

This transcript was exported on Feb 07, 2020 - view latest version [here](#).

Canned voice:

Hello and welcome to this special episode of Field, Lab, Earth, where we're focusing in on practical transitions from conventional to organic farming. This episode is part of a four part podcast mini series with a five part companion webinar series and is hosted by Dr. Erin Silva, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Canned voice:

You can find more information about these series and related resources as well as how to get continuing education units for listening in our show notes or on our website, fieldlabearth.libsyn.com. That's Libsyn spelled L-I-B-S-Y-N.

Canned voice:

Today's topic is organic farming basics and business operations. Our regular programming will resume on March 4th with a special two part episode. Thank you to NCR-SARE, the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program for their support of this episode. Let's talk about farming.

Erin Silva:

Welcome everyone to another podcast in our series about transitioning to organic grain production. I am Erin Silva. I'm an Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and I'll be the moderator for today's podcast. Joining me today is Anders Gurda, the Director of the Farm Profit Program at Pipeline Foods, and also Paul Dietmann, the Senior Lending Officer on the Mission Financing Team at Compeer Financial.

Erin Silva:

They'll be talking with us today about some of the business and financial considerations that you need to consider when transitioning to organic or working with farmers considering that transition. Welcome Anders and Paul.

Anders Gurda:

Thanks, glad to be here.

Paul Dietmann:

Thank you.

Erin Silva:

All right. Well, we'll jump right into the conversation. Anders, you and Paul spoke at an earlier webinar about the increasing demand for organic grain and the opportunity that this presents for farmers interested in diversifying their operations and expanding into the organic market. Can you talk a bit more about this?

Anders Gurda:

Yeah, happy to. The organic market as a whole, before we talk about organic grains specifically, the organic market as a whole has been growing exponentially for many years. The compound annual

growth rate has been double digits many of the last 10, 15 years, and the most recent measurements, I would say this was maybe about a year and a half ago, the most recent data show that it's a \$50 billion industry. The organic industry is a large industry, primarily driven by consumer interest and consumer hunger for organic products.

Anders Gurda:

Now organic grain is obviously a large part of that as far as feeds for animal protein, for dairy industry, for food industry, tofu, et cetera. Obviously small grains for wheat and other baked goods. That feeds into a lot of the different parts of different sectors of the organic grain market. That hunger is there for those grains as well.

Anders Gurda:

For a long time, the demand in organics was really the barometer that we look to with imports. Somewhat what some people might not know is that organic is an import dependent market, not export as it is with the commodity market. We import a lot of grain from South America, India, Turkey, Black Sea Region. The assumption was that because we're importing a lot of grain, that must mean that there is a domestic shortfall, that we are not meeting demand. And while that has been true and it's still true to some extent, imports are in some ways here to stay, that whether it's price or quality or the ease of logistics with container ships, imports are going to be there. That being said, there seems to be a balance between imports and domestic production that we've come to and there is still demand.

Anders Gurda:

Buyers are still looking for grain. We are still looking as an organic grain buyer for corn, beans, and solid grains. And you can also look to the price for those commodities as another barometer for the growth in the marketplace and for the hunger and demand there. Corn, we're looking at eight to \$9 a bushel, beans delivered Hope, Minnesota. Our most recent pricing is 1,875 for beans, 650 for feed wheat, and then we have a lot of other bids out there for different classes of small grain. But that's another way of seeing pretty clearly what that demand signal is.

Anders Gurda:

And you use the word diversifying. And I think that's the key word here. This is an opportunity to diversify, not only your production systems, but also your income streams, which makes you a more resilient operations that can persist through changing market and changing weather. That diversity of the same reason and ecosystem is healthy, we think about our farms as ecosystems, it's the same thing. We have to keep them diverse.

Anders Gurda:

In going organic on, however, many acres you want to transition, you are accessing a market that is robust and hungry. You are also being able to diversify. And then once you get organic, you can further diversify. You can sell into the traditional commodity market. Companies like ours, you can also do a lot more relationship marketing, organic rye for a distillery in a city nearby, barley for brewing, etc. There's a lot of opportunities to diversify in a market that doesn't show any signs of swelling.

