

Ideas and Issues Workshop 3

- Very well known scientist recently discussed without qualification that organic is not beneficial for climate change because it doesn't include no-till. Right now is a really good time to double down on the advantages of organic and why till/no-till is not the end-all be-all in these conversations.
- Take the system for what it is and what can be done, look at the system and all greenhouse gasses. This is an important reframing for all of agriculture. When putting food and climate together we need our messaging frame to stay broad and holistic, not clinging to individual components.
- There needs to be a lot more research on till/no-till before we can reach a conclusion
- To the extent we are measuring outcomes and measuring systems than individual circumstances we can have a better understanding of beneficial practices
- Organic has never cleanly dealt with the biodiversity piece in the standards and climate & biodiversity could be increased with conservation land banking programs. Need natural habitat in sight.
- Center people and the planet over profit. A lot of issues get solved when you don't try to scale up and lose sight of what was built
- Strengths of organic are that it is a system that increases biodiversity and soil health and is people first
- Need to move from qualitative to quantitative: what are the tools, what are the methods: it is hard and can be costly but it is the ultimate challenge if you want to be a climate solution
- Need LCA, TCA and land use change
- To what extent will funding or payments be contingent on quantitative outcomes and who provides those outcomes—3rd party verified?
- There has to be an increased focus on the measurement of outcomes and quantification to solve the climate crisis and we have to do those carefully to balance equity and anti-consolidation. The focus on sequestration can't be at the expense of focusing on human, people, or adaptive aspects of organic.
- It is really hard to pay for performance and is also very reductionist, forgets about all these other benefits with the carbon sequestration is the only thing that matters trap: water health, soil health. And the adoption of practice vs maintenance of a practice.
- How do you begin to define or quantify biodiversity? Support idea of paying for practices over paying for performances. Maybe at some point in the future we can pay farmers for carbon sequestrations but we aren't there yet.
- Not black and white because you are paying for practices based on the expected outcomes
- Data collection provision in White House of \$600 million. It could ultimately be very important for long term to understand the principles to examine in agriculture when looking at this.
- USDA hasn't recognized or rewarded early adopters that have been generating climate benefits for many years in their climate-smart ag programs and that is part of the problem.

- Intuitively there is a long history of land stewardship and organic practices. Holistic is a principle and we can get really obsessed with quantifying everything.
- We should be thinking of something as a workforce. In the early days of organic, some kind of fair labor standard was something that we never got to but that was very important and it still is.
- Need support for a cooperation. There is a steep learning curve for people transitioning to organic and it's all about the good will of your neighbor or extension agent. Providing resources to farmers who are transitioning.
- Outlet, conservation payments to transitioning farmers.
- Organic has been around for 30 plus years. Worried we are introducing these newer turns which are all shades of organic that really confuse the marketplace. Concerned there is the potential to undermine 30 plus years of work organic is doing by muddying the waters. Imperative that we really define what regenerative and climate smart is and make sure we are not losing ground.
- Don't want people to be choosing labels that mean nothing like natural but not every farm will be organic and farms can always do better and there should be a place for those to go.
- Hate the term climate-smart, have always hated it, but it is what USDA will be using so every reason to get in there and wrestle the particulars even if we don't like the title too much.
- Work to reform deceptive labeling around animal welfare standards. Legislation fell through because of lack of political will. Rulemaking petitions were denied. Started going through NAD BBB claim by claim to get labels out of the marketplace. Want to require third-party certification of humane claims. USDA keeps bringing up cost of certification to avoid certification requirements. Concerns about third-party programs just being industry standards with a label tagged onto it. Legislative path has been challenging even with multiple orgs pushing. Statutes may not be the best place to develop standards when it is hard to get stakeholders to agree what is "humane" or "outdoor access."
- FSIS approves marketing claims but there are also third-party certifiers that attest to labeling standards. FSIS does not appear willing to change on any of these issues.
- Bad media is another good tool for combating bad labeling claims.
- It seems like we are pitting different gov. agencies against each other. Have any groups used FTC approach to see if that is another federal government agency to help with labeling claims issues?
- One participant has tried that avenue and received no response for months.
- (O): Flipping the "organic is elitist" argument on its head to something like, "its elitist to say that low-income folks don't deserve access to foods with lower or no pesticide residues."
- (W): Language is weaker when we say organic is healthier "for you". We need to unpack who that you is (individual, environment, community) and make the case for each. Organic is about the healthful system, not just nutrient delivery.
- Using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a policy that should be used to discourage the use of chemicals in agriculture. But this practice hasn't been seen for the longest

time. Is it still a viable option? And if so, within the OTA family, can we push to bring that back?

