



**GROWING ORGANIC  
EXPERTISE IN IOWA**

**Growing Organic Expertise in Iowa for  
Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service  
February 2021**

**SESSION 1 – Organic 101: history and background of organic and the USDA National Organic Program; Organic Certification, Organic Standards and Guidelines; and Resources**

Presenter: Ben Bowell – Organic Conservation Specialist with Oregon Tilth and FPAC/NRCS in Portland, OR.

Ben Bowell is an Organic Conservation Specialist for Oregon Tilth, a national non-profit organic certification and education organization. Through his joint position with NRCS, he provides technical assistance, delivers trainings, and develops technical resources for use by NRCS staff and organic professionals in order to better support conservation work on organic farms. Ben first became interested in agriculture as a student at Wake Forest University and while completing his degree he worked on small-scale farms in North Carolina. He pursued this interest and received a M.S. from Tufts University's Agriculture, Food, and Environment Program during which he completed an internship at the Institute of Organic Agriculture in Bonn, Germany.

**SESSION 2 – Iowa Organic Research | Overview of Organic Markets**

Presenter: Kathleen Delate Ph.D. – Iowa State University professor and Extension organic specialist

Dr. Delate leads the ISU Extension organic research and extension program. Her research focuses on nutrient and pest management strategies that enhance production while lowering agriculture's environmental footprint. She works in Ames, Iowa, and at the ISU Neely-Kinyon Farm in Greenfield, Iowa. In addition to hosting the Annual Iowa Organic Conference each November, she offers a "Transitioning to Organic" course every other year through ISU.

Presenter: James McKellar – Mercaris Manager of Data Partnerships

James Mckellar manages Mercaris' Organic & Non-GMO Market survey along with the relationships of its participating data partners. Since graduating from North Carolina, A&T as a Agriculture business major, James worked with Bunge North America as a grain merchandiser and most recently comes from Indigo Ag an Ag-Tech Startup where he held a variety of roles working to partner with producers, grain buyers and grain marketing advisors to help facilitate cash grain transactions on a digital marketplace. James' passion for agriculture was sparked by his great uncle who farmed peanuts and cotton and his grandfather who raised hogs in eastern North Carolina.

**SESSION 3 – Organic Farming – Insights and Experience from the Field**

Presenter: Paul Mugge – Organic Farmer, Sutherland, Iowa; IOA board member

Paul grew up on the farm where he now lives and works in Sutherland, Iowa. Paul attended Iowa State University and worked as an engineer before returning to the family farm in 1976. He is a life-long environmentalist and his farm management has been a progression from conventional, to sustainable,

to completely organic since 2001. In addition to farming, Paul substitute teaches at a local high school and is active in his local church and many organic, sustainable ag and environmental organizations.