

A Productive Partnership: MCIA Working Together with the University of Minnesota

Cooperation from various personnel within the University of Minnesota has been and continues to be a key ingredient to the success of the MCIA Foundation Seed program. Whether it be plant breeders, their research teams, other faculty and staff members, or folks at the University Research and Outreach Centers, we greatly appreciate the support and teamwork we receive each year.

The Foundation Seed staff coordinates the increase and distribution of varieties developed by the University of Minnesota, MCIA members purchase the Foundation seed and produce certified seed, which is sold to farmers. The process begins as plant breeders identify new lines for potential release.

Communication and conversations with the plant breeders go on regularly. As one crop year ends, and the data is crunched, planning begins for the next season. Every year the breeders evaluate thousands of lines, looking for the next new variety that will provide the sought-after attributes, such as yield, quality, and disease resistance.

Each breeding program has a team of researchers and technicians that work in the labs and fields. They are the ones who package seed for testing, lay out the plots, plant seed, take field notes, harvest plots, conduct laboratory tests, and compile data—among other duties. The MCIA Foundation Seed staff have regular contact with the breeding team, sharing seed of released varieties, receiving breeder seed of potential new varieties, coordinating grow-out plots, and exchanging information.

As plans come together for the new production year, we reach out to Andrew Scobbie on the St. Paul campus and Mark Lostetter at the Rosemount Research and Outreach Center to request land space. Our production is primarily soybeans, but occasionally we grow some small grains.

The Ag Services farm crew at St. Paul and Rosemount will handle all the field tillage and will work with MCIA to complete planting. We also rely on them for spraying or cultivation during the growing season. MCIA has a couple of small combines, so



Planting soybeans on the St. Paul campus this spring. Roger Wippler (left) and Anthony Schumacher (right) of MCIA's Foundation Seed Services with Mark Peterson (center) of UMN Ag Services pause to clean the planter between varieties.

in the fall we do our own harvesting with occasional assistance from the farm crew. The seed is brought into the MCIA facility on campus for conditioning.

Over the years, we have also worked with the Research and Outreach Centers at Crookston, Lamberton, and Waseca. Like the other University personnel we work with, the staff at these centers, too, are accommodating and cooperative.

Our location here on the St. Paul campus is a plus when it comes to weed control, pest problems, or other production issues. Easy access to extension agronomists, plant pathologists, or entomologists helps us quickly identify problems and discuss if treatment options are needed.

The MCIA Foundation Seed program is successful because of the exceptional cooperation we receive from the plant breeding teams, the research center staff, and others within the University's Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics and the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station. At MCIA we recognize the value of this relationship and are glad to be part of the system that brings new crop varieties to farmers in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest.



New varieties: Look for MN-Pearl oats and MN-Washburn wheat at your area field days and plot tours! For more information visit: extension.umn.edu/courses-and-events.

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The few chances that I have to watch television lately, I am seeing more advertisements for specialty foods: GMO-free, organic, veggie burgers, and a popular beer brand using the marketing tactic of not using corn fructose for fermentation, which is totally 100 percent marketing to a specific group (trying to get millennials, who are trending to hard liquor, back to beer). Recent reports, however, show that few people actually shop for or consume these products by choice.

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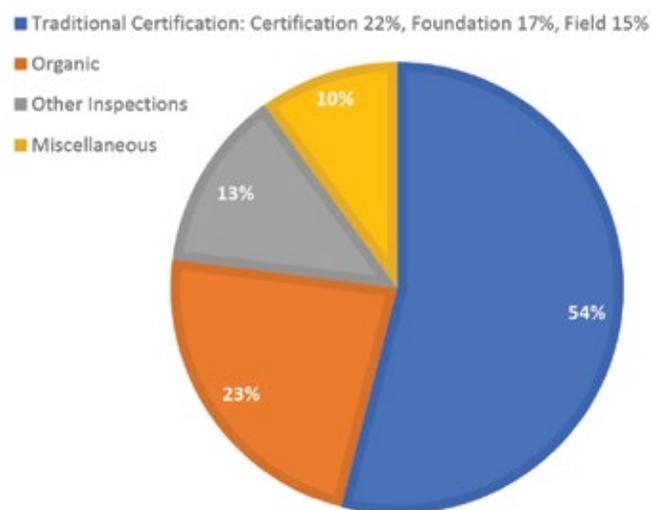
However, more and more marketing is managing to affect market trends and purchasing decisions. In response, MCIA provides unbiased inspection services to those agricultural producers who need it. MCIA's business is slowly moving from traditional certification services to organic certification and other non-traditional services (now accounting for nearly 36 percent of our business). These activities by MCIA provide high-quality, ethical services to those producing goods for the market.

