

# Tools for Transition



## Update

Fall/Winter 2014

### BEGINNING FARMER TRANSITIONS INTO ORGANIC PROCESSING



Vitaly Brukhman embodies the spirit of a true entrepreneur - full of energy and enthusiasm for his start-up organic processing business called Bubbly Jen's Farm or BJF. Brukhman's goal is to create a branded line of naturally fermented, locally produced, organic foods and specialty beverages targeted at ethnic consumer markets. Brukhman's desire to master natural fermentation originates from the recipes he enjoyed as a child growing up in Moldova, studying Russian, and traveling and working in Ukraine and Belarus.

**Getting Started.** Brukhman left his information technology job in 2012 to grow and market organic fruits and vegetables on a two-acre farmstead. His goal was to process his crops into naturally fermented products. Since 2012, however, his ideas have evolved as has his knowledge of organic production. In 2013 Brukhman graduated from a beginning farmer program sponsored by the National Organic Farming Association. In 2014 he participated in several on-line courses through the Organic Processing Institute and met with two dozen restaurant chefs, retail grocers, processors, farmers, and potential consumers to network and learn.

**Decision to Transition.** Brukhman anticipated that the transition to organic would be a fairly easy one since the two acres of land he purchased in 2012 had not been farmed for over 10 years.

He planted his first crop of radishes, garlic, and mustard greens in 2013. When meeting with a certifier in 2014 however, Brukhman was told that he'd violated several organic rules. Consequently, his land no longer qualifies for immediate certification; he will have to transition the land for three years before becoming certified. "At this point, I decided that I might be better off purchasing organic crops from other farmers to process while transitioning my own land," Brukhman says. That's when his processing business moved to the front burner.

**Transition Strategies.** Brukhman will continue to hone his processing skills and recipes by renting kitchen space at a certified commercial kitchen during the winter of 2014-2015. During this time he plans to complete the Food Safety Manager Program (required for food handling). Brukhman will purchase needed inputs and distribute the final processed products for taste-testing and sampling to friends, neighbors, and potential retail buyers. By spring of 2015, he hopes to have secured commercial kitchen space and organic handlers certification. If all goes well, he will begin processing recipe-tested naturally fermented, certified organic sauerkraut, pickles, and tomatoes by fall 2015.

Brukhman's modest sales goals include marketing 2,200 pints of product direct-to-consumers at farmers markets and fairs as well as independent specialty retail stores that cater to Russian and Japanese communities.

### For More Information:

Read more about Brukhman's transition experience online:  
<http://eorganic.info/toolsfortransition/farmers>.

*The Tools for Transition Project is funded by USDA NIFA Grant MIN-14-G12. Project partners are the University of Minnesota's Department of Applied Economics, Center for Farm Financial Management, and Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture; the Minnesota Colleges and Universities' Farm Business Management Program, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.*



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

National Institute  
of Food and  
Agriculture

# Tools For Transition *Update* Continued



## Mark Your Calendars for Winter TFT Workshop!

All *Tools for Transition* Project participants are invited to attend “Who’s Transitioning and How in MN” at 8:00 am on Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup> as part of the annual Minnesota Organic Conference. Research results and financial analysis (based four years of survey and financial data from your farms) will be shared. You won’t want to miss it!

Reimbursements of up to \$200/farm (mileage and one-night’s hotel stay) are available to those who attend the Saturday morning workshop. **You must check with Gigi DiGiacomo at the workshop** and to obtain reimbursement forms as there is no registration required for the workshop itself. Be sure to save a receipt for your hotel – you will need to submit this along with the form to obtain a reimbursement.

Contact Gigi DiGiacomo with questions: 612-624-7258 or [gigid@umn.edu](mailto:gigid@umn.edu).

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## Reimbursements Available to TFT Participants for Minnesota Organic Conference Registration

The 2015 Minnesota Organic Conference (MOC) is scheduled for January 9-10 in St. Cloud at the River’s Edge Convention Center. **All *Tools for Transition* (TFT) participants qualify for \$50/farm to help defray conference registration fees.** MOC conference registration is \$100 for one day or \$125 for two days (if you register before December 26<sup>th</sup>).

**MOC registration is available online at [www.mda.state.mn.us/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/organic) or by mail (contact MDA at 651-201-6012 for a registration form).**

To qualify for the \$50 reimbursement, register for the conference, pay the registration fees, and submit a completed reimbursement form (enclosed) along with a receipt for your registration by mail to Gigi DiGiacomo, 218H Ruttan Hall, 1994 Buford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108 or by email at [gigid@umn.edu](mailto:gigid@umn.edu).

If you are planning to stay overnight in St. Cloud to attend the conference, we recommend making reservations soon! The Best Western Kelly Inn hotel has reserved a block of rooms for the “Minnesota Organic Conference” through December 9<sup>th</sup>. The block room rate is \$95.52 and is reimbursable if you attend the TFT workshop on Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup> (see announcement above).

**Best Western reservations: 320-253-0606.**

Contact Gigi DiGiacomo with additional questions at: 612-624-7258 or at [gigid@umn.edu](mailto:gigid@umn.edu).

See you there!