

Welcome to the Fourth Annual...

*High Plains
Organic Farming Conference*

The Science and Business of Organic Farming!

February 21st & 22nd in Cheyenne, WY

Larimer County Community College

4th Annual High Plains Organic Farming Conference

PROGRAM

Day One **Tuesday February 21st, 2017**

12:00 pm **Registration Begins**

1:00 pm **Getting and Staying Certified**

How to get and stay certified. *Eastlyn Wright, OneCert Organic Certification Specialist*

This workshop will include an overview of National Organic Program regulations, tools and tips for record keeping and working with certifiers and inspectors, and features a mock inspection exercise that will walk participants through an inspection on a hypothetical farm.

Surviving the transition to organic: Financial and technical assistance

- **Overview of Wyoming Department of Agriculture Programs.** *Ted Craig, Wyoming Department of Agriculture.*
- **Overview of Colorado Department of Agriculture Programs.** *Mitch Yergert, Director, Division of Plant Industry, Colorado Department of Agriculture.*
- **USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service financial and technical assistance for organic producers.** *Roger Stockton, USDA-NRCS, Wyoming, and Ben Howell, Joint Organic Conservation Specialist, Oregon Tilth & USDA NRCS, Portland, Oregon.*
- **USDA-Farm Service Agency: Loan programs and other assistance available to farmers.** *Laura Kessler, FSA Laramie County Executive Director, Cheyenne, Wyoming.*

Discussion: We'd like to hear approaches, techniques, and experiences about transitioning and staying certified.

5:00pm Adjourn



The Radisson is offering a limited number of rooms at the special rate of \$65/night on Monday, Tuesday, & Wednesday night!

For more info or to book a room, call (307) 638-4466

Address: 204 W Fox Farm Rd, Cheyenne, WY

Day Two Wednesday February 22nd, 2016

7:30am Registration & Coffee

7:50am Welcome and Opening Remarks

8:00am Dryland Organic Grain Production: *Ron Rabou, Rabou Farms, Albin, WY*

8:40am Organic Livestock: Regenerative, Organic, and Resilient Family Farming: *Keri Schilthius, Fort Causeway Farm, Lovell, WY*

9:20am Irrigated Organic Production: *Wyatt Barnes, Red Wagon Farms, Boulder, CO*

10:00am 3-minute poster summaries (see list of poster presentations)

10:20am BREAK: Meet the Researchers poster session & student poster contest.

Check out our fantastic vendors!

Organic Agronomy

Organic Business

10:50am	CSU Organic Specialty Crops Research and Organic Transition Strategies: <i>Mark E. Uchanski, CSU, Fort Collins, CO</i>	Adding a Community Supported Agriculture Venture: <i>Cole Ehmke, UW</i>
11:40am	Measuring Soil Health and Fertility in the Lab and Field: <i>Caitlin Youngquist, UW Extension</i>	Effective Marketing on the Web: <i>Justin Johnson, Digital Director, West Edge Collective</i>

12:30pm LUNCH (provided) Meet the researchers poster session and vendor tables

1:10pm Is Organic Farming Environmentally Friendly? *Ben Bowell, Organic Specialist, West National Technology Support Center, USDA-NRCS, Portland, OR*

1:50pm Organic No-Till: Is it Possible?? *Patrick Carr, Central Ag Research Center, Montana State University*

2:30pm BREAK: Meet the researchers poster session & student poster contest.

Check out our fantastic vendors!

Organic Agronomy

Organic Business

2:50pm	Organic Forage Production: Can Alfalfa be Grazed without Fear of Bloat? <i>Anowar Islam, UW</i>	Food Safety Begins in the Field: Practical Insight on Protecting Yourself and Your Customers: <i>Jeff Edwards, UW</i>
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3:50pm Weed Ecology and Integrated Management with the Organic Toolbox: *Nevin Lawrence, UNL*

4:30pm Concluding Remarks & Discussion. Student poster contest winner announced! Please hand in evaluations.

5:00pm Adjourn.

Thank You Sponsors!



**HORTICULTURE AND
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



**UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING
EXTENSION**

Check out our

2017 Vendors!

- Booth 1: Andreas Seed and More**
- Booth 2: Fort Causeway Farms**
- Booth 3: ST Organics**
- Booth 4: BS Organics**
- Booth 5: Pawnee Buttes Seed**
- Booth 6 & 7: Mosher Products, Inc.**
- Booth 8: Beju Plant Food**
- Booth 9: Healthy Food Ingredients (SK Food International, Hesco/Dakota
Organic Products, Suntava, Heartland Flax)**
- Booth 10: Frenchman Valley Cooperative**
- Booth 11: High Plains OCIA of Nebraska, Inc**
- Booth 12: Wyoming Department of Agriculture**
- Booth 13: Water Resources Data System/Wyoming State Climate Office**
- Booth 14: Farm Service Agency/ WDA Specialty Crops**

MEET THE RESEARCHERS

Poster Session

Does the Surrounding Landscape Affect Alfalfa Weevil Densities?

