

THE COMMUNICATOR

ORGANIC CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL | JUNE 2026



OCIA CERTIFIED ORGANIC | JUNE 2026 |

Organic Eye recognizes OCIA as Certifier Upholding the Highest Ethical Standards

Take Back the Organic Farming Movement Switch to Certifiers That Protect Family Farms and Share Our Values



Certifiers Upholding the Highest Ethical Standards

Baystate Organic Certifiers	Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
Global Organic Alliance, Inc. (GOA)	Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA)
MOFGA Certification Services	Vermont Organic Farmers, LLC
NOFA-NY Certified Organic, LLC	Yolo County Organic
OEFFA Certification	
OneCert, Inc.	

Ethically-Challenged Certifiers

Partnering with corporate lobbyists and the USDA: hydroponics, livestock factories, imports, conflicts of interest, etc.

Americert International	Oregon Department of Agriculture
California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)*	Oregon Tilth Certified Organic*
Clemson University	Organic Certifiers, Inc.*
Colorado Department of Agriculture	Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO)*
Control Union Certifications*	Pro-Cert Organic Systems, Ltd.*
EcoCert*	Quality Assurance International (QAI)*
Georgia Crop Improvement Association	Quality Certification Services*
Idaho State Department of Agriculture	Texas Department of Agriculture
Indiana Certified Organic — EcoCert (ICO)*	Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
Midwest Organic Services Association, Inc. (MOSA)	Washington State Department of Agriculture*
Nature's International Certification Services — EcoCert*	Where Food Comes from Organic*
OnMark Certification Services	

Unranked

Agricultural Services Certified Organic	Marin Organic Certified Agriculture	Natural Food Certifiers*
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship	Maryland Department of Agriculture	Perry Johnson Registrar Food Safety, Inc.
Kentucky Department of Agriculture	Minnesota Crop Improvement Association*	Primus Auditing Operations*
	Montana Department of Agriculture	SCS Global Services, Inc.*
	Monterey County Certified Organics	

* *Organic* OTA Certifier-Member



This guide will be continually updated as more information becomes available at [OrganicEye.org](https://www.OrganicEye.org).

If you are a farmer or business certified by one of the unranked organizations, please encourage them to contact [OrganicEye](https://www.OrganicEye.org) to transparently share their policies.





President's Message

Greetings everyone,

Spring has sprung, and I hope your year is off to a great start. As always, your OCIA Board has been hard at work strengthening our organization and ensuring we remain responsive to our rapidly changing world.

First, I would like to commend our staff for their outstanding efforts participating in numerous trade shows over the past year. These events were funded through TOPP (Transition to Organic Partnership Program) dollars. One major advantage of attending these shows has been the opportunity to evaluate which events provide the greatest value to our organization. While the TOPP program is scheduled to expire at the end of 2026, OCIA plans to continue participating in the most beneficial trade shows moving forward.

Significant changes are also underway at OCIA R&E (Research & Education). The by-laws have been updated, and Brandon Hill will assume the role of Executive Director. Going forward, the R&E Board will work more closely with the OCIA International Board to strengthen collaboration and engagement. Although no microgrants or scholarships were awarded in 2025, OCIA R&E plans to resume these programs in 2026. OCIA R&E applied for TOPP partnership and is successfully filling the agreement.

In other news, a bylaw amendment passed at our last AGMM (Annual General Membership Meeting) authorized the creation of an International Chapter. After thoughtful discussion, the OCIA Board officially approved this new chapter during our May meeting.

The International Chapter is designed to provide a home for farmers and processors who either do not wish to affiliate with a local chapter or do not have one available in their area. To preserve OCIA's current chapter structure, International Chapter members will not have voting rights. Annual membership dues for the International Chapter will be \$35. The Board hopes this initiative will help expand membership opportunities and welcome farmers and processors who may currently certify elsewhere.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank everyone who certifies with OCIA. The Board and I are always available to answer questions or address concerns. Contact information for all Board members can be found on our website and in this newsletter.

As the only member-led organic certifier, OCIA remains an organization where your voice can truly be heard.

Thank you for your continued support.