- IPM can be a gateway for farmers to be comfortable with and even to transition to organic. We used to hear a lot about IPM practices.
- What happened with IPM is that it was co-opted. We have seen farmers shift from independent assessment towards those who represent chemical companies. Now we joke that it's integrated pesticides instead of integrated management. Maybe we could bring it back, not sure.
- Farmworkers should be expanded to farmers who are also exposed to pesticides. How do we reach out to the justice community to get that kind of farmers + farmworkers coalition.
- The discussion around the role played by the chemicals in the footprint of agriculture was not allowed to happen in the senate roundtables. Debates with a lot of folks around the idea that everyone should stay in their lane and we should let the chemicals win that fight and not even try to fight it. It is such a huge missed opportunity.
- It also seems that the holy grail is "polluter pay" but we never had a coalition big enough to bring that back. If we don't ask for it, we don't have much of a chance of getting it.
- We need to be louder about the omission of the chemical conversation in the debate and that we cannot let the senate ag committee decide what to include and not to include in the debate.
- In the farm to fork discussion, they put chemicals and nitrogen at the forefront of the debate.
- We hear from this administration that they want to be objective and science based, and we all know that LCA is important and they are not doing LCA for chemicals. They are not using best scientific practices. We need to push back with their verbiage around their thing to use science.
- Ken's point on environmentalism being about what we are for vs what we are against. In CA, we are trying to focus on farmers managing inputs.
- Around climate change there are downsides to navigate. Difficult to talk about pesticides around climate because they feel like health is the driver, so they feel like it complicates the debate to talk about climate although this is where the political conversation is. If we have a changing climate then we need more pesticides. Try to navigate not separating health from climate.
- Many operations in the organic world are mixed and are not willing to speak on pesticides, which makes it very difficult for operations to come together against pesticides
- Focus on soil carbon and reducing pesticides is key to improve soil carbon sequestration. Data is clear that reducing pesticides has to be part of whatever "regenerative" ag is out there.
- Hypocrisy of bayer and syngenta getting behind the "regenerative" discussion.
- It is very difficult to make the connection between pesticides and climate. As someone in DC, today most staff on capitol hill still don't make the connection. Instead of continuing to beat the drum, we should find new ways to elevate it.

- It has become even more challenging to get organic and chemical practices part of the conversation. A focus is on bad actors and worse offenders and reforming them vs helping folks who are already using better practices and make things even better.
- Staff in DC are very aware of the impacts of fertilizers on the climate. They are not aware as much about the dangers of pesticides.
- What is the data point for potential? The basic strategies are to refuse to work within the frame that the kabale is working on when it comes to ag and climate (one way) or the other way is to look at the few folks who are doing it right and to see what are solutions for these folks to do it better.
- Farmers themselves - non organic farmers - should be open to many of these conversations and the problem is the chemical industry wants none of it and it is aligned with farmer and commodity groups. Non-organic farmers who are more open to this would want to hear about this, they just need the right incentive.
- Agricultural women association. Their supporters are Syngenta, Bayer, and some people left the organization and most of their membership is in red state. Fertilizer and seeds are established in our neighborhood and communities and we have to deal with them. Find resources to incentivize some of the most reticent folks to get away from industrial cultivation. Providing them with monetary incentives.
- About TCA and polluter pay. Interim step that we have before us is conservation compliance and holding public funds from people still using pesticides. It doesn't require quantifying all the harm of pesticide use but makes sure that public investments are more aligned with the public outcome we want to see. There might be an appetite on the hill if they see a push from the outside.
- Playground politics is a big barrier to progress. One of the challenges that we face in our community is that two years before the farm bill we all come together, one year out we divide and we are like "don't touch my program". Trust is a big issue.
- How do we get out of our silos? We need to better understand the challenges farmworkers face. We need to do a better job at recruiting them to attend these kind of events. They are so vulnerable that we also need to support them, be in solidarity with them, and also incentivize them to attend. We need farmworkers and farmers to say the same thing and Washington would be pretty excited. There are a lot of possibilities if we deepening our relationships with farmworkers and listen to them and their priorities.
- The Farm Bill in a way is constrained in terms of building these alliances. Pesticides isn't a top tier, but immigration is top of the list. Making sure they are safe. As we think about farmworkers health, pesticides, livestock production and more are areas in which organic has something to offer.
- We might not be able to really improve immigration practices, but we could maybe incentivize safer labor practices with less pesticides for example.
- In CA, talking to the community about the benefits of an organic school program would help. The communities really cared about their kids having food at school without pesticides. Making sure that food security programs include organic food and make it more accessible. The multiple exposure route matters a lot.
- Water and access to quality water in rural communities is important.

