



**ORGANIC  
FARMING**  
RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION



2016 ANNUAL REPORT

## What a year it's been!

We've seen organic agriculture continue to grow, with more farmers and ranchers working more acres every year. The demand for organic products is providing new opportunities in rural communities, advancing resource conservation, and restoring health to our soil and waterways.

For close to three decades, OFRF has been at the forefront of this movement, working to ensure the voices of America's organic farmers are heard. This year, we updated our National Organic Research Agenda (NORA) and it is informing everything we do, from our research program to advocacy, education, and outreach.

The report includes recommendations for future investment in organic research, based on an in-depth survey and listening sessions with organic farmers and ranchers across the nation. Our team has been presenting NORA to land grant universities, USDA, Congress, and the research community to help increase public investment in critical challenges faced by organic producers.

Because of the work that OFRF has put into identifying organic research priorities, we are in a strong position to take the lead in ensuring continued support for organic research programs, as well as developing organic research priorities for the upcoming Farm Bill.

We are excited to share our accomplishments with you in this report. On behalf of our team, thank you for your support of the work we do. We couldn't have done it without you.

## Together, we can keep organic growing.



*Don Lareau*

Don Lareau  
Board Chair, OFRF  
Owner, Zephyros Farm and Garden



*Brise Tencer*

Brise Tencer  
Executive Director, OFRF

## OFRF's 19th Annual Benefit Luncheon at Natural Products Expo West

More than 300 leaders in the organic industry gathered at OFRF's annual kickoff to Expo West. Fred Kirschenmann, OFRF Advisory Board Member and longtime leader in sustainable agriculture, gave the keynote address. Kirschenmann shares an appointment as Distinguished Fellow for the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and as President of Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture. We are pleased to announce our keynote speaker for 2017, Kathleen Merrigan, Executive Director of Sustainability at George Washington University.



OFRF staff and board members with Fred Kirschenmann

## OFRF 2016 RESEARCH PROGRAM

*\$100,000/6 grants*

## OFRF RESEARCH PROGRAM AWARDS TO DATE

*Over \$3M/332 grants*

**WE HAVE FUNDED RESEARCH IN**  
*40 states, Mexico and Canada*

### Top 5 OFRF Research Priorities in OFRF's National Organic Research Agenda

- 1 *Soil health and fertility management*
- 2 *Weed management*
- 3 *Nutritional benefits of organic food*
- 4 *Insect management*
- 5 *Disease management*



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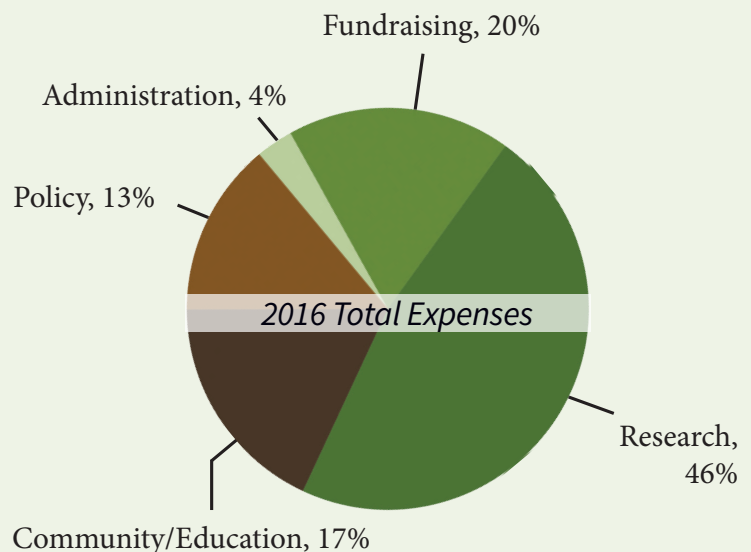
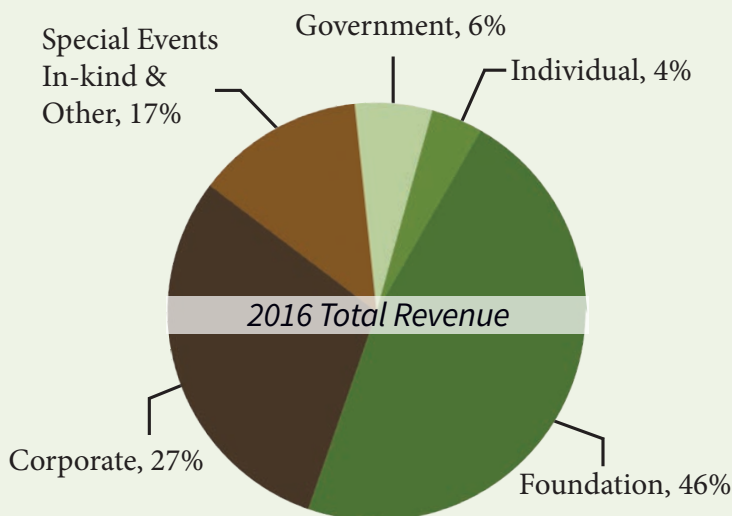


