

Organic Farmer Researcher Network Quarterly Planning Meeting Notes 4.4.24

The April 2024 quarterly planning meeting had 18 participants with good representation from both farmers and educators/researchers.

Review of network goals

- Share resources such as grant funding, ongoing studies seeking participants, etc.
- Create partnerships to ensure solid organic research...
- Share results of organic research to a wider audience...
- Develop farmer-led research questions
- Form working groups
- Facilitate Coordinated On-Farm Trials
- Organic Research Agenda for Ohio
- Make it easier to access past research
- Compensate participating farmers

Comments on Network Goals

- Could we add a goal of connecting to a broader presence of researchers and organizations in the Midwest, like other states' researchers, Marbleseed, etc. Network members have connections to share. Beth Knorr and Marc Amante offered help making connections with University of Wisc.
- Carl asked if group covered vegetative production only, or was also open to animal production.
- Doug added that our network could serve not only to review researcher grants, but also on-farm grants and projects.
- Bridget Burgess suggested it would be helpful to get grant information in front of farmers at their meetings and gatherings and be prepared to discuss the risks, time sinks, benefits. She felt there was interest in the OEFFA grain growers group in energy grants, cover crop and soil health research – especially if they are compensated for data they are collecting.

Current Grant Support

Reviewed goals of the OREI grant that our network received in September and looked at our progress thus far at the half-way mark.

Goal: Hold at least 5 DIY Research Workshops

- We've done 3 so far. Hoped to have one focused on Plain community farmers and another on organic dairy.
- Michelle: Ohio Beekeepers Conference in late October (Central State is hosting)
- Carl and Beth suggested we should create a one-page description of our workshops. How they are structured, what the goals are, what resources do we bring?
- Doug discussed developing a "next step" workshop or meeting. A Beyond Basics offering to develop a solid research question into a research plan, budget, grant proposal, etc.
- Lindsay: What really helped me was getting to an actual on-farm research project in person. Got to see how it was laid out, how much space it really took, realistic expectations about the time and commitment required.

Goal: Continue Virtual Meeting Series

- Lindsay: Monthly meetings are cool, but I never get the same sense of engagement. What if we had multiple speakers sharing short trials and experiments. Promote and elevate the informal

research people are doing that can be grown into larger projects – which has been a message from this group that she appreciates.

Goal: Produce an Ohio Organic Research Agenda

- Plan to use survey, workshop ideas and comments to build this agenda. Really focused on Ohio growers who are interested in research.
- Beth suggested starting a list now and keeping it in an accessible place to better facilitate connections and sharing. Maybe post ideas right after a workshop for instance.

Goal: Network Building and Quarterly Planning Meetings

- We are providing in-person and online ways to participate
- We (group facilitators) are learning to better manage the time and tasks needed for networking.
- We need a place where we're sharing what our group does louder. We do have a website, but it could use work and offer more useful things. (SARE guide to on-farm research, stipend paperwork, list of emerging research topics.)

Goal: Grant Proposals

- Our goal was to produce 3 grant proposals or working groups. Our meetings and workshops have fostered 4 Warner grant proposal.
- How can we best foster SARE and OFRF proposals this fall?
 - Start talking about grant submissions far enough in advance
 - Liked Lindsay's idea of having tours – seeing a project in progress and being able to talk with the lead researchers and hosts.
 - Michelle suggested reaching out to current SARE grant recipients for speakers or tours. Donnie Boynkins, Seth and Zach Dobbelar.

Goal: Co-create at least 5 Relevant Resources or Events

- Membership database is still a popular idea. Could we use Teams? Cassy noted past issues sharing Teams info with people outside of Ohio State. Maybe even something as simple as a google doc.
- Tour of a current research project could satisfy this requirement too.