- Eating healthy and growing organically is very important to communities. We are planning to introduce a program in DC and put a memorandum of agreement to work with the university and the school system to try changing behaviors in terms of eating habits and producing food organically.
- How to engage former EPA folks or public officials so that they are more willing to talk about the effects on farmworkers and communities of bad water. The Trump admin forced a lot of bright stars out of the government and they might be available to raise awareness on these issues.
- The agriculture health study (NIH funded) might help better highlight threats of pesticides of farmers and farmworkers communities, and drinking water.
- Suggested coalition partners organic should be talking to: Robert Wood Johnson foundation: funding + stakeholder network for rural folks. Des Moines in Iowa would be a good example of a rural area with a big fiscal crisis because of nitrogen and pesticides and this is because of water.
- Suggested coalition partners organic should be talking to: Small towns are highly influenced by farm communities and it's harder to get to them.
- Suggested coalition partners organic should be talking to: The national water association should be a good ally but their board members are big production farmers.
- Suggested coalition partners organic should be talking to: Rural coalition + national young farmer coalition both focusing on land access which is very important.
- Tell the story as to what extent fossil fuels sees pesticides and fertilizers as a way out of pressure they are feeling from the energy sector. We need to all say the same story that all sectors need to move away from fossil fuels and what does that look like ag and how do we move towards that as a solution
- Participants do not feel we have won support for eliminating CAFOs in Congress.
- Do we want a set of proactive agenda items to prohibit CAFOs, or should we focus on funding to people doing ag differently (grazing, etc.)?
- There is good data on grazing and climate. That fits in well with "not staying in our lane." Shifting to grass stretches out productive timeline across all animal species. Can you get it to the point that it is not cost prohibitive?
- Organic meat is the most expensive because of the cost of organic feed. For ruminants, the grazing part is key for the coalition platform we are talking about.
- 62% of people in Iowa are for a CAFO moratorium. The big question is whether people can afford to buy what they believe in.
- Executive orders 120866 listed the things we attacked them on failing on in the lawsuit.
- We need to raise the quantitative benefits of good animal care in a way that will stick in federal court. We should develop a scheme that drives toward the qualitative benefits in the calculations OMB is doing so they don't give 15 years to implement the rule.
- Some are open to doing work around defining what is not humane.
- Another alternative to animal welfare legislation is to talk to the administration about making regulatory and guideline reforms to reduce false claims and incentivize competitive markets. AMS needs support and political cover to move forward on initiatives.

- The industry is so fragmented it is hard to build consensus. What would happen if we had a proposal for a fund to shut down feedlots? The producers would be upset the feedlot operators get to walk away after benefiting for so many years.
- The Humane Society of the United States(HSUS) took Perdue to court and got them to remove Humanely Raised off the label. Falsity of PVP claims.
- It is easier to talk about the harms and contributions of industrial animal sector to methane, but it is harder to talk about why it would be good for climate change to mitigate the climate crisis to transition. Participants are working on gathering data. There is good research on grazing and climate, but any research gets blasted with trumpeting about fixing everything and then the narrative is derailed by detractors. COVID has made everyone inured to “science” because they don’t believe anyone.
- Lots of people are enthusiastic if they can sell a narrative about animals with high standards in a strong organic system. Folks are more interested in a total package explanation with animal welfare to be just one of those pieces.
- What about buying out CAFOs with an increase in local/regional processing? We just need to do a policy statement and do the math. If we spread out the processing, maybe the lots go away too. That will all impact climate through transportation changes.
- Weakness (W): Supply chains are not up to the task of fully connecting smaller organic producers with these larger institutional pipelines. Need to improve supply chains to improve access.
- Opportunity (O): Cost is often cited as a reason organic can’t be included in child nutrition programs, but USDA is already not going for the lowest cost items in their procurement – they’re choosing foods according to what portions of the market that need support. Organic producers are being left out of this process in favor of USDA supporting conventional markets. Raising awareness on this disconnect could be helpful.
- Threat (T): There are always big fights in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) over reimbursement.
- (O): Pursuing a universal strategy (like what’s included in the Build Back Better initiative) could be a potential way forward, but we will need to make sure there is TA and guardrails so that it does not become a giveaway to Sodexo.
- (O) (T): Cash in lieu of commodities could be a great way to give states the flexibility to include more organic food. However, flexibility can also lead to purchasing that slides the other way, toward more processed and less healthful foods.
- (O): Organic should come out in support of raising the federal minimum wage - purchasing power is an important part of this conversation.
- (W): Many schools do not have the infrastructure or trained staff to handle scratch cooking.
- (W): Nutrition quality groups are not convinced of the efficacy of organic as a choice.
- Strength (S): Organic sector is rich with data on why this system is better for people and the environment, but we need to better leverage it.
- (O): USDA seems more comfortable talking about culturally appropriate foods than they do talking about organic. If we had cultural groups ask for organic within these programs, could that be an avenue to explore?
- (O): Need a branding/marketing program on how we approach this with Congress.