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## FINANCIALS



OFRF's complete Financial Reports are available at [ofrf.org](http://ofrf.org)



## 2016 Research Grant Awards

*With your support, we were thrilled to provide funding for six cutting-edge researcher/farmer collaborations. These projects focus on the top priorities of organic farmers as identified in our 2016 National Organic Research Agenda.*

### **Creating Climate Resilient Organic Systems by Enhancing Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi Associations**

*Dr. Erin M. Silva, University of Wisconsin*

**IMPACT: Increased access to water and nutrients.**

Symbiotic microbes such as arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) increase plants' access to vital nutrients and water. Dr. Silva will be studying cultivar-AMF interaction on working organic farms, evaluating the contribution to carrot growth as well as the contribution of potential cultivar-symbiont selectivity on AMF populations in a variety of soil types across organic farms in Wisconsin.

### **Developing Integrated Irrigation Management Strategies to Improve Water and Nutrient Use Efficiency of Organic Processing Tomato Production**

*Dr. Amelié CM Gaudin, University of California Davis*

**IMPACT: Trial results could help convert 259,000 acres of processing tomatoes to organic production and provide techniques to mitigate and adapt to shifts in resource availability.**

This project aims at developing integrated irrigation practices that capitalize on soil health to improve the efficiency of irrigation water and decrease pest pressure and potential N losses of California organic processing tomato production. Dr. Gaudin will compare the impact of three different water management scenarios that delay onset of irrigation and/or advance irrigation cutoff on tomato water-use efficiency, yield and fruit quality and monitor shifts in water acquisition dynamics, N leaching and pest pressure.

### **A New Approach for Successful Organic Peach Production in the Southeast**

*Dr. Juan Carlos Melgar Jimenez, Clemson University*

**IMPACT: Increased economic opportunity for fruit farmers in the southeast and reduced reliance on pesticides.**

The production of organic peaches is extremely difficult under the humid conditions of the Southeast due to high pest and disease pressures, and the lack of effective, organically approved pesticides. Dr. Melgar Jimenez will be evaluating the use of paper bags to physically protect the fruit from pests and diseases to reduce reliance on spray applications and increase yields.

## Field Evaluation of Designed Compost Extracts for Organic Weed Suppression

Dr. Gladis Zinati, Rodale Institute

**IMPACT: Reduced weed pressure, soil degradation, and yield loss.**

In 2013-2014, OFRF funded Dr. Zinati to perform laboratory and greenhouse trials on the weed suppressing ability of chemically- and biologically-designed compost extracts (DCE). This new project builds off of the laboratory and greenhouse work to test the DCEs in the field and evaluate them as an alternative tactic to reduce weed pressure, soil degradation, and yield losses of field-grown organic cabbage.



