:** The budget and strategic plan are integrated. Bottom Line will be about negative \$50,000. The Finance Committee supported the bottom line and spending reserves to implement the Strategic Plan. Terrance moved to approve budget. No objections – Beth stayed her vote due to not reviewing the supporting documents.

**RFA Apprenticeship Report –** Board appreciated information from Ellie Hudson, provided via Google Drive. She provided the last 3 monthly reports to NOP, an abbreviated version of the Project Tracker, and a link to all deliverables.

**Potential training of Non-ACA member certifiers – Chuck** explained the research he had done to compare which NOP accredited certifiers are not ACA members. IOIA should send correspondence out for In-house training opportunities.

Respectfully submitted, Heather Donald, Secretary



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**KEEP IOIA STRONG – LEND YOUR STRENGTH AND GET INVOLVED!**

## **2022 Calendar**

**February 24 - 26** | [MOSES Conference](#), La Crosse, Wisconsin

**February 25 - 27** | 29th Annual BC Organic Conference | Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, BC  
<https://organicbc.org/conference/>

**March 3** | IOIA Annual General Meeting, see page 1

**March 9** | Virtual Panel Discussion: The Privatization of Public Seed Breeding | 6:30 p.m. EST  
[Register](#)

**March 9-18** | ECOFARM Online Conference | [Info and to register](#)

**March 16** | IFOAM NA [Online Annual Member Meeting](#), 10 a.m. Pacific time

**March 21** | USDA National Organic Program [Regulatory Priorities Listening Session](#)

The deadline to sign up to make oral comments during the virtual meeting is February 28, 2022.  
The deadline to submit written comments is March 30, 2022.

**March 28 - 30** | Organic Week 2022, Washington D.C. | [More info and to register](#)

**May 30 - June 15** | IOIA/Hong Kong Organic Resource Centre [Live Online Basic Crop Inspection Training](#)

**July 26 - 29** | [BIOFACH](#), Exhibition Centre Nuremberg, Germany

**November 29 & 30** | Organic and Non-GMO Forum, Minneapolis, MN  
[Register](#)

**PLEASE SEE PAGES 2, 3 & 4 FOR THE CURRENT LIST OF  
IOIA LIVE ONLINE, ONSITE, WEBINAR AND SELF-PACED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**