



Enhancing Value, Improving Marketability

Since 1903

## MISSION STATEMENT

Minnesota Crop Improvement Association is an organization dedicated to improving the productivity, profitability and competitive position of producers, processors and distributors of agricultural products by providing services to enable them to provide high-quality products to Minnesota, the United States and the World.

## BACKGROUND

Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA), through its diverse program offerings, provides certification and quality assurance services to a wide range of agricultural and food product producers and handlers. MCIA also provides an array of customized quality assurance services such as field inspections, seed and grain facility evaluations, as well as other third party audit and on-site evaluations.

MCIA is a member of the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA). AOSCA operates under an MOU with the USDA-AMS for seed certification in the US and audits its member agencies for compliance with Federal Seed Act requirements. Through its member agencies, AOSCA also provides trait stewardship, non-approved trait monitoring and other quality assurance services to assist the seed industry in meeting compliance requirements.

MCIA is a 501(c)(5) not-for-profit association funded by the fees it charges for the services it provides. MCIA operates from its offices on the St. Paul Campus of the University of Minnesota. MCIA serves its over 500 members with 13 full-time employees including three field supervisors located across the state. In addition, MCIA utilizes nearly 40 part-time employees to assist with field inspections and other seasonal work. MCIA's well-trained staff performs inspections and evaluations according to Association policies and procedures designed to protect the program's integrity, avoid conflicts of interest and ensure proper certification decisions. MCIA is governed by an 11 member Board of Directors elected from its membership.

## OFFICIAL RECOGNITIONS/AFFILIATIONS

### State of Minnesota:

- State Seed Certifying Agency
- Noxious Weed Free Forage and Mulch Certifying Agency

### USDA:

- OECD Seed Certifying Agency
- National Organic Program Accredited Certifying Agency

MCIA interacts and cooperates with numerous seed and other agricultural organizations on a regular basis.

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

**Certification Services** - MCIA offers certification services for seeds and other agricultural products through several certification programs. MCIA certification programs have been developed in cooperation with state, U.S and international organizations to enhance the marketability of products locally and around the world. All MCIA programs operate according to policies and procedures designed to ensure that defined standards have been met through a thorough non-biased certification process. Products certified by MCIA include field crop and turf seed, sod, native plant seeds, noxious weed seed free forage and mulch, identity-preserved grains for specialty grain markets as well as numerous organic crops, livestock and food products.

**Field Inspection Services** - MCIA's experienced field inspection team inspects seed, grain, forage, straw and sod production. MCIA's field inspection services are unique in their ability to focus on varietal purity attributes of crops. MCIA annually employs up to 40 inspectors to provide field inspection and on-site assessment services to clients throughout the state. MCIA has the capability of delivering consistent inspection services statewide and even beyond the state's borders through its partnerships with other AOSCA agencies.

**Third Party Audits** - MCIA offers third party auditing services to producers, processors, and buyers of seed, grain and other agricultural products. MCIA can tailor an audit program to meet internal monitoring needs and satisfy regulatory third party verification requirements.

### **On-site Evaluations**

MCIA's field staff covers the entire state of Minnesota delivering on-site inspection and verification services to the agricultural industry customized to meet customer and regulatory compliance requirements. MCIA performs a variety of evaluation services including:

- Trait stewardship requirement assessments
- Compliance monitoring of non-approved traits
- Carbon credit verifications
- Processing facility evaluations

## **KEY PERSONNEL**

### **Ben Lang, President/CEO**

Ben has over 30 years experience in agricultural certification and quality assurance work including field inspection, seed analysis, organic inspections, trait compliance auditing and agricultural seed and food processing facility audits. He has led the development of numerous certification and quality assurance programs for MCIA. Ben has performed ISO Guide 65 training workshops to AOSCA members and to APHIS-BRS personnel. His professional training includes successful completion of ISO 9001-2000 Lead Auditor Training, IOIA Organic Inspector Training, National Seed Health System Auditor Training as well as numerous seed certification related training programs. Ben holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy from the University of Minnesota.

### **Jim Boots, Manager, Special Services**

Jim is responsible for new program development and promotion as well as serving as a field supervisor for MCIA. Jim has been involved in the development and implementation of numerous certification and quality assurance programs for MCIA. He has nearly 30 years of field inspection experience including seed, grain, sod and other crops. He has performed audits and inspections for OECD field inspection accreditation, IRM trait compliance, bio-tech event containment, and organic certification of producers and processors. Jim's professional training includes ISO 9001-2000 Lead Auditor Training, IOIA and ACA Organic Inspector Training, and numerous seed certification related training programs. Jim holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy from South Dakota State University.