Erin Silva:

Wow. Those prices that you mentioned must be pretty enticing to farmers. Have those been consistent over the last few years?

Anders Gurda:

Really good question. Some people who have been watching organic for a while will know that there at one point was \$14 organic corn. That was great when it was happening. It also was relatively artificially inflated and as organic and conventional prices do tend to track roughly with one another, that was also unconventional prices were high. Now that conventional prices are where they are, organic has also settled into a little bit more of a moderated position.

Anders Gurda:

The last two or three years, we've been around those numbers. Every year is different. This year, it's been a crazy year as everyone knows and everyone has experienced, but we're still seeing the pricing holding relatively steady. But we'll be paying pretty close attention here as harvest continues up North.

Erin Silva:

As a buyer, does Pipeline look for a certain number of acres to contract with the grower? Are there a minimum amount of bakers that a farmer has to consider when transitioning or thinking about farming organically?

Anders Gurda:

If you're going to be going for a commodity market, you're looking to sell your corn, beans, wheat, then the minimum number is really all that it takes to fill a semi to fill a truck. We don't operate in LTL, we don't do less than truck loads. We're not going to pick up a bag or a tote of anything. But you can also team up with neighbors if you don't have that many acres. We do have some split loads. We'd obviously just need two different organic certificate and truck of exactly how many bushels got on that truck but it's possible, you can do that.

Anders Gurda:

We've contracted with growers who have 10 acres, it's decent yield. Depending on the crop, you can fill a truck with that. As far as minimum, really just enough to be able to get that semi-load.

Erin Silva:

That's a really good point about how well, actually a lot in organic is made easier by building a community and knowing your neighbors and teaming up, whether it be in terms of accessing inputs or resources or just sharing experiences. It's certainly knowing your organic neighbors and being able to partner with them on a variety of different levels certainly is a value.

Anders Gurda:

Absolutely. I think one of the best piece of advice you could ever get if you're thinking about transition is just to find a nearby farmer. Find a neighbor who has gone through that transition and I'm guessing we'll get into this as well, but it does also make sense as far as marketing, that you can help each other to be able to identify and access different markets in your region.

Erin Silva:

In that webinar that you presented earlier in January, you also talked about some of the barriers that farmers face when considering and starting the transition to organic grain production. And I know you've worked with a lot of organic farmers and a lot of transitioning farmers. Can you talk a bit more about how these barriers impact a farmer's decision or approach to transitioning?

Anders Gurda:

Yeah, really good question. It's important to talk about the difference between a perceived barrier and a real barrier, I think. A lot of the perceived barriers are some of what people have heard, right? You've heard, "Man, your yields are going to get cut in half." "All you're going to farm is weeds." "Paperwork isn't even worth it." "You can't even use manure," right? There's these things you have heard many of which are not true or if there's a kernel of truth, it's something that is a lot more contextualized than that.

Anders Gurda:

Yield drag can happen, but it's generally more in the 2020, 5% range, if anything, during transition or the first five years and a lot of longterm studies find parity after five years and your soils are up and running. And even if there is a small yield decrease, it's more than made up or and the the pay price that you're getting.

Anders Gurda:

Manure, you can use conventional manure assuming that there's no pit additives or anything else that would knock it out of compliance. But you can use manure from a conventional farm. Paperwork is some work but it's also fair compensation for increased management. And anyone who keeps decent records, you've already got a lot of your boxes checked. Things like that. There're these perceived barriers, things that people think that they know and they've heard, right? They do know because they've heard those things but there might only be a small amount of truth to them or no truth whatsoever.

Anders Gurda:

I think the biggest perceived barrier, and this is something that's harder to talk about and harder to quantify, is that people are afraid they're going to be a different person or seen as a different person if they transitioned to organic. "I go organic then I'm an organic farmer and coffee shop goes quiet when I walk in. I'm going to lose some friends." And there are instances where that does happen. There can be social costs for something like this. But in my view, I think we've come a long way from any of the stigmas that are there and at this point it is just a savvy business decision. If this isn't that can have other collateral benefit in terms of tractor operator health not having to spray anymore. A lot of farmers like not having to worry about that, not the headache of getting out there.

