

MCIA Hosts 2023 AOSCA Annual Meeting

BY FAWAD SHAH, MCIA PRESIDENT/CEO

Delegates from the US, Canada, and New Zealand gathered at the Hyatt Regency in Bloomington, Minnesota to attend the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) 2023 Annual Meeting, held June 4–7. After waiting for thirty-plus years, the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association had the privilege and honor to host this year’s event.

The vested members of AOSCA meet annually to review organization activities and identify and take on new initiatives, as well as update and revise seed certification standards. Members participate in various committee meetings, hear reports from affiliate organizations, and enjoy educational presentations.

The official meeting kicked off with a welcome from Commissioner Thom Petersen, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). He highlighted the economic impact of agriculture, stating that Minnesota has 26 million acres of farmland, 51 percent of its total land area, with 68,000 farms. Among states, Minnesota ranks fifth both in total agricultural production (\$16.7 billion) and crop production (\$8.85 billion), and it exports nearly \$9 billion in sales.

In addition, Commissioner Petersen noted Minnesota is home to several large ag-based businesses and agricultural cooperatives. These entities offer not only economic benefits to the state but also provide reliable employment opportunities. He also commented on the partnership between MDA and MCIA and its significance in sustaining the integrity of the state’s seed industry.

At the evening banquet, Tom Slunecka, Chief Executive Officer of the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association and Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotional Council (MSRPC), spoke to the group. Minnesota ranks third in national soybean production and is a substantial player in soybean exports to China and other nations. He highlighted some of their current projects. Most notably, is their financial support for soybean research at the University of Minnesota. Which Includes the development of specialty high oleic and low linolenic soybean varieties.



PHOTO: MCIA

Speaking at the 2023 AOSCA Annual Meeting in Bloomington, Minnesota: Sarah Wilbanks, PhD, CEO, Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies; Tom Slunecka, CEO, Minnesota Soybean Growers Association and Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council; Thom Petersen, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Tom noted the MSRPC effort to spearhead a remarkable public-private partnership to establish the Ag Innovation Campus near Crookston. The campus will serve as a hub for agricultural innovations and development of novel products, fostering value-added agriculture.

He also mentioned MCIA’s pivotal role in establishing the US Identity Preserved Program through Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance. MCIA staff members inspect and audit participating grain handling facilities in Minnesota and neighboring states. Upon meeting the program’s rigorous requirements, these companies can use the US IP mark when exporting Identity Preserved grain to international customers and selling in domestic markets.

Educational sessions were also part of the meeting agenda. Attendees heard from Kim Bremmer of Ag Inspirations. Her presentation encouraged those present to be leaders and advocates for agriculture in their communities and states. Terry Hollifield of the Georgia Crop Improvement Association addressed the topic of “Building a Successful Certification Agency.” Terry noted the importance of active leadership, building relationships with your clients and others important to your organization, and seeking out new opportunities.

Meeting delegates also had some time to explore around the Twin Cities. They enjoyed various activities, including a Twins game, golf, a boat ride on the Mississippi River, a visit to the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, and shopping at the Mall of America.

A great venue, beautiful weather, and delicious food, along with an interesting and engaging agenda, made this year’s meeting a huge success. MCIA staff members deserve to feel proud of all the hard work they contributed before and during the meeting toward the exceptional execution of this event.

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PHOTO: MCIA

Roger Wippler, Fawad Shah, and Jody Prudhomme holding, respectively, Honorary Member, Excellence in Innovation, and Certificate of Service awards.

AOSCA Honors MCIA with Three Awards

At AOSCA's 2023 Annual Meeting, held in Bloomington, Minnesota Crop Improvement Association was recognized in a big way. AOSCA established a new award to recognize its members for their service in the seed certification space. One of the inaugural recipients of that award is MCIA's very own Administrative and Certification Manager Jody Prudhomme. She was awarded a Certificate of Service, "in recognition of twenty-five years of dedicated service, loyalty, and commitment to AOSCA and the seed industry." Jody's knowledge, experience, and ability to work with colleagues and clients is exemplary. She has a great track record for ensuring the integrity of seed certification standards across the board, for all crops certified by MCIA.

In addition, AOSCA established the Excellence in Innovation Award. The criteria for consideration included, a) Use a novel approach to meet a challenge in the seed industry, b) Develop a unique way to enhance an AOSCA program, c) Implement a new technique with an AOSCA Program, and d) Foster growth of seed certification or a related program. MCIA is the first recipient of this prestigious award. The recognition is a testament to MCIA's diverse array of seed certification and third-party inspection and audit services, as well as its Capacity Building Initiative, which educates and trains seed professionals in other nations. MCIA staff also teach an undergraduate class through the University of Minnesota's Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics. No other agency offers such formal education.

