

Growing the eOrganic Community - Annual Report 2011



eOrganic, [the eXtension Community of Practice for organic agriculture](#), is now three years old and well on its way to becoming the national online source for science-based, practice-based, and NOP compliant organic information. This is our first annual report. Read on to learn about our accomplishments in 2011, and about the work we are doing in 2012.

Webinars and Broadcasts

Starting in late 2009, eOrganic started offering free web-based presentations, or "webinars." A webinar allows people from all over the world to hear a presentation, view the presentation slides, and type in questions - all while sitting at their computer. The presentation is recorded and available for viewing at any time from eOrganic's YouTube channel. To date, eOrganic has delivered more than 50 webinars attended by over 4,500 attendees.

In 2011, eOrganic held 20 webinars attended by a total of 2,313 participants. The average number of attendees per webinar was 116, up from 80 attendees in 2010 (and mean attendance in 2012 is 143!)

Popular Webinars in 2011

- GMO Contamination: What's an Organic Farmer To Do? Jim Riddle, University of Minnesota - [Watch](#)
- The Evolution, Status and Future of Organic To-Till in the Northeast US. William Curran, Penn State University, Steven Mirsky, USDA-ARS, and Bill Mason, Mason's Heritage Farm - [Watch](#)
- A Novel Strategy for Soil-borne Disease Management. Carol Shennan, University of California-Santa Cruz and David Butler, University of Tennessee-Knoxville - [Watch](#)
- Starting Up Small Scale Organic Hops Production. Rob Serrine, Michigan State University - [Watch](#)
- Reduced Tillage in Organic Vegetable Production. Helen Atthowe - [Watch](#)
- Shades of Green Dairy Farm Calculator. Charles Benbrook, The Organic Center - [Watch](#)
- Using Small Grains as Forages on Your Organic Dairy. Heather Darby, University of Vermont Extension - [Watch](#)
- Fly Management in the Organic Dairy Pasture. Donald Rutz and Keith Waldron, NYS IPM Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension - [Watch](#)
- Stockpiling Forages to Extend the Grazing Season on Your Organic Dairy. Laura Paine, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection - [Watch](#)

eOrganic is now hosting "broadcasts." A broadcast is a webinar of a live presentation delivered at an in-person conference. In 2011, eOrganic broadcast:

- The USDA ERS Organic Farming Systems Conference - [Watch](#)
- Dryland Organic Agriculture Symposium from the Washington Tilth Conference - [Watch](#)
- NOFA-NY's Organic Dairy and Field Crop Conference - [Watch](#)

Webinar Evaluation

An evaluation is sent to participants immediately following each webinar to assess whether or not the participants liked the quality, utility, and accessibility of the webinar, and whether they would recommend the webinar to others. For select webinars, an impact survey is sent the following winter to evaluate how the participant's practices or recommendations changed as the result of attending the webinar. Read eOrganic's complete evaluation report at <http://eorganic.info/evaluation>.

Eighty percent of participants in eOrganic dairy webinars delivered between September 2010 and August 2011 said they had a better understanding of the topic addressed and 65% said they would make changes to their farming practices or how they advise farmers as the result of their participation in the webinar. Specifically, 78% of respondents said they better understand the inter-relationships between pasture management, feeding, and animal behavior as a result of the webinar; 88% learned how to avoid problems in their grazing system during the webinar; 44% will change the way they feed concentrates to their cows during the non-grazing season; and 85% said they will add grains into their livestock operation or change how they advise farmers based on what they learned at the webinar.

Farmer Feedback

“I just wanted to say that I really love your webinars. They are the perfect way to learn- I don't have to take time off the farm to travel, if the information is not applicable, I can leave, and the topics are pertinent. Today was perfect -- a cold, rainy day here -- and I got to come in for an hour and a half, have a cup of coffee, and watch the webinar. Right after the webinar on pastures, I was inspired to head back out and make some changes to my grazing system. Thanks for inspiring and informing me!”

“The kind of research reported in the webinar provides very practical answers that are pertinent to dairy farmers with small and mid-size operations. I see that some of these findings might also apply to beef cattle, sheep, and goat producers. It is what researchers in Land Grant Universities should be doing and should be rewarded for doing.”

“Thank you very much for providing this great service. As a busy farmer, I find it very difficult to attend on farm trainings. Webinars are great because it the experts are able to come to me.”

