

Organic News

Upcoming Programs

Monday, May 1 - San Saba Pecan Field Day, all day program in San Saba Texas. Organic will be part of the program for pecan producers. 5 CEU's offered.

Tuesday, May 2 - State Master Gardener Meeting by Zoom. Organic gardening and lawn care on the afternoon program.

Tuesday, June 27 - Eagle Lake Rice Field Day (depending on water availability for rice research) held at the Rice Research Center with a meal and program following the field day at Eagle Lake Community Center.

Thursday, July 13 - Beaumont Rice Field Day, held at the Rice Research Center near Beaumont.

Thursday, August 31 - South Plains Organic Cotton/Peanut Field Day near Seminole and much like last year but new things to see.

Tuesday, October 17 - Wednesday, October 18 - 2023 Organic Conference, Georgetown, Texas. All things growing organic or becoming organic!

Strengthening Organic Enforcement

Lots of new rules affecting organic throughout the WORLD! The Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) final rule reduces fraud in the organic marketplace; strengthens oversight of organic producers, handlers, and certifiers; and improves USDA's enforcement mechanisms. USDA used public comments to refine this final rule and maximize benefit to the organic industry.

What do these changes mean for the regular producer? Probably you won't notice any change but the rest of the world that interacts with ORGANIC will notice a change.

First, it has strengthened traceability from the farm to the end user. Basically, all supply chains in agriculture are becoming more transparent but organic is trying to be even more transparent so that the consumer feels like they know you and what you do. It is like you are becoming the farmer around the corner from them and so they trust you.

Another important point is that the authority that USDA Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) has to both oversee and enforce organic trade in the US and abroad has been strengthened. Basically, they have both the rules and the ability to enforce those rules against organic violators.

There are more aspects of SOE but another one I think is important – they have significantly reduced the number of uncertified entities in the organic supply chain. Specifically, they are now requiring both importers and exporters to be certified and that they maintain traceability.

Lastly, these are things an individual organic producer needs to be aware of and be ready for starting this year.

Unannounced inspections. Your certifier will be required to do unannounced inspections on 5% of the operations it certifies – that could be you! If you say, "there is no way they can do an unannounced

STRENGTHENING ORGANIC ENFORCEMENT | PROPOSED RULE
Safeguarding Organic Supply Chains
 The National Organic Program (NOP) is updating its regulations to support continued growth of the organic market and improve oversight at critical links in organic supply chains.

What does the rule do?

- Reduce the types of businesses exempt from organic certification
- Require electronic NOP Import Certificates for all organic products entering the United States
- Clarify recordkeeping and fraud prevention procedures to improve supply chain traceability
- Standardize requirements for on-site inspection of organic operations to strengthen oversight

How does the organic industry benefit?

- Stronger tools and processes to help ensure compliance
- Robust and consistent enforcement of the organic regulations
- Improved farm to market traceability
- Strong consumer and farmer trust in the organic label
- Level playing field for organic farms and businesses

United States Department of Agriculture
 Agricultural Marketing Service
 National Organic Program

inspection on my farm!” Well, you won’t be certified any more.... The real change is that USDA is looking over the shoulder of certifiers to make sure this happens properly!

Mass-balances, in that quantities of organic product and ingredients produced or purchased account for organic product and ingredients used, stored, sold, or transported; and that organic products and ingredients are traceable by the operation from the time of purchase or acquisition through production to sale or transport; and that the certifying agent can verify compliance back to the last certified operation... Example: you plant 100 lbs. of seed per acre on 100 acres then you should have receipts for 10,000 lbs. of seed. Again you have been doing this but the oversight will be harder and thorough. Keep receipts!

If you want to read more then I recommend this “Side by Side” publication that shows what was and what has changed. ***Strengthening Organic Enforcement: Comparison of Old and New Regulatory Text***

Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP)

If you know a producer interested in transitioning to organic I would like to know!

If you would like to be a mentor (no mentor experience necessary) let me know!

LockDown Liquid Herbicide for Organic Rice

Organic rice producers were able to attend two meetings in March about LockDown Liquid use in organic rice, one in Nada and one in Beaumont. A big thanks to Greg Devillier, Douget’s Rice Mill and Vivian Spanihel, American Rice Growers for arranging the meetings.

LockDown Liquid is sold by Agricultural Research Initiatives and Kelly Cartwright. Kelly was able to make the meetings and discuss both how LockDown works and how it should be applied in 2023 to control Northern Jointvetch and possibly other

weeds as well. It’s great to have affordable organic weed control when things get bad!

If you are interested in purchasing LockDown Liquid for use on your organic rice acres then we do need to get the orders in soon. We are shooting for a June application, but this will require an order to be made soon (**April 15-May 1**). Cost is **\$15** per acre and orders require the number of acres to be sprayed (3 liters per acre).

You can call Greg, Vivian, or myself to place an order and since this is a live organism once ordered it is yours! No returns....just dead weeds!

40 Years of Organic Farming - Rodale Institute



There are not many research projects that have been going on for over 40 years and are still going. The Rodale Institute started this project in the early 80’s on 12 acres of land including 72 different plots and 3 systems. The three systems are conventional production, organic with manure applications and organic with only legumes for fertility. Within these three systems they all are subdivided into full-tillage and reduced-tillage.