Furthermore, AOSCA recognized MCIA Foundation Seed Services Manager Roger Wippler with its Honorary Member award. Roger's whole family joined him upon the receipt of this award, which was a complete surprise to him. About four years ago, Roger's spouse and then MCIA General Manager, Cindy Wippler, was recognized as an AOSCA Honorary Member for her service to seed certifying agencies, a first in the history of AOSCA for a woman. With nearly seven decades of dedicated service to seed certification between them, Cindy and Roger Wippler truly deserve the recognition.

Besides the honor and joy of hosting the event, these awards made this year's AOSCA Annual Meeting the most memorable in the history of MCIA.

Thank You AOSCA Annual Meeting Sponsors!

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the sponsors listed below for their generous support of the 2023 AOSCA Annual Meeting. Your contributions played a crucial role in the success of this event. Delegates from national and international seed certifying agencies gathered to review and revise seed certification standards, share ideas, foster collaboration, and inspire one another. Your sponsorship helped create an environment where these connections could flourish and promote professionalism in support of the production, identification, distribution, and promotion of certified seed. On behalf of AOSCA, the MCIA staff, and all attendees: **Thank you for your financial support and for making the 2023 AOSCA Annual Meeting a resounding success!**

—Fawad Shah, President and CEO,
Minnesota Crop Improvement Association

Platinum Sponsor: Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council. **Gold Sponsors:** Albert Lea Seed House, Minnesota Turf Seed Council. **Silver Sponsors:** Anchor Paper Company; Bayer-WestBred; Forever Green Initiative; Grain Millers, Inc.; KWS Seeds, LLC. **Bronze Sponsors:** MayerSeedLine, Minnesota AgriGrowth Council, Minnesota Cultivated Wild Rice Council, Minnesota Wheat Research and Promotion Council, Western Integrated Seed, Inc.

PHOTO GALLERY: 2023 AOSCA Annual Meeting



PHOTOS: MCIA

TOP: Billy Skaggs, incoming AOSCA President; Andrew Altishin, outgoing AOSCA President; Commissioner Ken Bertsch, North Dakota State Seed Department. BOTTOM: 2023 AOSCA Annual Meeting delegates.

Salute to Johnson and Mohr

MCIA salutes Paula Mohr and Andrea Johnson upon their well-earned retirements. Both are veteran journalists who have reported extensively about agriculture in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest, including many articles about the activities of MCIA and the experiences and accomplishments of MCIA's members. Paula Mohr retired from her position as editor of *The Farmer* magazine last winter. Andrea Johnson retired from her position as a reporter for the *Minnesota Farm Guide/Farm and Ranch Guide* this spring. In recognition of their service to agriculture and support for MCIA, MCIA honored both women with the Honorary Premier Seed Grower award; Mohr in 2020 and Johnson in 2022.



PHOTO COURTESY ANDREA JOHNSON

PHOTO: MCIA

Journalists Andrea Johnson and Paula Mohr.

Check Your Email

We are in the preliminary stages of a plan to communicate with MCIA members more efficiently while lowering our operating costs. Instead of delivering printed copies by mail, our plan is to send members an email notification when our quarterly newsletter, the *Minnesota Seed Grower*, and our monthly bulletin, *Samplings*, are published digitally. Members will then have the option to read the publications online or download them. We expect to complete this transition later this year. Therefore, now is a good time to inform MCIA if your email address or any other contact information has changed. Send your contact updates (email address, telephone number, etc.) to Selena Nelson at selena.nelson@mncia.org. It is important that we continue to provide members with information about MCIA programs and services in the most effective way possible.

Prepare for the State Fair

Save your certified seed samples for the Minnesota State Fair! Entry closing date for farm crops will be Wednesday, August 9. (The new corn closing date is Thursday, August 31.)

The Farm Crops—Divisions, Rules & Premiums reference, registration, and other competition details can be found online at <https://www.mnstatefair.org/competitions/ag-hort-bee/farm-crops>. For further information, please contact competition@mncifair.org or 651-288-4417 or roger.wippler@mncia.org.

Chairman's View

Brad Barth, MCIA Board Chair



Hello from Northern Minnesota!

Every year we seem to be surprised by the weather and how it acts. So far, this year is no exception. Northern Minnesota had quite a bit of snow last winter and we thought it would be a terrible late and wet, sloppy spring.

But once again Mother Nature has proven us wrong. The temps went from 30 degrees to 60s and 70s so fast that we barely had time to take off our jackets. The snow melted fast, and the runoff was gone seemingly overnight.

All-in-all, the crops in northern Minnesota went into the ground nicely and almost timely. There are the typical pockets of "too dry" and areas of "too wet," but on average it is starting out to be a good year.

Whatever the weather in your part of the state just wait a little bit and it will change—right?