“I just want to thank you for the FABULOUS webinars! What an amazing resource. I hate to miss any of them. I guess I date myself by saying this, but I think back to not too long ago when farmers would ask us technical questions and there was no one to turn to for help. In fact, Extension would roll their eyes and make derogatory comments about organic. To have this great resource created by Extension is phenomenal. The webinar technology is working GREAT, and the research and information is invaluable. THANK YOU!”

Looking Ahead to Webinars in 2012

In early 2012 eOrganic hosted webinars on ecological farm design, organic apple production, participatory on-farm research, weed management, and profit management. In addition, eOrganic has presented more live conference broadcasts including Jim Riddle's presentation "Why Eat Organic?" at the Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism and Organic Conference, 3 presentations on organic grains and organic transitions from the Carolina Organic Conference, and 6 workshops from the Organic Seed Grower's Conference in Washington. 284 people attended Jim Riddle's presentation and 225 attended the seed workshops. More

webinars are planned through the end of March, including a series on cover crops and webinars on organic management of stink bugs and fire blight of apple and pear. Find our webinar schedule at <http://www.extension.org/pages/25242/webinars-by-eorganic>. Sign up to give a webinar next fall or winter by contacting Alice Formiga at formigaa@hort.oregonstate.edu.

eOrganic Articles

All of eOrganic's 240+ published articles can be found at http://www.extension.org/organic_production. Before publication, they are subject to two anonymous (peer) reviews and National Organic Program compliance review.

Notable articles published in 2011:

- [Biology and Management of Pickleworm and Melonworm in Organic Cucurbit Production Systems](#) Geoff Zehnder, Clemson University
- [Biology and Management of Aphids in Organic Cucurbit Production Systems](#) by Mary Barbercheck, Penn State
- [Stink Bug Management Using Trap Crops in Organic Farming](#), by Russell Mizell, University of Florida

eOrganic Videos

Find eOrganic's 212 videos on eXtension at <http://www.extension.org/pages/18726> and on the [eOrganic YouTube channel](#), where we have more than 850 subscribers and over 655,000 views.

New videos published in 2011 include:

- Why we are Studying Blueberry Roots. Luis Valenzuela-Estrada, Oregon State University. Filmed by John McQueen, Oregon State University - [Watch](#)
- Organic Blueberry Research at Oregon State University. Bernadine Strik, Oregon State University. Filmed by John McQueen, Oregon State University - [Watch](#)
- Innovations on an Organic Dairy: "The Fly Barrel". Kevin Jahnke. Filmed by Harriet Behar, Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Education Service - [Watch](#)

Looking Ahead to Video Capture Training 2012

eOrganic is offering its first online video capture training course in March-April 2012! Participants will learn the basics of video planning, storyboarding, filming and production. The course will provide the students with the skills they need to deliver their video project, from writing scripts, storyboards and production plans, to filming basics. Once students complete the course, they will submit their storyboard, clips, and still images to the eOrganic staff. The staff will edit the materials into a video, run it through eOrganic's review process, and publish it to YouTube and eOrganic. If you are a member of a project working with eOrganic and interested in participating in this course, sign up with Lane Selman, eOrganic's video coordinator, at [laneselman \[at\] gmail \[dot\] com](mailto:laneselman@gmail.com). eOrganic hopes to offer this course to additional eOrganic members in the future.

Online Courses 2012

eOrganic is gearing up to offer online courses via eXtension's Moodle campus at <http://campus.extension.org>. eXtension uses Moodle for its online course development. Moodle or “Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment” is a popular, free, open-source software platform used by than 1.2 million educators in 206 countries to offer more than 3 million courses (<http://moodle.org/stats>).

The Organic Seed Alliance created an [Organic Seed Production Course](#), which is currently undergoing eOrganic's peer and NOP compliance review process. Organic Seed Production is a self-directed course designed for producers with some seed production experience, seed industry professionals, and extension professionals. This course provides practical field-based knowledge and current research on organic seed production practices. It covers the fundamentals of seed production for onions, beets and chard, brassicas, carrots, and wet-seeded crops. It also addresses climatic requirements for seed crops, important diseases, and seed quality.

The eOrganic Dairy Team received an OREI grant to develop organic dairy production courses. The introductory course will be available through eOrganic this fall, and the advanced course in summer 2013. Service providers who complete the courses will be eligible to receive Continuing Education Credit, and the courses will also be used in curricula of emerging academic organic dairy programs, educating undergraduates and thereby a new generation of organic dairy farmers and service providers.