One of the best take-aways for me is that the yields are all very similar with the organic legume system being slightly behind the organic manure and conventional systems. Overall, the organic systems are more resilient in that they tended to have higher yields in low rainfall years and didn’t suffer as much from continuous heavy rainfall or water saturated soils in wet years.

The picture on the next page says a lot about the system! **The graph on the left** shows net returns without organic premiums and organic manure-

based systems win. **On the right**, both organic systems have **higher** net returns than conventional with organic premiums. Amazing, and validates all you do for organic agriculture!

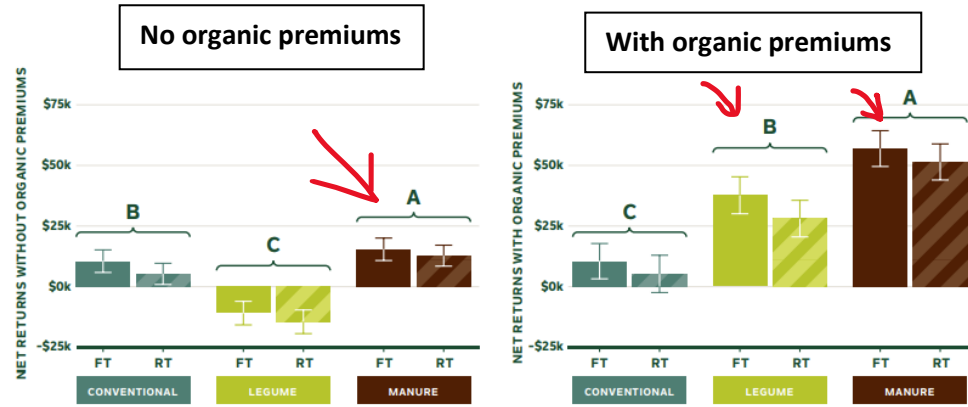


Figure 15 Net returns (Left, without organic price premiums; Right, with organic price premiums) of each of the systems in the Farming Systems Trial from 2008–2020. Budgets are for representative farms 54 hectares in size.

NRCS Organic Ag Tour



A few

One of the things they wanted to do was to get their local staff out and on organic farms and to meet organic farmers. The only way to do that is to travel around the state and meet people and so we did. The plan was for me and a few NRCS state staff to travel to the sites and to meet the local staff at the farm. Any NRCS staff member within 2 hours of the organic farm was invited to travel and spend a few hours visiting the producer and learn about the organic production in their area.

Where did we go? We started out near O’Donnell on the **Carl Pepper** cotton farm. Wow! The way **Carl** conserves moisture in dry west Texas. Next, we traveled to Central Texas near Dublin to see **Henk**

Postmus’ organic dairy and organic forages done right. From there we moved east to Wills Point to see **Jamie and Katy Kulesa** and Lone Star Organic Dairy. In one week almost a straight line west to east and the change in scenery was fascinating!

months ago, I was contacted by NRCS to help with their organic training program. NRCS is making a real effort to reach out to organic growers and to offer more assistance both on a personal level and with new programs and services.

The next week we started off in the Rio Grande Valley at South Tex Organics and talked citrus and onions with the **Holbrook's**. The citrus was blooming, and onion harvest was just starting. Traveling north we ended up in Runge to talk regenerative ag and organics in sorghum fields and cattle pastures at the **Zack Yanta** farm. **Zack** has many great experiences in soil health improvement. Last, we had a great visit with **Kenneth Danklefs** at Garwood in rice country. **Vivian Spanihel** with American rice growers talked organic rice marketing and **Kenny** gave us a rice field tour and talked organic production.

We haven't made it to the High Plains just yet, but it is on the agenda soon! It was a great chance to see lots of organic farms and talk to super farmers about organic. Thanks to everyone who helped.

What is your preferred method?

When it comes to your farm operation or farm business, what's your preferred method of communication? I recently saw this on Twitter, and it was **spot on** in my opinion when working with farmers and ranchers in Texas. This guy just did a random poll of 600 farmers asking them how they like to communicate with folks.

Method	Percentage
In person	27.5%
By email	8%
By a text or texting	46.3%
Phone call	18.2%

As you can plainly see, texting is nearly twice as popular as the next closest thing which is, **In Person**. I also like texting and usually if I don't take a phone call because I'm busy, if they then text, I will go ahead and answer the text right away. Also, I am the type that will drop in on a farmer to see if they are there because I do feel that farmers like a personal visit – just don't stay too long. So, I agree, texting is really a great method to get things done and personal visits are second best. I am getting to

be like most farmers; email is becoming my least favorite method! **Now that you are holding this newsletter in your hands, I hope this is also a preferred method!**

Tarleton and Viva Fresh Expo



March 31-April 1, I was privileged to travel with and discuss organic with some Tarleton State University agriculture students. It was a weekend of organic agriculture with a particular emphasis on organic fruits and vegetables. I was asked to help out with the tour because I do know a lot of people in both the conventional and organic world of fruits and vegetables and to help talk about Texas organic production in that world. Viva Fresh was held in Grapevine this year which is very close to Tarleton State Univ. and Stephenville. On the way we were treated to a behind the scenes tour of the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens and the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT). To say the least the students were wowed when they saw nearly 3,000 folks on the exhibit floor at Viva Fresh and talked to hundreds of prospective employers!

Lastly, you might enjoy reading this book, I know I did! Lots of information on what is going on in the soil and in the plants you eat. If you farm organic, it is what you do! If you get a chance, it's worth the time.