After a successful spring seeding and a nice timely rain or two, my bride and I took a little trip to Kansas to pick up a piece of equipment. It is always fun to travel a little and see agriculture in areas other than our own. To me, it does not matter what state it is, a field green with a new crop and a farmyard as a backdrop is always a beautiful sight.

On the way back from our little Kansas adventure we stopped in the Twin Cities to spend a couple of days at the annual Association of Official Seed Certifying Agency's (AOSCA) meeting in Bloomington. This meeting comprises all the crop certifying agencies from throughout the US and is held in a different state each year. This year happened to be Minnesota's turn. As the hosting state agency, MCIA cooperated with the AOSCA staff to select a hotel venue, obtain meeting sponsors, and suggest speakers and activities, among a host of other details.

I spent a part of two days at this meeting, and I must say that our team at MCIA did a phenomenal job of putting this together. As the board chairman, my job was to mingle and visit with as many attendees as possible, which is a job well suited for a jabber jaw like me. I will not go into detail as I am sure it will be covered elsewhere in this newsletter. Suffice it to say that the speakers were excellent, and I thoroughly enjoyed their presentations.

My heartfelt thanks to all the sponsors and to all the volunteers from the MCIA staff for their work to put together and execute this fantastic meeting. I will again leave it to others to report on the awards presented, but I just wanted to make a point of saying that I was super proud to see MCIA and the staff be recognized for their great efforts.

Field Notes

Kris Folland, Field Services Manager



The MCIA Field Services staff and field inspection team is well positioned geographically and well trained in all areas of field inspections. One of the largest parts of the MCIA field inspection program, outside of certification, is the “Field Inspect Only” program. These field inspections are conducted according to the applicant’s

requirements. Used primarily by large private seed and genetics companies, these inspections are often based on certification and/or company standards for varietal purity, isolation, and other field specifications.

MCIA field staff has decades of experience matching variety descriptions and applying purity standards as high as 100 percent. Documenting exact varietal descriptions and offtypes found can be another valuable tool for seed companies and producers. The field staff eagerly conducts field reporting on company iPads, cell phone field applications, and paper copies.

There is still time to apply for field inspection and consult with MCIA about your seed field inspection. Feel free to give us a call any time to discuss your needs.

Seed growers requesting certification and other field inspection are encouraged to submit applications as soon as possible along with proof of seed source. Due dates are upon us and having applications in hand helps us plan for an efficient and cost-effective inspection season. If you have any changes to your field inspection applications or issues including reseeding, please let us know.

To producers of noxious weed seed-free forage and mulch: Remember applications are due within four weeks of cutting. Contact your field supervisor with any questions about this program.

By the time you receive this newsletter MCIA field inspectors will be inspecting perennial grasses, natives, and rye. Flower inspections in soybeans will not be far behind. With the inspection season approaching, isolations should be established where needed. If you notice any issues with your seed fields, such as potential variety contamination issues, other crop mixture, or anything that may compromise the integrity of your seed, please contact and inform your field supervisor prior to inspection and harvest.

As always, let us know of any questions or needs you may have. Whether you are an independent seed grower or a large company, the Field Services staff enjoys working with each of you. We are here to serve the needs of our members, no matter the size of their operation.

Organic Corner

Michelle Menken, Organic Services Manager



I think that 2022 is a year we are all glad is over. Except that it is not over. We still have about 50 reviews to complete and need to issue the last certificates. At the same time, we are moving forward with 2023 so we do not get behind this year. Files are starting to go out and inspectors have started doing farm and livestock inspections.

I am very happy to report that we have hired two new staff members who started June 15. Sarah Lindblom has about 10 years of experience as a vegetable farm operator and has worked with the Sustainable Farm Association for several years. Tessa Parks comes from a family with a long agricultural tradition, has a chemistry degree, and currently runs a small beef operation. We will introduce both of them more fully in the next issue of the *Minnesota Seed Grower*. We are also working with several new inspectors this year. So, you may be seeing new faces at your inspection.

The NOP’s Origin of Livestock rule is now in full implementation. We have been updating Livestock Lists to identify any dairy animals that were “transitioned.” Any transitioned animal (dairy cow or goat) can only be used to produce organic milk on your own farm. These animals cannot be sold as organic milk or meat animals to another operation.

The NOP published the new Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) final rule January 18, 2023. The regulations have been updated to include the changes. If you access the regulations online, the eCFR will include the changes. MCIA will be working on printing copies to mail out later in the year.

More parties in the organic supply chain will have to be certified, including more brokers who buy and sell raw commodities. Import Certificates will be required for all organic imports. There will be more requirements for audits of sales or purchases of ingredients for handlers at inspections. There are also more requirements for certifier and inspector training. To read the full rule go to: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/01/19/2023-00702/national-organic-program-nop-strengthening-organic-enforcement>. We will probably be updating many of our forms to comply with the SOE requirements.

