

## Notes from OOFRN Planning Meeting on 12-5-24

### **Attendance:**

Cassy, Johnnie, Denise, Cheryl Wheeler, Matt Falb, Brian Gwin, Carl Skalak (Blue Pike Farm), Matt Kleinhenz, Kisha Parker (Parker Farm), Morning Robinson, Lindsay Klaunig, Kara of Attican Farm, Michelle Wallace, Elijah Dean, Katie Lloyd, Doug Jackson-Smith, Donee Boykin

### **What Can this Network Do/Keep Doing?**

- Networking – farmer to farmer and researcher to researcher and support system!
- Share grant opportunities. Sharing and supporting grant opportunities that reduce farmer risk in research projects.
- Help getting ideas turned into a funded grant proposal.
- Keep the Network newsletter because it raised the profile of the group and kept the network in the forefront of farmer awareness
- Give farmers the confidence to apply for a grant/write a research grant proposal
  - True Story: Lindsay applied for a OFBF organic variety trial grant and was emboldened to go for it due to this OOFRN group – pepper shade trials for seed production. She applied for grants for things she does anyway, questions she asks anyway but now gets higher quality outcomes and more reportable results – good quality data.
- Provide instant free access to past presentations
  - Appreciate that recordings are available even if I haven't listened to them.
- Offer a jolt of enthusiasm every third Thursday – a significant positive that possibilities exist to participate in this network

### **What would you like to see more of/What would you like to see us improve upon?**

- Increase farmer participation overall.
  - Keep providing stipends, especially the farmer leader stipend to help a farmer participate at a higher level. Keep supporting farmer equity in collaborative working spaces.
  - Create a way to do asynchronous matchmaking
    - i.e. spreadsheet with names and interests for farmer to farmer pairing and researcher to farmer pairing.
  - Pilot a structured Peer to Peer Farmer Support so a farmer can have another farmer be their accountability partner. Pairing farmers for deep one on one conversations for research projects.
  - Pilot a structured paid farmer mentoring program.
    - Being clear on how many hours to allocate for the amount of funds available to support the farmer time.
    - For example, right now, if you have 3 years of organic management experience you can qualify to be a TOPP mentor whether you are still managing an organic farm or not. (Johnnie/OEFFA can provide more info)
- Publish a university/professional researcher expertise list–
  - The list of faculty given with the OSU Warner grant application may be a good starting point.

- CSU also has a meet the researchers digital publication
- Offer presentations and meetings at different times so you don't have to come in from the field mid-day on a good working day.
  - Do we change the time depending on the time of year and the topic to match?
- More marketing/promotion of the program with a Clearer Message
  - Missed opportunities to expand the farmer base by not being at the places that farmers gather – i.e. market garden training program in Cleveland
  - Present on farm research as a way to improve your on farm profitability/business resiliency
  - Clarify that research is the focus, not getting money for research. Do you want to do this project with or without funding – should the answer to this questions be yes for this group?
  - Be realistic on time commitments.
- More support from facilitators to help organize farmers for meetings and logistics to help people set up research experiments.
  - Do we need to recruit other paid university/OEFFA partners to make this possible?
  - Are there support systems in place that we should connect farmers to? Ie Michael Fields Institute for grant writing support.
- Developing or sharing a framework for any research project.
  - Better using our DIY Research workshop materials worksheets in between workshop
  - Create an intake form to capture ideas and contact us form to connect with a farmer leader, facilitator, researcher, etc.

### **How do we best use the OEFFA Conference 2025 as a Gathering Place**

-Suggestions for research questions to flesh out and/or further develop into projects. Names in parentheses indicate who suggested the topic but does not commit anyone to the topic.

- Henry Pellar and Lindsay Klaunig – Living cover crop mulches for cucurbits – watermelons as a seed crop and as a market crop, solutions and terminations methods that work (Lindsay Klaunig)
- Spotted lanternfly in the NE (Carl Skalak) impacting commercial crops.
- Companion planting (Carl Skalak)– Friends with Benefits – does companion planting work or not. Donee Boykin is in. Could be open field or high tunnel.
- High population corn (Eli Dean)
- Flame cultivator follow up trials (Eli Dean)
- Variety Trialing (Lindsay Klaunig)
- Participatory breeding work and adaptation – heat adapted, climate resiliency (Lindsay Klaunig?)
- Local Spawn Production for mushroom production (Janell Baran)

-Connect to a researcher in advance and give farmer access to literature review in advance to address questions that come up and what has already been done.

-Invite other farmers, researchers and support staff to participate in specific questions/projects that we know we are going to focus on at the conference.