We have also seen in the news reports of some organic producers fudging the rules and imports being everything but what they say they are. Such problems are not unique to organics. The seed industry continues to address issues related Plant Variety Protection (PVP) and illegal seed sales. No part of the ag industry is immune from unethical practices.

As MCIA diversifies its inspection services, our staff members work closely with USDA, MDA, and other agencies to learn the appropriate rules and requirements. This knowledge is then applied in the field to insure that rules and regulations are followed and production is done according to the appropriate standards.

MCIA continues to provide services that help and encourage the production of quality products, regardless the crop or activity. This unbiased, strong sense of quality and adherence to regulations is a commitment from MCIA's staff and from the organization as a whole. Bottom line: Things are changing in the market. MCIA is adjusting and trying to do it right.

Service/program revenue as a percentage of total revenues generated, June 2017–May 2018. From the President's Report, as presented at the 2019 MCIA Annual Meeting.



Organic Corner

Michelle Menken, Organic Services Manager

We have hired a new Organic Services employee, Cherry Flowers. Some of you met her last year when she was working for us as a contract inspector. Cherry will be doing inspections and office work this year. Please welcome her to the MCIA organic team. In addition, Rose-Marie Odell is now working for

the organic team full time. She formerly worked with MCIA's seed certification and foundation seed services. Rose-Marie can help you with forms, billing questions, and general queries.

The crop season and inspections are off to a slow start for this year, with rain and flooding everywhere. It seems that most people have crops planted now. Your inspector will update Field History Sheets at your inspection, if you made any changes to your planting plans. Be sure to keep receipts and tags for new or exchanged seed.

Just a reminder, in addition to the regular inspections, we will again be conducting at least 26 unannounced inspections and collecting samples from 5 percent of our clients this year. All certifiers are required to do this each year. A typical sample is 500 grams. So, a little more than the weight of a can of pop. We use Medallion Labs in the Twin Cities to test for the National Organic Program's list of prohibited chemicals. MCIA pays for the sampling and testing.

We will be mailing out updated copies of the National Organic Program regulations to all who did not get a copy this winter. There were several important changes to the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances, especially for livestock producers. For example, these products are now allowed for health care treatments: Propylene glycol for treatment of ketosis; zinc sulfate for hoof and foot treatments; acidified sodium chlorite as a teat dip; mineral oil for topical use and intestinal compaction. One important change is that Ivermectin will not be allowed after December 27, 2019. The parasiticides Fenbendazole and Moxidectin will still be allowed. Be sure to review National Organic Program, Subpart G—Administrative, §§205.601–606 for these changes.



The concept of sustainable agriculture has been approached from a variety of angles. No matter how sustainable agriculture is defined, its overall goal is to meet the food, fiber, and shelter needs of our present human population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own such needs. Sustainable agriculture focuses on a number of key components: a healthy environment and stewardship of land, air, and water; economic vitality and profitability; and the maintenance and improvement of the quality of life for everyone.

Sustainable agriculture involves numerous disciplines, such as biology and economics, good agricultural practices, and making producers and consumers aware of their shared responsibilities. The success of sustainable agriculture will depend on farming communities and consumers working together to overcome challenges and establish new solutions that will lead to a prosperous future.

One such effort is underway at Minnesota Crop Improvement Association. MCIA is working collaboratively with the University of Minnesota and the Land Institute as they develop the intermediate wheatgrass, Kernza. This perennial grass species is related to wheat. Breeders at both institutions are busy developing Kernza into a promising new perennial grain crop. As a perennial plant with a deep and dense root system, Kernza provides important ecosystem support, improving water quality and land integrity through erosion control, increased nutrient retention, and carbon sequestration.