*“I have been farming organically for 30 years and every season I still learn some new component about fertility and availability. Research is a necessity since organic farming is still relatively new compared to research efforts tied to conventional farming over the last 80 years. This project with UC Davis would not be happening without OFRF. We already have some thought provoking results on water cut off impacting yield.”*

Scott Park, Park Farms

## Flowering Plants in Organic Strawberry Fields to Enhance Natural Enemies and Pollinators and Improve Pest Control and Fruit Quality

Dr. Justin M. Renkema, University of Florida

**IMPACT: Improved crop pollination and fruit quality in Florida organic strawberries.**

The objective of this research project is to manage for both predators and pollinators in Florida organic strawberries through intentional use of flowering plants. Dr. Renkema will target conservation of minute pirate bug, *Orius* spp., in the hope of showing how flowering plants support high levels of *Orius* spp. and pollinators, resulting in lower thrips populations and crop damage and improved crop pollination and fruit quality.

## Nutrient Budgeting in Organic Grain Production

Iris Vaisman, University of Manitoba

**IMPACT: Improved soil health, cash crop yield, and grain quality through the use and proper management of green manures.**

Green manures play an essential role in organic grain-based systems on the Canadian prairies by contributing to soil health, cash crop yield, and grain quality. The goal of this project is to increase the use and proper management of green manures. The researchers want to help farmers better understand their whole-farm nutrient budget and increase the adoption of green manures to enhance soil health and farm resiliency.

## 2017 Grant Program

In October 2016, OFRF issued a new request for proposals with continuing focus on top priorities identified in our NORA survey, such as creating diverse rotational systems for small grain production, assistance for transitioning farmers, and animal breeding for organic systems. Grants will be awarded in spring 2017.



## Past OFRF Grantee Continues to Make Impact

Funding innovative work at the early stages becomes very impactful when researchers are able to grow their programs and continue to work on a larger scale. *Kevin Murphy*, assistant professor and breeder of barley and alternative crops at Washington State University, received research grants from OFRF in 2010 and 2014. We were thrilled to hear that Murphy received a \$2M grant from the USDA Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) in 2016 to continue his work with organic quinoa.

## Advocacy & Outreach

OFRF works to ensure that policymakers are informed about organic farming issues and farmer needs by advocating for programs that support organic producers, in particular public institutional support for organic farming research and education.

### **2016 Highlights:**

- Engaged regularly with members of the House and Senate Agriculture committees to discuss policies and issues that are impacting organic agriculture.
- Researched barriers and challenges to organic transition in order to develop federal policies that will help support farmers transitioning to organic production.
- Worked with USDA National Resource Conservation Service to ensure the Conservation Stewardship Program is accessible to organic farmers and ranchers.
- Presented the National Organic Research Agenda to USDA's Organic Working Group, National Institute for Food and Agriculture, Economic Research Service, and shared it with key members of the Congressional Organic Caucus.



OFRF's new full-time Policy Associate in Washington, D.C., **Michael Stein**, hit the ground running in 2016, where he has been working to strengthen awareness of organic farming challenges, develop a unified policy platform, and advocate for a significant increase in funding for organic research across USDA programs and public institutions.

## Organic Agriculture Research Symposium

The 2016 Organic Agriculture Research Symposium, presented by OFRF and University of California, Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension (KARE) Center, brought together researchers, students, farmers and others from across the U.S. for an informative and interactive day in Pacific Grove, California on January 20th. A pre-conference to the annual Eco-Farm Conference, the symposium featured sessions ranging from soil health and biodiversity to farming and livestock systems, including current and ongoing organic agriculture research findings.

The 2017 Organic Agriculture Research Symposium will take place in Lexington, Kentucky, immediately preceding the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Conference (SAWG). OFRF is holding the event, in partnership with the University of Kentucky and Kentucky State University on January 25-26, 2017.

OFRF was pleased to be invited to share our outreach materials at meetings and events across the U.S. All of our reports and educational publications are available to download at ofrf.org.