Anders Gurda:

I think that's one of the bigger perceived barriers too is what it means to be an organic farmer as opposed just to the savvy of diversifying your operation. And then there's all the real barriers, right? The real barriers like the 36 month transition period where you're farming organically, but getting conventional prices can be tough. Weeds are one of the biggest issues for any farmer, but especially for an organic farmer, they are constant and they will not leave you alone.

Anders Gurda:

Fertility, what you do if you can't use MAP, DAP, and anhydrous, what can you use? That's sometimes a challenge. Machinery. You don't have a rotary hoe or a cultivator on your field anymore in your machine shed, you're going to have to go get those. Maybe you don't have a small grain drill anymore. If you're going to have a three year rotation, you might need one of those.

Anders Gurda:

Wrapping your head around new crops, you might need to grow in that longer rotation, which is all ways of saying the biggest challenge is really just the learning curve that you'll need to navigate. And I already said this once, but I'll say it again, that transitioning to organic is not the easiest thing in the world, but it is absolutely possible if you have the right mindset and if you have the wherewithal to keep going.

Anders Gurda:

What I said before is that it is more work, but it is fair compensation for increased management. The barriers are real, but all those real barriers are surmountable. You can get over them. All it takes is some investment and some desire.

Erin Silva:

Yeah. That knowledge piece is definitely key. And there is definitely a different set of tools and a different way of putting those tools together. Some of which are also using conventional, some of which are pretty novel to organic. But I agree, Anders, in my experience, once you learn what are those tools, who are those people to go to, and how to put that all together, there is quite a bit of success to be had in organic production.

Anders Gurda:

Absolutely.

Erin Silva:

We talked about the knowledge gap and the need to learn new practices and how to put those practices, both those that may be used in conventional and those new organic, how to put those together. What role have you seen the crop consultant play to help a farmer navigate through those different challenges and break down some of these barriers?

Anders Gurda:

Yeah. I work pretty closely with an agronomist in Nebraska and he works with a lot of organic growers. That is mostly who he works with for the last many years. He describes most of his job as just telling farmers that they're not crazy and that everything will be okay. I think there's a lot of just moral support that comes with it. That might not be most of the time spent but that is a really important role for someone like an agronomist to crop consultants, actually to service provider to be able to plague.

Anders Gurda:

There are some fears as we just talked about, both perceived and real, fears and barriers. Someone who is just there with that farmer who is troubleshooting, who is normalizing their experience, who is saying, "You've got this," change is hard for anybody, any human change is hard for. And for farmers that have been doing things in a certain way for years, decades, this change is tough. And it's really important to

acknowledge that. And I think that an agronomist can help to just be a guide and a fellow adventurer on that journey. That's the little bit loftier answer.

Anders Gurda:

But the more specific answer here is to help to do things like navigate the regulation. As an agronomist, it would be really smart just to read through the regulation and it would take you a couple hours to figure out what the regulations are, how we account for those in the organic system plan that you can also help and grow or set setup, and to make sure that they're within compliance. That is one of the scariest things. It's genuinely scary for a farmer that can get knocked out of compliance and lose their three year transition if they make one mistake.

Anders Gurda:

If you can be another security is a piece of security there, that's a huge service to a grower and they're going to appreciate it and we pay for that. Navigating the regulation and that means also doing some of the record keeping. A lot of agronomists who work with organic farmers handle some or all of that record keeping. That's something a farmer is really happy to pass off and it's actually not that much work. It's not that big of a deal for someone to do if you have your head wrapped around it in the right way. Things like sourcing inputs and that's related to soil testing and fertilizer recommendations.

Anders Gurda:

They're going to look to someone to help them transition from using their synthetic fertility to finding ways to accurately credit cover crops and forage crops. Figuring out how to test and make sure you're applying manure in the right applications and also navigating all the biological and other inputs that are out there. There's a lot of them. It's hard to figure out which ones are worth it and which ones aren't.

Anders Gurda:

For less recommendations, sourcing input. The biggest point here is that as an organic agronomist, inputs are not going to be your bread and butter as they are oftentimes. For someone working with conventional farmers, your input is knowledge. The investment and understanding organic production, organic regulations, record keeping, organic markets, that is your value and it's be easy to understate that value to think that doesn't have inefficient value to a farmer. But it does, those are the things that a farmer needs help with and those are the things they're going to feel confused or scared about. You as an ally and an expert being able to come in and help them out, that will go a long way. That's your input is knowledge of the organic system.