CHRIS JAWORSKI
OCIA INTERNATIONAL
PRESIDENT



Upcoming OCIA Events



Treasurer's Message

Happy beginning of summer to all our OCIA members and friends! Hopefully you're starting to get some moisture while avoiding the nasty weather.

For the beginning of 2026 through the end of April, income is up 15% from this time last year, and expenses down 6%. Cycle 3 renewals were combined with Cycle 2 which would account for some of the increase but allows for inspections to be completed earlier as well. Keep in mind, numbers have a way of evening out as the calendar wears on but our talented team at OCIA continues to implement processes to bring the highest value for the most reasonable costs.

Accounts Receivables are down 50% for this time last year. OCIA staff works diligently to collect certification fees in a timely manner and payment plans are available if your operation needs an alternate way to pay renewal fees/inspection costs. Lastly, one of our long standing goals is to have six months of operating expenses in our reserves and we've been able to meet that as of May 2026. Kudos to all who have been working hard to keep us fiscally healthy!

Well, stay safe this summer and enjoy the work ahead – the fact that we're still able to do it is a blessing!

CHRISTIAN EVANS
OCIA INTERNATIONAL
TREASURER

Staff Workforce Development Training

September 14 - 17, the OCIA Staff will participate in an in-person Workforce Development training. **All OCIA offices will be closed during this time.**

We are looking forward to the opportunity to collaborate and strengthen OCIA relations and expertise.

Peru Inspector Training:

- October 26th and 27th, 2026
- Location: Moyobama, Peru
- More Information: <https://ocia.org/events/>

Mexico CGG and Processor Training:

- December 1st - 4th
- Veracruz Mexico
- More Information: <https://ocia.org/events/>

Certification 101:

Find the zoom links <https://ocia.org/events/>

- June 17th 10:00am
- July 22nd 10:00am
- August 26th 10:00am

Spanish Certification 101:

Find the zoom links <https://ocia.org/events/>

- June 23rd 10:30am
- June 30th 10:30am
- July 9th 10:30am
- July 14th 10:30am

OCIA Organic Office Hours:

Find the zoom links <https://ocia.org/events/>

- June 10th 11am
- June 24th 11am
- July 8th 11am
- July 22nd 11am

Transition to Organic Farming Workshop - North Platte, NE:

August 1st 9:30am - 4:30pm



Executive Director Message

Exciting new opportunities are taking shape at OCIA Research & Education. Brandon Hill will assume the role of Executive Director beginning in December 2026. We are currently applying for grants to further support our mission of advancing organic education and research. Our goals include providing technical assistance, workshop opportunities, outreach, and education programming.

OCIA International is committed to supporting our certified operators with high-quality service and clear communication. Thank you for your continued trust and partnership. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or concerns. Wishing you a safe and successful summer,

AMANDA BREWSTER
OCIA INTERNATIONAL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings OCIA International Members,

We are in full swing of the 2026 inspection season! If your inspection has not yet occurred, it is likely just around the corner. We continue to receive files and are working diligently to coordinate inspections as efficiently as possible. Cindy does an outstanding job in helping to keep inspection costs as low as possible—we appreciate her dedication.

As a reminder, noncompliance(s) are a normal part of the organic certification process. They are not intended to be punitive or overly critical but rather are required by Organic Regulations. Operators are expected to respond to noncompliance notices promptly and thoroughly, so that OCIA can fulfill its responsibilities to our accrediting bodies.

We also encourage you to seek support and insights from fellow chapter members and certified organic farmers. As your certifier, OCIA is prohibited from offering consulting services or providing technical advice on how to correct specific noncompliances. If issues are not addressed adequately, OCIA is required to proceed with the next steps in the compliance process, which may include proposed suspension or other adverse actions. Timely and complete responses help avoid these outcomes. I encourage you to contact our team for any assistance we are permitted to provide.

Be sure to visit our website at www.ocia.org for information about upcoming events, including trade shows and local farm tours. If you're hosting a farm tour, please let us know so we can help spread the word by listing it on our site. Please also follow us on social media - Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn - for updates and additional information.





