



Organic Farming Research Foundation works to foster the improvement and widespread adoption of organic farming systems. OFRF cultivates organic research, education and federal policies that bring more farmers and acreage into organic production.

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

LETTER FROM OUR CHAIR



OFRF whirled like a dervish in 2015! I am tremendously proud of our professional staff and the work they accomplished on so many fronts. What a way to commemorate our 25th anniversary!

In just the past year, our research department conducted in-depth assessments of both OFRF and USDA funded organic research, as well as a national survey of certified organic producers. We also redesigned our OFRF direct research grants program.

On the advocacy front, we worked with the White House, Congress and Federal Agencies to secure increased investment in research and policies to help organic and transitioning farmers be successful.

We also improved the functionality and resources on our web site, initiated an organizational strategic planning process that we will complete in 2016, and welcomed a terrific new advisory body (see back page). All the while increasing revenue by 34%!

With consumer demand for organic food increasing, opportunity abounds! OFRF is working to help launch tomorrow's organic farmers, while continuing our efforts to help today's organic farmers thrive.

We know that weed control, building soil health and fertility, and coping with water management—way too much some places, way too little in others—are persistent and pernicious challenges. We are invested in helping find solutions.

I invite you to celebrate our 2015 accomplishments and to be part of OFRF's work in the year ahead. Together, we can grow the next 5 million organic acres to produce a healthy and sustainable organic food system, protect the environment, and create economic opportunity for our nations' farmers.

Sincerely,

Meg Moynihan
Board Chair

POLICY

Jane Shey was hired as Policy Associate to manage legislative and regulatory campaigns that support the needs of organic farmers. Based in Washington, D.C., Jane has worked on agricultural and trade policy for 30 years.

Throughout 2015, OFRF maintained an active presence in the Capitol, meeting with Congress, monitoring the implementation of key USDA programs, and cultivating relationships with the House Organic Caucus. Our advocacy work continues to focus on increasing investment in organic farming and ensuring research funding is matched to the highest priorities of organic farmers and conventional farmers transitioning to organic farming.

OFRF submitted comments and testimony to help secure funding and organic focus on the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, the Food Safety Outreach Program, the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR) authorized in the Farm Bill, and many others programs critical to the future of organic farming in the US. All of OFRF's current policy statements are available on our website.

EDUCATION

Outreach and sharing of research findings is a priority for OFRF and its grantees. This year, in addition to presenting at more than 20 conferences across the US, we have expanded the visibility of scientific research and practical information for growers through our monthly online newsletter, weekly blogs, and social media. Our newly updated website provides easy access to current information and resources that help both new and transitioning organic farmers increase their success.

2015 Organic Agriculture Research Symposium: OFRF served as both an advisor and a presenter at this event where key research findings on diverse topics were presented to both farmers and researchers. The model was so successful that OFRF worked with University of California Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension (KARE) Center to hold another Symposium in January, 2016 in Pacific Grove, California.



Suzanne and Stefan building a small heating chamber for grafting tomatoes.

"Developing grafting procedures and cultivars has become a necessity for the continued survival of our farm. This project was a big success for me because I am still doing grafting and I was shown the technique as part of the project."

- Farmer Collaborator Stefan Hartman of Black River Organic Farm in North Carolina

"As a master's degree student at North Carolina State University, applying for the OFRF grant, being successful, and working with farmers inspired my career. I have maintained this thread of research in organic systems as a professor at the University of Georgia."

- Researcher Suzanne O'Connell received a grant to study tomato grafting for soil-borne disease resistance.

OFRF GRANTS HELP BRING THREE NEW ORGANIC SWEET CORN VARIETIES TO MARKET IN 2015



“Who Gets Kissed?”

This open-pollinated sweet corn variety with sweet yellow and white kernels yields well, tolerates cool soils, and is resistant to common rust and corn smut. It is currently a top seller at High Mowing Organic Seeds.

A participatory plant breeding model was used for this project, enabling researchers and farmers to work together to

develop varieties that exhibit specific traits identified and selected by the growers. The team worked with three experienced organic sweet corn farmers to grow two sweet corn breeding populations in their fields. William Tracy at the University of Wisconsin led the research that produced the new “Who Gets Kissed” variety.