The two online, asynchronous courses include: 1) An Introduction to Organic Dairy Production Systems, and 2) Advanced Organic Dairy Production. The courses are being designed as content modules; each module follows a particular topic or theme that will be accompanied by a narrated PowerPoint to serve as the learning guide. In addition, each module will contain an outline of course content and learning objectives, at least one webinar, a video clip, a reading assignment, study questions, a homework assignment and a content assessment survey. At the conclusion of each module, the participant will be asked to complete an on-line quiz to evaluate mastery of the material, as well as a content assessment survey to establish if the material was relevant and the platform was user-friendly.

eOrganic Engagement

Ask-an-Expert

The Ask-an-Expert service is a way for our stakeholders to get an answer - about anything - from Land Grant University (LGU) and Extension professionals through eXtension.org. Ask your question at <http://www.extension.org/ask> -- you can even submit an image to help with a diagnosis.

eOrganic provides oversight of all questions tagged with "organic production" within the Ask-an-Expert system. Our staff finds an answer by either answering the question directly or by soliciting the best response possible from our eOrganic members. In 2011, community members answered 214 questions, and more than 1,000 organic agriculture questions have been answered through the service since its inception in 2007.

eOrganic and Social Media

eOrganic remains committed to interacting with people through social networking services. We maintain a Twitter account (http://www.twitter.com/eorganic_cp), a Facebook Page (<http://www.facebook.com/eorganic>), and a YouTube account (<http://www.youtube.com/user/eorganic>). 2011 has brought steady growth in our fans, followers, and subscribers. Please visit us in one of those spaces to learn more about our work there.

eOrganic Outreach to Stakeholders and Community Members

eOrganic staffed booths at annual conference sponsored by EcoFarm, PASA, and MOSES in 2011 to get the word out to farmers and others about eOrganic's public content. The eOrganic dairy team promoted eOrganic dairy content with booths/presentations at a variety of events in Vermont and the NOFA-NY Organic Dairy and Field Crop Conference, from which a presentation by Heather Darby and Cindy Daley was broadcast nationally.

Alex Stone and Danielle Treadwell gave a workshop and presentations about eOrganic the American Society for Horticultural Science meetings in September, 2011 and Alex gave a workshop and poster on eOrganic at the American Society for Agronomy/Soil Science Society of American meetings in October. John McQueen and Alice Formiga gave a webinar and a presentation through eXtension about eOrganic's evaluation program. Alice Formiga and Jim Riddle conducted a workshop about eOrganic for faculty at the University of Minnesota St. Paul, and Michelle Wander gave a presentation about eOrganic at an organic training day at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock.

Looking Ahead to Outreach 2012

Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant will coordinate the eOrganic booth at the Organic Farming Conference this week in Wisconsin. If you will be there, stop by eOrganic's booth to say hello (and volunteer to staff it for a few hours this or next year)! If you go to an organic farming conference, consider bringing eOrganic outreach materials or giving a presentation. Contact Alice Formiga at formigaa@hort.oregonstate.edu for more information on how to get involved with eOrganic outreach.

Alex Stone, Sally Miller and Meg McGrath will lead a workshop on eOrganic and how to get involved at the International IPM Symposium in Memphis in March. Contact Alex Stone at stonea@hort.oregonstate.edu if you will be attending that meeting and would like to participate in the workshop. eOrganic will participate in an eXtension workshop at the ASHS meetings in Miami this summer, and will have a presence at ASA/CSSA/SSSA this fall. If you would like to bring eOrganic to your next professional society meeting contact Alex Stone.

eOrganic Staff

eOrganic is supported by a talented group of part-time staff.

Micaela Colley (Organic Seed Alliance) leads the Plant Breeding and Seeds Groups.

Alice Formiga (Oregon State University) coordinates membership, webinars, evaluation, article review for most content and project groups, and assists with outreach and grant proposal support.

Debra Heleba (University of Vermont) coordinates the Dairy Group providing support for content development, review, outreach, webinars, and broadcasts.

Roger Leigh (Oregon State University) is the programmer for the eOrganic.info website and eOrganic project websites and manages the technical link to www.extension.org.

Betty Marose (USDA-ARS Beltsville) coordinates the Grains Group.