- (W): Our current language around organic could be helping to exclude us in federal feeding programs.
- Branding/marketing guide for how we approach organic x child nutrition with Congress.
- USDA can mandate that organic not be prohibited from organic purchasing in the WIC and other nutrition/feeding programs. They've already done this for the fruits and vegetables voucher portion, but have yet to expand it to the main program.
- If we allow WIC to differentiate state-by-state, there will always be some who lag. Advocacy needs to be targeted to federal.
- Supporting local food procurement can be one way to expand organic inclusion. Many states already have policies that additional reimbursement dollars can be provided or higher prices paid for a locally-sourced product (DC does this). Perhaps organic could build support and good will by supporting these initiatives.
- Support tribal nutrition and food sovereignty efforts, such as the Tribal Nutrition Improvement Act.
- The benefits themselves (SNAP, WIC, school meal programs) are under threat. The organic community should firstly support the benefits themselves (i.e., become an ally to existing advocates) and then push for improvement of the benefits (i.e., inclusion of organic).
- Some culturally important foods might be organic but not necessarily organic certified, so equity barriers to organic certification might exclude some producers if USDA prioritized organic certified.
- Don't shame the children or families for their food choices, focus energy on reforming the system and increasing access vs shaming.
- Some states have taken the lead on making allowances for organic in WIC. Should support/uplift/promote those efforts to other states.
- 15-year compliance period for poultry in the OLPS rule. Participants support OLPS implementation in a reasonable time frame, not 15 years. Some participants have requested or will request meetings with OMB about the ability of poultry farmers to continue selling product, just not as organic. The OMB cost-benefit analysis has been flawed all three times.
- We could use appropriations to meddle with the implementation timeline of improving animal welfare standards instead of opening up OFPA.
- Some consensus around changing OFPA to incorporate more animal welfare standards and address the other 10-20 year problems NOP is frozen around. Worry that OFPA will get worse if amended. Then again, how will we make progress if we don't amend OFPA when nothing has been working for 20 years?
- Not enough producers to meet institutional needs, even if we had the right policies in place.
- By making certification more affordable and accessible, we can increase producer numbers and make federal meal program participation more feasible.
- Incentives to greater ag diversity. Crop rotation. Soil health. Reduced pesticides. Pest pressures. Crop rotation can be supported as a bridge to organic farming without being explicit that it is an organic program. 4.1 million went to IPM through CSP (conservation

something something). There should be organic specific bundles within CSP. Many things are at play in the farm bill which is a parochial thing.

- Investments in research around worker safety issues in the Farm Bill is something where we could get some resourcing for that overall workforce health and would be a place to find some carrots to incentivize better practices.
- With regard to the water, creation of a national infrastructure bank. Have a fund to make out infrastructures in good working order. A lot of support from the legislators. We need to get into the public arena so that people understand what it's about and what it's supposed to do. Do what was done to pay for the war for independence and civil war. We need to use the treasury to pay for our infrastructures.
- Need to remember every farm is different: have things like tiered payments for practices(how can we really incentivize farmers who have less acres), BIPOC producers think about who is the best person to be doing that interfacing(USDA has burned a lot of bridges so maybe community organizations).
- The biggest CAFO shouldn't be getting dollars for climate smart incentives, putting size limits
- Early adopters have been rewarded so little and polluters haven't paid a bit: Farmers are very responsive to what we signal in policy. What we pay for now is specialization, maximization, no biodiversity. Send a signal of what we are going to pay for as a policy and the early adopter will be compensated.
- Ease of access, cost of utilizing them, ease of utilizing programs. Need to look at extent that small diversified farmers can access programs. The access piece of a carbon market would be absolutely critical.
- Rule making is not effective or timely, and it is subject to partisan reversals. Whatever needs to be done has to be put in the Farm Bill/amendments to OFPA. We need Congress to act, not the NOP.
- Carrot and the stick: We need to remove the carrot for bad practices. The carrots are always money. Debt relief for CAFO operators. Grants. No low interest loans. Prop 12. We want to see folks transitioning to animal welfare certification programs to receive credit.
- In addition to SNAP, there are other programs (e.g., GUSNIP/ Double Up Food Bucks) that could potentially make it easier for families to purchase organic; especially at the farmers market. There are currently some efforts to nationalize GUSNIP in the 2023 Farm Bill that could be useful to support.
- Organic should support programs that help those in poverty and look for ways to support minority/disadvantaged family farmers in the Farm Bill.