MCIA, in cooperation with the Land Institute, has developed IP standards for Kernza. In addition, the model seed conditioning plant at our MCIA facility is used to condition limited quantities of Kernza that has been produced on the University of Minnesota's Saint Paul campus and at the Rosemont Experiment Station.

Late last summer, MCIA cooperated in the distribution of seed for the planting of Kernza at four locations around the state.

MCIA is a member of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station's Crop Variety Review Committee. During the CVRC's December 2018 meeting, MCIA supported the release of the first Kernza variety produced by the University of Minnesota. Seed of the yet-to-be-named MN-1504 Kernza line will be made available through MCIA's Foundation Seed Services later this summer. It is anticipated that some of the Kernza produced this year will also be used for grain. A number of Minnesota-based food companies are excited to include Kernza in their existing and new products, responding to consumers interest in practices that support sustainable agriculture and help restore a healthy environment.

Sustainable agriculture is not just a passing trend, it is a truly life-changing phenomenon that is intended to stimulate new ways of thinking that engage farmers and consumers. MCIA is playing its part to help produce food responsibly, with less impact on the environment, and to help ensure food security for future generations.

Details of the seed distribution plan for the MN-1504 Kernza line are still being developed. MCIA members interested in producing Kernza seed or grain should contact MCIA by calling 612-625-7766. More information about Kernza can be found on the University of Minnesota's Forever Green website, forevergreen.umn.edu, and on the Land Institute's website, landinstitute.org.



Kernza lead scientist Lee DeHaan examines Kernza heads for seed count. Seeds from the most bountiful plants in this breeding plot will be used for future crossbreeding.

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Welcome Cherry Flowers!

Minnesota Crop Improvement Association welcomes **Cherry Flowers** to the staff of MCIA's Organic Services. Cherry's position is Organic Certification Specialist/Inspector. Cherry has a long-held passion for organic agriculture, which preceded her decision to become an organic certification inspector and make a career in agriculture.

Cherry holds a bachelor of science degree in interior design from the University of Minnesota. She also completed a certified professional project manager

program at the University of St. Thomas. She is an active Ramsey County Master Gardener, following completion of the volunteer core course from the University of Minnesota Extension. In 2017, Cherry successfully completed the International Organic Inspectors Association's inspector training program for crops and processing. Since then, Cherry has performed inspections for multiple organic certification agencies, including MCIA. Cherry is currently an appointed member of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Organic Advisory Task Force.



THE MINNESOTA SEED GROWER Vol. 91 No.2
Summer 2019 (Pub# 352240) is published quarterly
by MCIA, 1900 Hendon Ave, Saint Paul MN 55108.
Periodical postage paid at Saint Paul, MN and
additional mailing offices.

PERIODICAL

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO
THE MINNESOTA SEED GROWER
1900 HENDON AVE
SAINT PAUL MN 55108

The Minnesota Seed Grower
quarterly newsletter of the
Minnesota Crop Improvement Association
1900 Hendon Avenue, Saint Paul, Minnesota

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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

JUNE–JULY

University of Minnesota Small Grains Summer Plot Tours
For schedule visit: extension.umn.edu/courses-and-events/small-grain-summer-plot-tour

JUNE–AUGUST

Seed Conditioning Workshops: Iowa State Univ., Ames
For schedule visit: seedlab.iastate.edu/seed-conditioning-workshops

JULY

- 10 Organic Field Day at SWROC: Lamberton
- 17 Crops and Soils Day at NWROC: Crookston
- 24–26 Northern Seed Trade Association Annual Meeting: Winnepeg, MB

AUGUST

- 6–8 Minnesota Farmfest: Morgan
- 20–22 Global Trade Exchange & Midwest Specialty Grains Conference and Trade Show: Chicago, IL

AUGUST–SEPTEMBER

Minnesota State Fair: St. Paul, August 22–September 2

For more event information visit www.mncia.org.