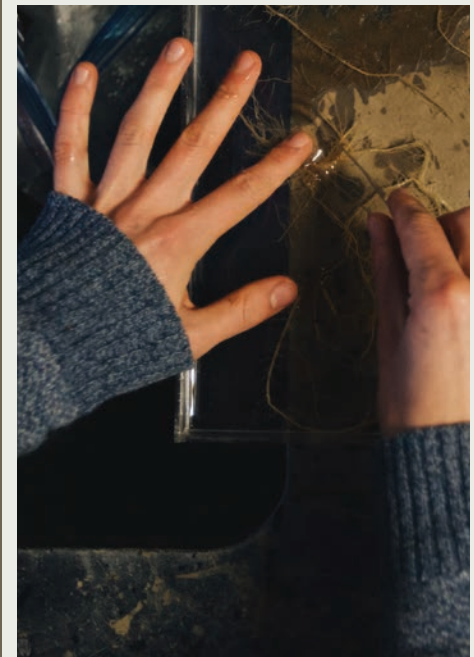
## The 2016 National Organic Research Agenda



This report, an analysis of research priorities as identified by over 1,000 organic farmers across the U.S., provides a framework for ensuring future research funding is relevant and responsive to the needs of today's organic farmers.

*“Ultimately, we expect this report to help significantly increase funding for research that assists farmers in adopting new practices that enhance both the environmental sustainability and economic viability of their operations.”*

**Brise Tencer**  
Executive Director, OFRF

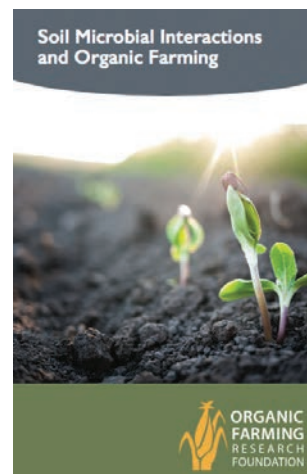


## Soil Health Institute

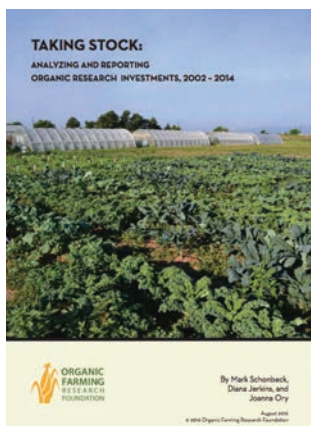
OFRF's Research Program Director, Diana Jerkins, and Board member, Klaas Martens, were appointed to the Board of the Soil Health Institute, formed by The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation and Farm Foundation. The Institute is committed to engaging a broad base of producers and those in and outside of agriculture, including academia, government and industry. Their mission is to safeguard and enhance the vitality and productivity of the soil through science-based research and advancement.

## Soil Microbial Interactions and Organic Farming

The first in a series of educational guidebooks addressing farmers' most pressing challenges, this guide is available in both English and Spanish. This resource explores the role of microorganisms, like bacteria, in creating healthy soil ecosystems that benefit organic farms.



## Taking Stock: Analyzing and Reporting Organic Research Investments, 2002–2014



OFRF analyzed 189 organic agriculture research, education, and extension projects funded by the USDA Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) and Organic Transitions (ORG) competitive research grant programs from 2002–2014. The report includes recommendations for improving funding for priority areas and project administration, and strongly encourages a significant increase in organic research funding to ensure the continued growth of the organic sector.

*“Healthy soil is a key to sustainable farming and a research priority for organic farmers. We are thrilled to be involved with the Soil Health Institute as they are bringing the organic perspective and deep expertise to this major initiative.”*

**Diana Jerkins**  
Research Program Director, OFRF

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# Thank you for your support!

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*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.*

All OFRF-funded research results are shared freely at [ofrf.org](http://ofrf.org).



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