OCIA Research & Education

OCIA Research and Education Mission

The mission of OCIA Research and Education (R&E) is to support farmer driven research, on farm and at research institutions, including exploratory and demonstration projects. We facilitate connections between farmers, researchers, consumers and decision-makers and educate organic producers and local and global communities regarding organic farming and foods.

Organic Micro Grant Program

The Organic Micro Grants Program supports small, high-impact projects that advance organic agriculture and benefits multiple producers, processors, and/or consumers. Funding is intended to encourage innovation, education, and practical research that can be replicated and shared across regions. Projects must clearly support organic agriculture and align with the OCIA Research & Education mission.

Typical award amounts range from \$500 to \$3000. Projects must be completed within one year of approval. A progress report is due at the mid-point and a final report is required upon completion. Final reports should not exceed two pages.

Submit a completed Organic Micro Grant Application (<https://ocia.org/research-education/micro-grants/>). Applications are reviewed every year by the Board of Directors. Please submit your completion application to abrewster@ocia.org.



Scholarship

The purpose of the OCIA Research and Education scholarship is to support students pursuing education in agriculture or agricultural - related fields. This scholarship is intended to encourage leadership, innovation, and service within the agricultural sector by investing in students committed to advancing agricultural education, sustainability, and community engagement.

Scholarship Award

- Award Amount \$1,500
- Number of Awards: 1-3
- Funds may be used for:
 - Tuition and Fees
 - Books and educational materials
 - Required program expenses

Please completed scholarship application available at (<https://ocia.org/research-education/scholarships/>) Please submit your completed application to abrewster@ocia.org.





OCIA R&E Scholarship Recipient

Sai Parkash Naroju,

*Ph.D Candidate, Graduate Research Assistant,
Dept. of Agricultural Sciences and
Engineering, Tennessee State University*

I am truly honored and deeply grateful to be selected as a recipient of the OCIA R&E scholarship. It is a privilege to receive this recognition, and I sincerely appreciate the time, consideration, and support extended by you and the selection committee.

This scholarship means a great deal to me, as it will significantly support my academic and professional journey. It also motivates me to continue working diligently in my field and to contribute meaningfully to organic agriculture and sustainable systems.

I am pursuing education in agriculture because I strongly believe that the future of global food systems depends on our ability to produce food sustainably without compromising productivity. As a Ph.D. candidate in Agricultural Sciences at Tennessee State University (TSU), my research is focused on improving the productivity and resilience of organic farming systems while reducing the yield gap between organic and conventional agriculture. My interest in agriculture began during my undergraduate program (B.Sc. Agricultural Sciences), where I gained hands-on experience in crop production, soil management, and sustainable farming practices. However, it was during my graduate studies that I realized the critical challenge: organic agriculture promotes environmental sustainability but often struggles with lower, inconsistent yields compared to conventional systems. This realization shaped my academic path and motivated me to focus on developing science-based solutions to improve the efficiency and productivity of organic farming.

My doctoral research involves evaluating diverse cover cropping systems, including legumes, grasses, and brassicas, to understand their role in improving soil ecological functions, nutrient cycling, weed suppression, and overall crop productivity. I also study the termination methods and timings of cover crops, which are critical yet often overlooked factors influencing nutrient availability and crop performance. In addition to field research, I am exploring innovative production systems such as organic microgreens and vertical farming, which offer opportunities to increase production efficiency and optimize resource use. These particular systems represent the future of agriculture, especially in urban and resource-limited environments. Through field trials and controlled-environment studies, I aim to identify practical strategies that farmers can adopt to enhance organic yields while maintaining ecological balance.

Beyond research, my passion for agriculture is deeply rooted in its impacts on the farming community. Through extension programs, farmers workshops, and field demonstrations, I actively engage with various growers to translate research into actionable and practical solutions. My goal is not only to generate scientific knowledge but also to ensure that it reaches the farming community in a meaningful and practical way. Ultimately, I am pursuing agriculture to help build a resilient, productive, and sustainable food system that meets the demands of a growing population while protecting our valuable Mother Nature.

Ultimately, my goal is to contribute to a future where sustainable agriculture is not only environmentally responsible but also economically viable and highly productive.





OCIA R&E Scholarship Recipient

Ava Schmutte,
Norris High School, Firth, NE
University of Nebraska - Lincoln
Animal Science, Pre-Vet

Thank you for the exciting news!

