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Growing Organic Expertise in Iowa *February Workshops*

Des Moines, Iowa – The Iowa Organic Association is delivering a second round of the "Growing Organic Expertise in Iowa" workshop series in February. This full-day workshop (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) will provide information from organic experts and presented resources about the National Organic Program, organic certification and transition, organic standards, organic production practices and insight into current organic market trends and demands.

As the organic market continues to grow, Iowa producers, landowners and businesses are looking for opportunities to participate in this movement. Last October, we reached 65 participants at four different workshops in Atlantic, Calmar, Cedar Rapids and Webster City.

The target audience for the February 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.

The "Growing Organic Expertise" workshops are a series of 12 regional workshops that will be offered across Iowa in 2020. The locations for the February workshops are as follows:

- Tuesday, Feb 4 -- Mason City Public Library, Mason City
- Thursday, Feb 6 -- Oakwood Road Community Center, Ames
- Tuesday, Feb 11 -- Fairfield Public Library, Fairfield
- Tuesday, Feb 18 -- Council Bluffs Public Library, Council Bluffs

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.

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 dedicated to expanding organic opportunities and building a more sustainable Iowa. For more information, visit www.iowaorganic.org.

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