John McQueen (Oregon State University) handles social media and provides technical support, management, and post-production for webinars, broadcasts, and the eOrganic.info and eOrganic project websites.

Jim Riddle (University of Minnesota) leads the Certification Group and reviews eOrganic publications for NOP compliance.

Lane Selman (Oregon State University) provides video support and coordinates the video production class.

Ed Zaborski (University of Illinois) coordinates Ask-an-Expert for the eOrganic community, coordinates the Soils Group, and provides final article copyediting.

eOrganic Membership Survey

As part of our effort to move eOrganic forward we sent a survey to 189 active eOrganic members to determine how eOrganic could improve existing services and plan for the future in fall 2011. Fifty-five (29%) members responded. The survey results were compiled and discussed by eOrganic leadership team members and staff at a 3-day planning meeting in winter 2011. Read the full report at <http://eorganic.info/membersurvey2011>. We learned that:

- Member strongly reaffirmed eOrganic's core mission of education and communication.
- Members consistently indicated that eOrganic is unique in its mission and actions.
- The staff of eOrganic is highly valued and critical to the success of the program.
- eOrganic's relationship with eXtension provides the group credibility and visibility.
- The technology services eOrganic is providing to research and outreach groups are robust and appreciated.

While there was strong support for all eOrganic activities, members offered valuable ideas to help eOrganic improve and grow. Priorities for the next five years were to:

- **Expand and Strengthen Educational Program Offerings.** Members believed eOrganic was successful in sharing research outcomes through the development of peer-reviewed educational materials, but there remains a need for more advanced materials for practitioners as well as new short courses for clientele groups such as certification agencies, food service providers, and other participants of the organic industry.
- **Increase Engagement.** eOrganic's networking role was cited as one of the most important services the program provides. However, members noted that civic engagement, engagement of new and existing members, and engagement with community partners such as ATTRA and SARE could be enhanced with a consistent message and effective marketing strategy.
- **Secure Long Term Funding.** eOrganic's ability to secure funding for core activities to support the community of practice was identified as one of its most important successes. In particular, the importance of including eOrganic language in the NIFA Organic Program RFA was noted. The availability of this funding mechanism in the future will be dependent on future federal legislation.
- **Improve the eOrganic.info Website.** eOrganic has been an early adopter of new technology since its inception. While members value the technological support and functions of eOrganic webinars, videos, and project management websites, they also cited some functions lack simplicity and can be difficult to use. Members believed simplifying the user interface of the website, improving the search engine, and improving access to tech support after hours would increase member use.

Many factors about our industry and workplaces have changed in the past few years, and these changes necessitate a more systematic, efficient approach to meeting client needs that includes web-based and nationally coordinated programming. Suggestions from eOrganic members and Stakeholder Advisory Committee, community partners, and end users will shape the course of eOrganic for the next five years.

Get Involved with eOrganic

Contribute Content to eOrganic

eOrganic is a Community of Practice, which means it relies on community members like you to help it grow and better serve our farmer and agricultural professional stakeholders by developing and delivering critical and timely resources. eOrganic wants YOU to write an article, shoot a video, deliver a webinar, or develop and teach an online course. All of our articles and videos undergo NOP compliance and peer review before publication. Learn about our editorial policies at <http://eorganic.info/node/155>. Contact Alice Formiga at formigaa@hort.oregonstate.edu for more information on how to contribute content to eOrganic.

Write eOrganic into Your Next Grant Proposal

For complete information on the diverse opportunities eOrganic offers project groups and how to write eOrganic into your proposal, visit <http://eOrganic.info/proposal>. It isn't too late to write eOrganic into a 2012 OREI, and we can also partner with you on regional IPM, AFRI, SARE, NRCS-CIG and proposals to other funding sources.

eOrganic can offer your project:

- Web conferencing
- Webinars and webinar series to stakeholders and community members
- Publication consultation, editing, and peer and NOP compliance review
- Video capture training, editing, review, and posting to the web
- Online course development and support
- Outreach for your articles, videos and webinars to our established network of farmers, extension personnel, ag professionals, and researchers from around the country and the globe - at conferences and through our newsletters and social networking activities
- Project workspace at eOrganic.info to facilitate project communication and management
- Project websites that are easily managed by your project members from eOrganic.info (see <http://eorganic.info/novic>)
- Ask-an-Expert support