Presenter: Makenzie Pellissier

The composition of landscapes surrounding crop fields can influence the abundance of pests and beneficial insects in those fields. For this project we analyzed landscapes surrounding alfalfa fields in southeastern Wyoming to determine if landscape composition was associated with alfalfa weevil infestations.

Reduction of Soil Salinity by Cover Crops in Dryland Organic Winter Wheat Fallow

Presenter: Mavis Badu, University of Wyoming

High soil salinity is a major threat to seedling emergence and growth in drylands and could reduce yields by 50%. Cover crops may be a good remedy to reduce soil salinity when planted before wheat. Four compost rates and inorganic fertilizer were compared, in addition to cover crop and fallow treatments. Cover crops were found to significantly reduce EC, thus reducing soil salinity. Study will be repeated in 2017 and 2018 to validate results.

Groundwater Use and Management in Eastern Laramie County

Presenters: Kristi Hansen, Dannele Peck, Kaila Willis, and Shannon Glendenning,
University of Wyoming

Groundwater levels under portions of eastern Laramie County are dropping. What should be done, if anything, to relieve pressure on the aquifer from existing demands? We present possible goals and strategies for achieving them, as explored by the Laramie County Control Area Steering Committee in 2015-6.

Way Too Early Results of High-Carbon Char

Presenter: Dr. Cody Creech, University of Nebraska

High-Carbon Char added to agricultural soils can improve soil physical, chemical, and biological processes. Results from the first year of multiple experiments show no negative impact on crop yields. It is anticipated that yield increases will occur in several years based on prior literature.

Effects of Cover Crops and Compost on Phosphorus Availability and Wheat Yield in Calcareous Soils

Presenter: Erin Rooney, University of Wyoming

Phosphorus is largely unavailable in calcareous soils. Can cover crops solubilize this recalcitrant phosphorus? Can a one time high rate application of compost increase available phosphorus? Phosphorus cycling and wheat biomass findings are reported.

Talk Summaries

Adding a Community Supported Agriculture Venture, *Cole Ehmke, Rural business development, UW*

A CSA venture offers fresh, local produce to a group of committed customers for an entire season. Starting one can be fulfilling and profitable if you invest the time, energy and money required to get things going, and they can nicely complement other enterprises like farmer's market stands. We'll talk about what they are, how they work, and if they're for you. Pick up a free CSA book at the session.

CSU Organic Specialty Crops Research and Organic Transition Strategies, *Mark Uchanski, CSU*

The Specialty Crops Program at Colorado State University has many active research and demonstration projects in the field, in the greenhouse, and in high tunnels in Fort Collins, CO. Come learn about those projects and results, and let us know your vegetable production questions and needs. The presentation will also summarize the results of an organic transition research project, allowing us to share with you best practices and the important lessons we learned while executing the project.

Food Safety Begins in the Field: Practical Insight on Protecting Yourself and Your Customers, *Jeff Edwards, UW*

An introduction into Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) or "GAPs Lite" focusing on hygienic practices and that can help keep the food chain safe.

Is Organic Farming Environmentally Friendly? *Ben Howell*

Do organic farms provide environmental benefits or is organic production just about marketing? Confusion persists about organic practices, and some believe that organic farms have less demonstrable environmental benefits than other farming systems. This presentation will look at USDA organic regulations, guidance and organic farming practices to discuss the conservation impacts of organic systems.

Organic Forage Production: Can Alfalfa be Grazed Without Fear of Bloat? *Anowar Islam, UW*

Organic forage production is increasingly getting popular. However, there are several issues in organic forage production, especially in grazing. Pasture bloat is a major problem in animals associated with grazing alfalfa pasture despite its high growth, quality, and production. Millions of dollar per year is lost due to pasture bloat in cattle production in USA. My talk will focus on this issue and provide information that will enable cattle producers to benefit from grazing alfalfa stands without any fear of bloat and to improve feed efficiency and cost effectiveness of the high performance grazing systems. In-depth discussion on bloat and its prevention will be made in the presentation.

Organic Livestock: Regenerative, Organic and Resilient Family Farming, *Keri Schilthius, Fort Causeway Farm*

Fort Causeway, represented by Keri Schilthuis, is excited to speak about the regenerative agriculture practices that form the basis for our farm program and allow us to be organic. Topics will include our limiting factors especially with regards to our soil, how we are overcoming these factors and how they have influenced the farm practices that we have put in place. The farm management practices discussed will include management of water on flood irrigated ground, management of sheep and the part they play in building soil health, a discussion on the forage we grow and how the combination of all has helped us extend our livestock forage season.

Organic No-Till: Is it Possible?? *Pat Carr*, MSU

This talk will provide a summary of research on developing organic no-till systems that can be adopted by U.S. organic farmers, with an emphasis on studies in dry regions in the central/western U.S. and adjoining Canadian provinces. Recent efforts to adopt continuous no-till in organic environments in both the U.S. Great Plains and Canadian prairie regions will be presented. The presentation will conclude with best management practices for those considering adopting conservation-tillage practices on their organic farms.

