

Roundtable Discussion Identifies Organic Research and Outreach Priorities

During the University of Minnesota's Organic Field Day, held July 11, 2007, at the Southwest Research and Outreach Center, over 100 farmers and researchers shared ideas for University organic research and outreach priorities.

The roundtable discussion was led by Organic Outreach Coordinator Jim Riddle and Organic Research Coordinator Carmen Fernholz.

The group of farmers and researchers was full of ideas, ranging from pursuing organic no-till research, as described earlier in the day by keynote speaker Jeff Moyer of the Rodale Institute, to converting a University dairy herd to organic management.



Below is a complete list of the organic research and outreach ideas.

SWROC Organic Field Day July 11, 2007 Roundtable Suggestions for University of Minnesota

Organic Research Ideas:

1. Giant ragweed management in row crops
2. Organic dairy research at University – systems approach, mastitis, forages, genetics for grazing animals, conversion from conventional dairy
3. Beef genetics for optimum grazing and carcass quality
4. Larger research plots, especially for vegetables
5. Roller/crimper no-till – row crops and vegetables, analyze performance and profitability in different regions, at UMN sites and on farm research
6. Energy conservation in organic systems
7. Carbon sequestration with different organic methods
8. Measuring nitrogen availability, soil biological activity – need quick and reliable tests
9. Markets for alternative dairy products – goats, sheep
10. Economic impacts of organic to communities
11. Organic purchased input research – validate claims made by input manufacturers and suppliers
12. Organic or natural product ingredients for non-food companies like Aveda, opportunities for other markets, including agricultural products deemed by NOP to not be currently available from organic sources
13. Costs and environmental effects of various agricultural systems – organic, no-till, ridge-till, etc.
14. Comprehensive research priorities, make University accountable for organic, systems research
15. GMO contamination of organic crops

16. Legume cover crop species - nitrogen contribution, winterkill, and biomass production – information for across state.
17. Hairy vetch research and breeding - early flowering, cutworm susceptibility

Organic Outreach Ideas:

1. Marketing – consumer outreach and education
2. Infrastructure for local and regional processing of organic products
3. Tours of organic farms; audience – transitioning producers, consumers, other themes
4. Symposium at Lambertton, expand field day to two days – speakers, field tours, dinner conversations, have option to attend one day, more topics like dairy, horticultural crops vs. agricultural crops, unique experts from around country
5. Principles of organic systems applied to other producers – spin-off benefits of organic research findings
6. Attracting young people to organic farming, creating mentorships for new and transitioning farmers
7. Organic hotline for specific questions, dedicated person to answer, organic extension specialist
8. 4H, FFA, and Master Gardener outreach
9. Retired organic farmers group
10. Integrated site for organic research and resources with simple, comprehensive, research-based information on organic production