All renewal applications are now due for crop and livestock operations. If you are not going to re-apply, please contact us to surrender your certification or you may be suspended.

Lab Report

Chase Mowry, Seed Laboratory Manager



Well, we survived another year.

Since the last Seed Lab update, sample quality has continued to be high, with very few disease issues encountered in germination tests. The main cause of lower germination percentages in soybeans was due to mechanical damage, perhaps related to the dry conditions last fall. However, despite those conditions, the average germination percentage this year, among all soybeans tested (certified and service samples), was 90 percent, with 92 percent as the median.

In terms of samples received, our busiest months were January through March, as expected. The total number of samples tested this year is comparable to that of the previous few years, upward of 2,800. The top five crop types tested this season were perennial ryegrass, soybeans, wheat, corn, and oats.

Unfortunately for us, seed technologist Sam Banks departed MCIA in March to pursue a job opportunity with another

laboratory. Recently, we successfully completed the interview process to fill the vacancy. A new staff member will join the Seed Laboratory in August.

In April, Claire Biel attended a four-day germination workshop held at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. The focus of the workshop included test preparations, evaluating germination tests in large-seeded crop types and small grains, tetrazolium testing, and common issues encountered during viability testing. During a germ evaluation, seed analysts distinguish differences between what is considered a normal seedling (those seedlings possessing essential structures that are indicative of their ability to produce plants under favorable conditions), an abnormal seedling, dead seed, and hard or dormant seeds.

In the upcoming summer months, as samples begin to slow, our focus in the laboratory will shift to other tasks—many of which pertain to accreditation and ensuring quality results for the next testing season. We will stay busy with training, updating SOPs, calibrating equipment, purchasing new supplies, conducting an internal audit, discarding samples from cold storage, and evaluating grow-outs, to name a few.

Lastly, be on the lookout for the 2022–23 Seed Laboratory Customer Satisfaction Survey email. This will be a short, 10-question survey to provide feedback on how we did this past year. If you could take a moment to respond, we would very much appreciate it!

Foundation Seed Report

Roger Wippler, Foundation Seed Services Manager

I thought I knew the answers, but then they changed the questions. Over the years, I have learned that try as we might to find some predictability, the world of agriculture is ever-changing. The weather certainly plays a big part in that unpredictability. With all the snow last winter, what looked like it might be a wet, late spring, turned out not to be the case. Small grains, corn, and soybeans were planted in a timely manner. Now a couple of months later, rain has been scarce in many areas of the state and high temperatures have pushed the crops along at record rates. Like all seed producers, our foundation seed is in the ground. Now we wait for Mother Nature to provide the best growing conditions.

For MCIA, wheat and oats generally make up most of our foundation seed sales, so we are always looking for favorable conditions and good prices for small grains. Early intentions show fewer acres of wheat, barley, and oats being planted this year as strong corn and soybean prices continue to put pressure on small grain acres.

Foundation Seed Sales

Overall foundation seed sales increased 15 percent compared to 2022. However, with no new wheat variety this year, foundation wheat sales dropped about 20 percent

compared to last year. MN-Rothsay and MN-Torgy made up the majority of wheat sales, which totaled just over 4,300 bushels. Demand for oats was good, with sales at 6,100 bushels, just under 2022 totals. MN-Pearl, and Rushmore were popular varieties. Foundation barley sales maintained modest levels at 400 bushels sold.

Soybeans were the reason overall seed sales rose in 2023. Sales more than doubled over last year because MCIA had more contract production of specialty type varieties. A summary of the last five years of foundation seed sales follows.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
WHEAT (bu)	5,865	9,864	4,130	5,406	4,320
OATS (bu)	9,922	9,954	5,953	6,328	6,116
BARLEY (bu)	626	185	482	401	397
SOYBEAN (50#)	1,503	2,990	2,336	2,108	5,575

Variety Licensing

Variety licensing continues to be an important part of the Foundation Seed Program. Over the past year we have prepared new license agreements for winter barley and several soybean lines. We continue to work with plant breeding programs and parties interested in new materials.



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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.

Improving your process • Enhancing your products • Increasing your profits

CALENDAR

JULY

- 4** MCIA Office Closed
- 5-7** Small Grain Plot Tours
Organized by the UMN Extension:
Benson (7/5), Rochester (7/6), LeCenter (7/7),
and other locations TBA
- 14** MCIA Board of Directors Meeting, St. Paul
- 15** Marbleseed Organic Field Day:
Beargrease Botanicals, Sturgeon Lake
- 19** Crops & Soils Day, Northwest Research and
Outreach Center, Crookston

AUGUST

- 15** Marbleseed Organic Field Day:
Circadian Organics, Ferryville, WI
- 24** Minnesota State Fair (through September 4),
Saint Paul

SEPTEMBER

- 4** MCIA Office Closed

For more event information visit www.mncia.org/events