Erin Silva:

Wow. It sounds like the crop consultant definitely has a role that they can play in making the transition process easier for farmers. And, Paul, Compeer Financial also offers services to make the transition process easier. Can you talk a bit more about the services that Compeer Financial has to offer to farmers interested in transitioning?

Paul Dietmann:

Yeah, you bet, Erin. Well, we're a farm lending cooperative primarily. We're a farmer owned cooperative and so we make loans for a lot of different purposes, whether it's purchasing land or covering operating expenses or equipment, buildings, all sorts of things. We also offer crop insurance, so we do offer crop

insurance to organic producers. One thing that we're just in the process of coming out with, and we should be rolling it out here in the next couple of weeks is an organic transition loan program. And it's a loan program that's designed specifically for people transitioning to organic grain production. It'll be an eight year loan.

Paul Dietmann:

The first two or three years during the transition process, the farmer can take loan proceeds and it's interest only on the proceeds that they take during that transition period. It should help with the cash flow during the transition years. Once the farm is certified organic, then the loan transitions into a term loan and it's regular principal and interest payments through the eighth year. We're hoping that that program helps people with that transition process because the first couple of years during transition is when cash flows is usually the tightest and when they really need a little bit of help.

Erin Silva:

Yeah, I can imagine that must be a hurdle that farmers have to strategize to overcome. Are there specific traits that you see in farmers or their businesses that lead to a smoother transition with respect to farm economics?

Paul Dietmann:

Yeah, a few things that I see. People who transition a bit slowly where they're not trying to transition too many acres all at once, especially if they have no experience with organic production, that's really a critical. I've seen a few growers get themselves into a bit of financial trouble where they like the idea of organics, they're enticed by the prices and they try to transition too many acres all at one time. They haven't really gotten through that learning curve of getting used to managing an organic production system.

Paul Dietmann:

Going through the transition slowly and not transitioning too many acres at once. Whatever a farmer can do to try to ease the cashflow during those early years, and in a lot of cases that means trying to reduce their operating expenses or their variable expenses. A great way to do that in the upper Midwest if there's livestock in the area is by transitioning the land to hae rather than to transitional grain crops and then bring into the system once they're certified organic.

Paul Dietmann:

When we run the enterprise budgets, hay is it a much less expensive crop to put in, and it also helps them clear up some weed issues and things like that, or maybe can add some soil amendments as they're seeding the land down to hay. Getting expert advice and mentoring. Like Anders mentioned, the moral support is really important. It's one of those things that I don't think farmers, maybe they don't even realize that they need it or they don't realize how important it is to have someone who is telling them, "You're not crazy. This actually makes sense to do this," and whether it's their agronomist or their lender or neighbors folks that they meet through Midwest organic and sustainable education service, I know it's an important role that you play in your job, Erin. Just having somebody who is able to reassure the farmer, "This is going to be okay. You're doing the right thing and this is a good investment. You're going to come out in good shape."

Paul Dietmann:

Getting cost sharing, if they can get torturing through natural resource conservation service or some states have organic transition dollars available. I've got a farmer that is bad as this last spring was, it was so wet, we had land wasn't able to be plant it. I've got a guy who's taken advantage of this poor year and he's looking at it as, "Well, mother nature forced me into my first year of organic transition because I couldn't put a crop in the spring." Therefore, we didn't spray anything. We didn't put any synthetic fertilizer on the ground, and he's planting cover crops this fall and he's got his first year of transition under his belt. It's just having that kind of attitude like making lemonade out of lemons, I guess.

Erin Silva:

I hadn't heard that one yet this year. That's interesting. And we have stressed in other podcasts and webinars as well in this series that, again, doing a parallel operation is possible. I agree and in my experience, and not jumping in necessarily with both feet and transitioning the whole farm, but starting off with a manageable amount of acres and getting some experience under your belt and really being strategic on how to transition those acres, both in terms of the agronomy, the market, and the financial aspects is so, so critical.