I am pursuing education in agriculture because agriculture is the foundation of everything I care about. It connects me to the land, the animals, and the people who make Nebraska what it is. Without agriculture, rural communities like mine would not exist. And without trained professionals who understand both the science and the heart of agriculture, those communities cannot thrive.

My path in agriculture began in my own backyard, raising poultry. I started with a small flock of chickens, collecting eggs each morning and learning what it takes to keep animals healthy and productive. That experience taught me responsibility in a way nothing else could. The chickens depended on me for food, water, shelter, and care. If I did not show up, they suffered. That lesson in accountability has stayed with me and grown stronger with every animal I have cared for since.

As I expanded my experience to include equine, beef cattle, and swine, I began to see the bigger picture. Agriculture is not just about individual animals. It is about systems. It is about nutrition, reproduction, genetics, management, and business. It is about feeding families, supporting local economies, and sustaining a way of life that has defined Nebraska for generations.

The future of agriculture in Nebraska depends on young people choosing to come back. Our state's farmers and ranchers are aging, and too few young professionals are entering production agriculture or related fields like veterinary medicine. The shortage of large animal vets in rural Nebraska is already critical, and it will only get worse if we do not act. I want to be part of the solution. By returning to Nebraska after veterinary school, I can help fill that gap and ensure that the next generation of farmers and ranchers have the support they need. My education in agriculture will focus on animal science through the pre-veterinary program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This degree will give me the scientific foundation I need to pursue veterinary school and, ultimately, a career focused on production animal care. But my agricultural education will also teach me about the livestock industry, production medicine, and the challenges facing farmers and ranchers today. That knowledge will make me a better, more well-rounded veterinarian.

My involvement in agricultural education, leadership, and community activities has been the foundation of my high school experience. Through FFA, HOSA, NHS, and hands-on work with animals, I have grown as a leader, a student, and a future veterinarian. Each of these organizations and experiences has taught me something valuable about service, responsibility, and the kind of professional I want to become.

In FFA, I have been a member since 2022 and have served as Secretary for the past two years. This role taught me how to keep meetings organized, communicate effectively with officers and members, and support our chapter's goals. Being Secretary required attention to detail and a commitment to showing up prepared every single meeting. I learned that leadership is not about being in charge; it is about making sure things run smoothly so everyone else can do their jobs. FFA also connected me to the agricultural community and showed me the importance of advocating for farmers, ranchers, and the animals they care for.

Thanks again for selecting me as a recipient!



2027 OCIA

Annual General Membership Meeting

Join OCIA International February 11th, in Council Bluffs, Iowa

OCIA International's 2027 Annual General Membership meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn & Suites Ameristar, February 11th in Council Bluffs, IA. The one day event will provide OCIA operators opportunities to connect with peers, board members and OCIA International Staff. Attendees will also have the opportunity to learn about microgrant and scholarship opportunities.

Attendees with voting rights will have the opportunity to vote on the proposed 2027 Budget and elect the 2027 Board of Directors.

Comprehensive informational packets are available on the OCIA website under "events". The packets, available in both English and Spanish, include information about:

- AGMM Agenda
- Hotel Reservations
- Registration
- and more!

Members who plan to attend the AGMM should be sure to register no later than February 3, 2027.

Room Reservations are available at a block rate until January 19, 2027. To make reservations, call 712-322-9232 and mention OCIA International, for the group rate.





DID YOU KNOW?



OCIA provides Technical Assistance to farmers undergoing the transition process? If you are a transitioning farmer located in North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, or Colorado, we are here to support you.

- Work 1:1 with a provider to develop your organic system plan
- Learn how to create and maintain a successful recordkeeping system
- Help with preparing for your first inspection
- Understand how your operation can meet the organic regulations



OCIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES

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Carolyn Lane, Secretary, USA
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AL - Amanda Brewster



OCIA Field Signs for Sale

Aluminum "No Spray Zone" signs are currently for sale at \$20 each plus shipping/handling.

- Call us at 402-477-2323
- Email: info@ocia.org

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OCIA INTERNATIONAL

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