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Growing Organic Expertise Across Iowa

Regional Technical Workshops for Agriculture Service Providers October 1 - 4

Des Moines, Iowa -- As the organic market continues to grow, Iowa producers, landowners and businesses are looking for opportunities to participate in this movement. The Iowa Organic Association (IOA) and regional partners will deliver a series of “Growing Organic Expertise in Iowa” organic workshops to provide the information, tools and resources needed for agriculture service providers and consultants to support farmers interested in organic transition, diversification and expansion.

This full-day workshop will provide information from organic experts and presented resources about the National Organic Program, organic certification and transition, organic standards and production practices and insight into current organic market trends and demands. The target audience for the workshop includes: NRCS, Extension, IDALS, FSA, SWCD, RC&D, County Conservation, crop insurance agents, farm lenders, farming organizations, farmers, agriculture educators and students, and others interested in learning more about organic opportunities.

Currently, Iowa ranks fifth in the U.S. and represents five percent of the nation’s certified organic farms, and yet less than 1% of Iowa’s agriculture production is organic. Rosalyn Lehman, IOA executive director shares that “many of Iowa’s farmers and landowners struggle to find reliable support as they explore new organic production systems and land uses.” These workshops will provide guidance and tools to adequately assist organic and transitioning farmers and landowners.

Today, the organic market is a \$50 billion industry. “As the market continues to grow, and demand for domestic, organic products continues to exceed supply, it is necessary that Iowa service providers are skilled and knowledgeable about organic agriculture to help Iowa farmers diversify and grow organic acres,” said Kevin Kuhn, Iowa NRCS Resource Conservationist. Expanding organic production in Iowa is as much an opportunity for farmers to diversify production and income streams, as it is for businesses supporting those producers.

The October “Growing Organic Expertise in Iowa” workshops are the first in the series of 20 regional workshops that will be offered across Iowa over the next two years. The locations for the October 2019 workshops are as follows:

October 1 -- Northeast Iowa Community College, 1625 HWY 150 South, Calmar

October 2 -- Indian Creek Nature Center, 5300 Otis Rd SE, Cedar Rapids

October 3 -- Rock Island Depot, 102 Chestnut St, Atlantic

October 4 -- Hamilton County Extension, 311 Bank St, Webster City

To register, visit **<https://www.iowaorganic.org/calendar>** or call 515-608-8622. There is a \$20 fee to participate, and lunch will be included.

IOA's "Growing Organic Expertise in Iowa" workshop training series is made possible with grant support from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE).

The Iowa Organic Association (IOA) is a statewide, 501(c)3 non-profit organization committed to organic education, advocacy and cooperation. Our membership is a diverse community of Iowa's organic farmers, gardeners, food and farm businesses, advocates and consumers who are devoted to expanding organic opportunities and building a more sustainable Iowa. For more information, visit www.iowaorganic.org.

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