Erin Silva:

I don't know if you could talk about this at all, Paul. We talked about how organic involves different practices in different markets and sometimes when we're then moving into those different practices in markets, it requires the purchase of new equipment or grain storage. Can you talk a bit about how those different capital expenditures may influence strategies with transition or any advice on how farmers can deal with, again, having to purchase new equipment or making new investments in terms of structures or other more physical purchases on their farms?

Paul Dietmann:

Sure. I mentioned earlier cashflow and maintaining cashflow during the transition years. And that's where if a person is making capital purchases early in the transition, they can get themselves into a bit of cashflow trouble. And when we talk about cashflow, there's an important difference between profitability and cashflow. And people I think have a tendency to use the terms interchangeably. When we talk about profitability, we're really looking at rate of return on assets, rate of return on equity, financial efficiency measures and things like that. We talk about cashflow, we're looking at all the cash that's coming in and available to the farm operation, all the cash that's going out of the farm operation, and then how much is sticking around at the end of the day and helping us fight another year?

Paul Dietmann:

When someone's thinking about making a capital investment, I usually try to, if they can push that investment a little bit further down the road when they're ready to be certified. We've got people who are early in the transition years, they may be are investing in soil amendments that it takes a fair chunk of cash and it puts it into the ground and they're hoping that that's going to pay off three to five years down the road, which also can have an impact on the cashflow.

Paul Dietmann:

It's projecting cashflow early on in the process before the transition starts and being able to project when is cash going to come in, when is cash going to go out, and are we going to have months where

cash is short? I see too many farmers that don't do that, don't do that kind of planning ahead of time. And when they find out that they're going to be short of cash is when they're sitting down and they're paying bills and suddenly the farm checking account is empty and then they start thinking, "Well now what am I going to do? Well, am I going to put it on credit cards? Am I going to put off paying some bills and letting the vendor carry me for a month or two?"

Paul Dietmann:

It starts with the snowball effect of bad things happening. When someone's looking at making capital investments, again, I try to encourage them to push the capital investment down the road as much as they can. And if they can't make sure that they're projecting cashflow and making sure that they're never going to come up short or if they have a plan to get through it.

Erin Silva:

Well, those are some really good points. I know in the organic ag world there can be a lot of silver bullets dangled in front of farmers in terms of whether it be inputs or machinery. And certainly I think not to be too enticed by those silver bullets as with most things in life. If it's marketed as a silver bullet, it tends not to act that way and function that way. And really again be strategic in looking at where investments are most likely to have an impact in the longer term and really pay attention to, as you talk about Paul, maintaining that cash flow, particularly in the early years and learning more about where to more strategically make those investments as you talk to other farmers and get more experience in terms of how your land specifically may require different tillage equipment or different cultivation equipment or what you're going to settle on in terms of a crop rotation and what might be needed.

Erin Silva:

In terms of resources, you might point farmers too, Paul, in terms of getting some of this help in terms of strategizing financially through the transition period, are there specific places you send people to or are there specific services that computer offers?

Paul Dietmann:

Well, we've got a couple of really good resources that just recently appeared on the horizon and that one is the Organic Grain Compass, which of course you've been very involved with. That's an online tool that allows a farmer to plug in a lot of numbers, anticipate capital expenses and things like that and run out multi year multi crop rotations and see how it impacts the bottom line.

Paul Dietmann:

We've got a publication that came out as a companion to the Organic Grain Compass. The compass of courses is an online tool and then we have a [inaudible 00:25:59] publication. It's called Turning Grain into Dough. I wish I could take credit for that title, but that credit goes to Anders, but I think that's a really nice piece to back up the Organic Grain Compass.

Paul Dietmann:

There's getting to be more and more places where farmers can get information. The annual Organic Grain conference, which will be held in Madison in January has become a really popular thing with organic grain producers. It's a little different than the Moses Organic Farming Conference. It's more targeted too, people who are specifically interested in growing organic commodities. I think it's really

become an important place for organic grain producers to meet or transitioning organic grain producers to meet and share ideas and things.

Paul Dietmann:

There's a lot of field days that are being offered. There's more that are farming organically and so there's more places to go for mentoring and advice. It's really a good time to be going through the transition because every day there gets to be more support out there available.