Weed Ecology and Integrated Management with the Organic Toolbox, *Nevin Lawrence*, UNL

This talk will discuss what integrated weed management is and how it can be applied in organic production. We will focus on the challenges and opportunities of organic production and provide examples of weed control in organic production.

Our Speakers



Ron Rabou owns and operates a 7,500 acre organic wheat farm in South Eastern Wyoming. He served as the Executive Director of the Wyoming FFA Foundation and initially spear-headed the effort in growing the foundation from a start-up to what is now a prospering organization.



Keri Schilthius, Fort Causeway Family Farm is an 80 acre farm owned and operated by Kevin and Keri Schilthius and their four children. They produce pasture finished, organic lamb which they direct market. They also produce pasture raised beef, poultry, and hogs. They currently run 450 breeding ewes and finish all livestock locally on the 120 flood irrigated acres that they intensively graze.



Wyatt Barnes owns and operates Red Wagon Farm with Amy Tisdale. They farm in Boulder County, Colorado. Red Wagon grows about 100 crops each season and plants 30 irrigated acres. They sell their vegetables at the Boulder Farmers' Market, to their CSA, and to local restaurants. Their farming is sustainable for the land, provides wildlife habitat, and strives to have a farm that is economically sustainable and are certified Organic.



Mark E. Uchanski was born and raised among the corn and soybean fields of the far western suburbs of Chicago. His first formal job was as a strawberry picker, then produce stand worker, for a ~100 acre produce farm about two miles from his home. That early experience among many others, began his life-long passion for the vegetable crops. Since 2016, Dr. Uchanski has worked at Colorado State University as the coordinator for the CSU Specialty Crops Program.



Cole Ehmke is an Extension Specialist with University of Wyoming based in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics. His work covers agricultural entrepreneurship topics as well as personal financial resource management. Recent projects have included coordinating the Annie's Project program of management classes for women in agriculture and creating a managers of community supported agriculture ventures.



Caitlin Youngquist is an extension soil scientist with UW and a trained compost facility operator. Her research includes agricultural uses and public perceptions of biosolids compost from rural wastewater treatment plants, large animal mortality composting, soil nutrient management, and several soil fertility, management and quality assessment projects.



Justin Johnson is the Digital Director for West Edge Collective, a Cheyenne, Wyoming marketing and advertising agency. Justin is a Wyoming native with over 15 years in the digital and web marketing space. He served as the Web Marketing Manager at Sierra Trading Post, and held positions in Affiliate Marketing and Search Engine Optimization. His responsibilities included the development of Sierra's first mobile e-commerce application while pioneering social media technologies.



Ben Bowell is an Organic Education Specialist for Oregon Tilth, a national non-profit organic certification and education organization. Through his position as a Joint Organic Conservation Specialist with USDA-NRCS, he provides technical assistance, delivers trainings, and develops technical resources for use by NRCS staff, agriculture professionals, and producers.



Patrick Carr has been conducting organic farming research since the 1990s. Dr. Carr Developed the first formal organic farming research program while at North Dakota State University, and in 2007 began to study the possibility of adopting no-till farming methods when growing wheat and other field crops organically. He is the superintendent and associate professor of cropping systems at the Montana State University, Central Agricultural Research Center near Moccasin, MT.



Anowar Islam is a professor in the Plant Sciences department at UW, where he works to develop modern and innovative research/extension programs on Forage Agronomy that include: Germplasm search and evaluation for selection/cultivar development; establishment and best management practices for profitable and sustainable forage and livestock production; and grazing management and integration with cropping systems.



Ted Craig is the Agricultural Grants Manager for the Wyoming Department of Ag.



Jeff M. Edwards is a University of Wyoming Extension Specialist and Entomologist. His areas of focus include pesticide applicator safety training and horticulture – particularly small scale commercial fruit and vegetable production.



Nevin Lawrence, directs the integrated weed management research and extension program for the Panhandle region and other areas of Western Nebraska. His research and extension interests include developing integrated and holistic weed management programs that leverage crop rotations and other cultural practices to supplement the sometimes limited herbicide and tillage options available.



Roger Stockton is the Wyoming NRCS State Conservation Agronomist. Roger farmed and ranched in western Oklahoma for 20 years. He has an MS in Agronomy from Oklahoma State University and a PhD in Crop Physiology and Production from UN-L.



Eastlyn Wright is an Organic Certification Specialist and AmeriCorps Alumna. Growing up in a city, she never imagined herself with a career in agriculture. Now a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, with a B.S. in Horticulture, Eastlyn enjoys a career that utilizes her passions for education, interpersonal skills and natural resources

The 4th Annual High Plains Organic Farming Conference and Certification Workshop

February 21st & 22nd, 2017

The Centennial Room - Center for Conferences & Institutes

Laramie County Community College, Cheyenne, WY



Thank you for attending!

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