

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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December 13, 14, 2016 Growing Pennsylvania's Organic Farms to Meet Domestic Demand

Harrisburg (December 13, 14, 2016) US Organic Market needs more US Organic Farmers

In 2015 there was significant growth in the demand for organic farm fresh foods in the domestic market. China, New Zealand, and Mexico are some the countries that are providing organics products to the United States market. Currently, Pennsylvania is 3rd in organic production, and it is believed Pennsylvania farmers can increase their market share in the United States. Pennsylvania can be the 'keystone' to organic dairy, grains, fruits, and vegetables, all drivers of growth in the marketplace an organic farmer. The goal would be to become the organic breadbasket to the East Coast.

Growing Pennsylvania's Organic Farms educational conference focuses on organic production practices for beginning and transitional organic farmers. In-depth presentations on current organic farming issues are provided by speakers from universities and institutions with accomplished organic research programs, successful organic farmers, and farm industry representatives dedicated to organic production. Sessions at the 2016 conference will include topics on animal health, dairy, pastured livestock, fruits, vegetables, small (heritage) grain, soil health, and pest and weed control.

Known as the "father" of biological agriculture, Gary Zimmer is an internationally known author, speaker, and consultant. He owns Otter Creek Organic Farm, a family operated, award-winning 1,000-acre farm near Lone Rock, WI, and has been on the board of Taliesin Preservation Inc. since 2011. Zimmer will be the keynote speaker at the conference.

Jim Gerritsen and his family have owned and operated Wood Prairie Family Farm as an isolated organic farm in Aroostook County, Maine for 40 years. MOFGA-certified organic since 1982, the Gerritsens grow organic early generation Maine Certified Seed Potatoes, seed crops, vegetables, and grain. Gerritsen is the theme speaker for the conference.

The intent of this conference is to annually support Northeast and Mid-Atlantic organic farmers with information and discussion on the best available organic farming practices. The conference is a collaboration of private, public, and government agencies: PA Dept. of Agriculture, Rodale Institute, PA Certified Organic (PCO), Organic Valley Dairy, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA certified organic farmers, consumer advocacy groups, and PA Farm Link.

If you would like to be a sponsor/exhibitor at GPOF? Link here:

<http://www.gpofconference.org/exhibitors/>

Growing Pennsylvania's Organic Farms will be held on December 13 - 14, 2016. To register, visit <http://www.gpofconference.org/registration/> or contact Michele Brookins at 717-787-5319 or mbrookins@pa.gov. Students can receive a \$50 discount off of registration by showing student ID at the conference. Lodging arrangements can be made at the Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel, 4650 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111. To register for lodging by phone, call 717-564-5511 or visit <http://www.gpofconference.org/location/>.

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