Erin Silva:

Going back to, Anders, particularly with respect to marketing, you talked a little bit about marketing and some of the considerations that farmers must take into account throughout the transition, but can you talk a bit more about what are the options for marketing organic grain and what are some of the resources that may be available to farmers exploring different market opportunities?

Anders Gurda:

Yeah, absolutely. I think it's important to note first off just how different the organic market scape works and how different it looks. In conventional, you have every 20 miles, do you have an elevator that you can drop and get whatever spot price they're paying that day? Often times you've been going there for five or 50 years. In organic, it is not that same system, right? There aren't nearly as many brick and mortar trans loading facilities, grain cleaning facilities, elevators.

Anders Gurda:

Our company has invested pretty sizably in these so that we have them more equidistantly spread throughout the landscape, but they're still not there yet. Close "in the organic market" could be a 100 miles, 200 miles, 300 miles, or more and the premium can still justify that amount of diesel propping up your crop, puffing up the pay price that you're getting there. It's as far as accessing market, a lot more of the onus is also going to be on the farmer.

Anders Gurda:

I mentioned that in organic, oftentimes buyers will reach out to farmers because they are all looking for the some unlimited quantities of grain, but it is really in the best interest of the farmers themselves to call around because there is no CBOT, there is not a futures market in organic. It really is still the wild West and companies like ours are working to tame that a little bit, give it a little bit more professionalization and predictability, but it's still really is relatively unregulated.

Anders Gurda:

The USDA puts out a biweekly report that is basically populated by someone at the USDA getting on the phone, calling a dozen, two dozen people who are buying organic grain averaging those numbers and publishing them. It's a good range to be able to know generally what the prices might look like. But really what it comes down to is who you have access to, whether the pricing is [inaudible 00:29:19] and they do pickup or whether you're delivering is best for you to know who is in your region, who is buying?

Anders Gurda:

That might just be an elevator that is then going to be an aggregator cleaner, maybe drier, put things on rail, get into the coasts, or getting to the last operations in your region. It could also be, and oftentimes
2019-02-05-Episode 028-SARE Gurda Dietmann (Completed 02/06/20) Page 10 of 13
Transcript by [Rev.com](#)

that is probably a good idea to diversify beyond just commodity. It might be another local farmer. Maybe that's commodity, but it's within the neighborhood. Is with someone that you know and have a relationship within your network. I may be filling someone's grain bin if they didn't have a good year or if they're a livestock farmer, dairy farmer, they don't grow their own grain, you can do that.

Anders Gurda:

I mentioned things like rye for distilleries. A lot of farmers that I work with, they will sell us their grain, but they also have certain number of their acres. Could be 10, could be 500 that they are dedicating to other market streams as well. There's actually a farmer, a willd wave like Illinois who recommends a pure med approach. I really like this and I'll give him all the credit for it.

Anders Gurda:

The bottom, which makes up the bulk of that grain that you're growing, it's probably going to go to commodity market. That's your number two yellows, your feed grains. Relatively easy to grow, you know what you're doing, and that's going to make up the bulk by weight, by volume. And then that next tier up on this pyramid, on this triangle, little smaller, it's going to be a slight value add. That could be food grade, it could be clear highland, high pro, soybeans depending on the market, depending on the buyer nearby. And to get to that very top, that small triangle and that is going to make up a much smaller part by volume or by weight or by bushel, but it could make up a large part of your income streams. And that's more of that value end processing that's selling into local millers and brewers and distillers.

Anders Gurda:

It is probably the best idea to, once organic, to continue to diversify, as I mentioned, to access all of those different streams. And when it comes down just to selling your grain, again, I mentioned calling around, really it's going to be calling the same four or five people or eight or 10 people, however, many folks that are buying are in your region and getting their price when you're ready to buy. That's a good idea if you're organic to invest in storage, you do get a premium for holding on to that. You're also increasing your risk by holding on to that because you are on the hook for conditioning and keeping a condition.