Funding provided by OFRF played a crucial role in initiating this participatory breeding project to improve sweet corn for organic farmers. As a result of this seed money, further funding was secured from USDA to continue the project.

“Top Hat” and “Tuxana”

These new varieties of open-pollinated, sweet corn will be available in limited quantities for the 2016 planting season, thanks to ongoing research by Oregon farmer and OFRF research partner Jonathan Spero.

Spero’s project was supported by a four years of research grants from OFRF in partnership with the Clif Bar Family Foundation’s Seed Matters grant program. He expects his new varieties of white and yellow sweet corn to see additional improvements in coming years as they are planted in new regions and the seed is saved and replanted by numerous farmers and gardeners.

In addition to breeding for enhanced sweetness, Spero worked to make his corn more competitive against weeds, better able to resist insect pests, and tolerant of lower fertility soils—all attributes of high value to organic farming systems.



RESEARCH

OFRF’s research team completed several groundbreaking reports reviewing and assessing the current needs of organic farmers. The findings are being used to ensure the effectiveness of OFRF’s 2016 research grant program as well as influence USDA-funded organic research.

OFRF AWARDED
106 GRANTS
FROM 2006-2014

INVESTING A TOTAL
OF
\$1,452,517

AVERAGE ONE-YEAR GRANT = \$14,000

Impacts of OFRF Grants: 2006-2014

Since our founding 25 years ago, OFRF has invested over \$3 million in 326 grants to organic researchers and farmers. In 2015, we evaluated our past grant-making in an impact report determining that OFRF grants have lasting impacts on organic farming knowledge and the lives of farmers and researchers. OFRF’s funding of plant breeding, disease management and insect pest control research, produced exciting results for the organic farming community.

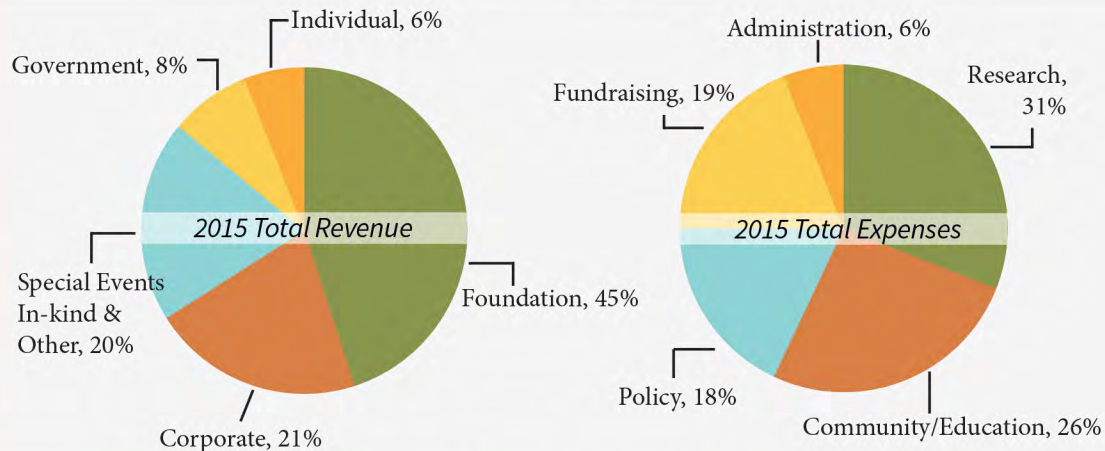
National Organic Research Agenda (NORA)

We are in the final stages of updating the influential report OFRF first issued in 2007, documenting the research needed to help organic farmers and ranchers improve the agricultural, environmental and economic performance of their production systems. OFRF’s research team conducted listening sessions across the US and completed a national survey of certified organic producers (over 1,000 organic farmers responded). The new report is providing a framework for informing our own grant-making program and will be shared with researchers, academic institutions, and policy makers nationwide.

Review and Assessment of USDA-Funded Research

With the support of a grant from the USDA, OFRF completed an in-depth review and assessment of 188 USDA-funded organic studies supported by more than \$142 million in grants between 2002 and 2014.

FINANCIALS



OFRF’s complete Financial Reports are available on our website.

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THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO DONATED TO OFRF IN 2015



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