Anders Gurda:

But you can definitely make a premium, oftentimes goes up a buck or more a bushel depending on how long you hang on to it. There's a lot of ideas thrown out there but it really is the smart and savvy thing to do a good landscape scan. See who's buying out there. And I know that O'Brien has been working on a map that I'm not sure when it will come out, but a map that shows who all the buyers are and where they are. But also Paul mentioned the Moses Conference. That's a great place to go because all the buyers were just sitting there right in a row at their little booths, come up and talk to us and ask questions and get what our pricing is and figure out what our contracts look like and get to know the buyers and you can shop around. And the best price will win. It's good to get out there and do that again.

Erin Silva:

Paul already suggested some resources that he's found valuable for transitioning organic farmers. Do you have any resources that you recommend to the farmers that you work with?

Anders Gurda:

Yeah. I think, thanks for asking. First I'll just do the same Pipeline promotion and that is that I run something called the Farm Profit Program here. It's a series of tools and resources and support so that folks can see the organic opportunity and then more easily access the organic opportunity. That looks like some financing models. We also work with a lot of crop insurance partners. We also have longterm off take agreement, so creative ways of marketing.

Anders Gurda:

But more to the point we have a new website that we actually just [inaudible 00:33:07] about two weeks ago. And that website has a lot of really good educational resources on them. A lot of them include O'Brien resources as well as a podcast we recorded with Paul, we're on the phone with, so a lot of these resources are recycled here and what we've done is, I think, created one of the best curated lists of resources that are out there.

Anders Gurda:

There are hundreds of things you can read and videos you can watch. Some are more helpful than others and so we've done is just to pick four or five of the most helpful in about a dozen or 15 different categories. The farmer can go to our website, put some quick information, then get an email with the link and then go to our website all free, all open source, and you can find a lot of what you would need as far as guides, fact sheets, podcasts, videos, other forms of media, and they're all right there.

Anders Gurda:

We also have our own podcast and videos and things, so Pipeline is one of the one stop shops you can go to, but Paul hit it on the head, I think, that getting out there and getting in person with people is going to be the most effective, but it's finding a neighbor. There are a lot of mentorship programs. I know O'Brien has a mentorship program in conjunction with Moses, as Paul mentioned. That actually experienced grain growers working with less experienced grain growers to get them up and running, going to field days or GreenUp great field days. The land connection has good ones. Moses has field base, PFI has field base. All these great organizations doing great work have on farm field days which are just as useful for the educational content as they are for having a borough next to someone who is going to end up becoming a mentor or challenging your thinking on something. Really trying to find a way to meet as many organic or transitioning farmers as possible, it's always going to be your best bet.

Erin Silva:

Paul and Anders, you guys have both given some great thoughts in what needs to be considered when transitioning to organic grain production. Do you have any other last thoughts and comments before we adjourn the podcast?

Anders Gurda:

Sure. I'll just huffier up that very simply. Organic is a good move. It's a savvy move to make and just it's important to note that, as I said before, not easy money is getting paid well for upping your management game, but it is a good move and we're happy to help in any way that we can to make that move.

Paul Dietmann:

Yeah. It's almost become cliché in organic that if you're only going into organic for the money, you're probably not going to be successful at it, but that's really true. You have to be committed to the methodology and committed to the farming practices and as Anders says, you'll get rewarded for the effort that you put in.

Canned voice:

Paul and Anders, thank you so much to the both of you. It's been an absolute pleasure to talk with the both of you today.

Anders Gurda:

Thank you.

Paul Dietmann:

That's been great. Thank you, Erin.

Canned voice:

Thank you for listening to Field, Lab, Earth. You'll find links to resources mentioned in this episode, including our webinar series on this topic in our show notes or on our website. If you have any questions, comments, or recommendations for show topics, please contact us at podcast@sciencesocieties.org or on Twitter [@fieldlabearth](https://twitter.com/fieldlabearth). If you'd like to hear more content like this, please subscribe and don't forget to rate and review us on Apple podcasts or anywhere else you find your podcasts if you like our show.

Canned voice:

This podcast is a joint production of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America. Special thanks to Lobo Loco for the use of their song, Spooky Castle on the intro and outro of our show. This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, US Department of Agriculture under award number 2018-38640-28416 through the North Central Region Sara Program under project number ENC 18-166.

Canned voice:

USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the US Department of Agriculture. Opinions and conclusions expressed by guests are their own and are not considered as those of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, Soil Science Society of America, its staff, its members, or its advertisers.