

ORGANIC
seed
ALLIANCE

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



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FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we finish this annual report, the world has been arrested by the coronavirus pandemic. Reflecting on the year seems like a nostalgic luxury detached from the difficulty our communities currently face. Yet we are able to face these challenges as an organization because of the strength granted to us by you, our partners, supporters, and funders. Thank you for believing in our mission, acting to advance it, and investing in our sustainability.

From advocacy successes in strengthening organic seed policy, to launching our Organic Seed Producers Directory, to hosting two new regional seed summits, 2019 was a landmark year. While our work reached new milestones, so did your giving. Thanks to you and to an unusual and generous capital donation, OSA enjoyed a year of fortuitous philanthropic support, raising over \$1.5 million for our operations, programs, and a new seed facility.

We feel incredibly fortunate to brave the crisis before us with so much support. Our work at Organic Seed Alliance has always focused on hope and resilience: the hope inherent in every seed and the resilience of farmers and food systems relying on seed that can be saved, improved, adapted, and shared. Thank you for empowering us to share that hope and resilience in a time of great need.

Gratefully,

Cara Louie



OUR MISSION



Organic Seed Alliance advances ethical seed solutions to meet food and farming needs in a changing world.

We envision organic seed systems that are democratic and just, support human and environmental health, and deliver genetically diverse and regionally adapted seed to farmers everywhere.

OUR VALUES

In 2019, the OSA staff reexamined the values that have guided our work for the past 16 years through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens. We believe that these core principles reflect who we are and how we operate as an organization and will inspire our team to advance our mission with renewed purpose.

ACTION

We value taking action to support seed growers and to remove structural barriers to a just and equitable seed and food system.

CIVILITY

We value civil discourse on issues that matter to our constituents.

COLLABORATION

We value public participation in decision-making—in the field and in policy—beginning with the grassroots, resulting in the co-creation of knowledge and shared solutions.

COMMUNITY RIGHTS

We value a community's right to determine whether and how culturally important seed are used and shared.

DIVERSITY

We value genetic, biological, cultural, and social diversity in our seed and food system.

EQUITY

We value the equitable treatment of all individuals and equitable rights for all, and the equitable exchange of seed with appropriate acknowledgement and compensation.



FAIRNESS

We value fair competition, labor, markets, and opportunities for all.

FARMERS

We value the leadership and rights of farmers across time and scale in research, education, policy, seed stewardship, and food security.

HEALTH

We value a healthy environment and the health of all species, including the right to clean air, soil, and water.

INCLUSIVITY

We value an organizational and program environment that is inclusive of all.

INTEGRITY

We value the integrity of seed and personal and professional integrity in the people who steward them.

PRECAUTION

We value preventative actions and policy positions in the face of uncertainty.

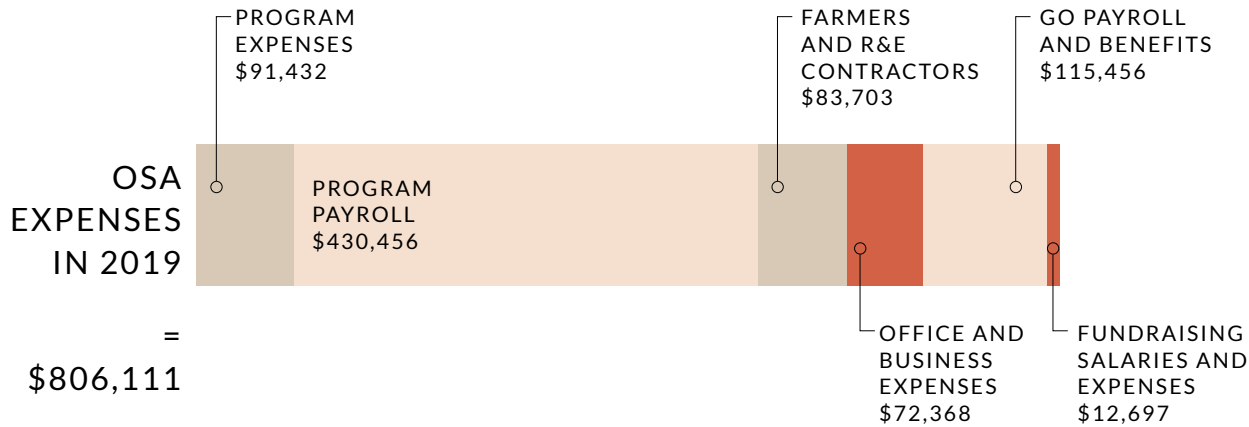
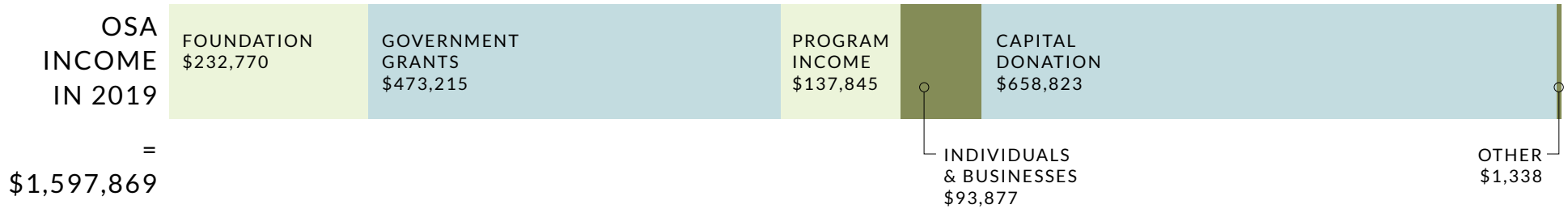
PUBLIC GOOD

We value actions, programs, and policies that aim to serve the public good first.



FINANCIAL REPORT

CASH BASIS



NEW SEED CENTER FOR OUR NORTHWEST OPERATIONS

In July 2019, a generous community member gave OSA a significant capital donation to build a new seed center on land we lease at Finnriver Farm & Cidery in Chimacum, WA. This project will allow OSA to expand and professionalize our organic seed operations and to provide local seed growers access to more equipment and educational opportunities. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2020 and we are actively fundraising to enhance our capacity and strategically plan for programming centered on the facility. To learn more, please contact Executive Director Cara Loriz.





RESEARCH

Organic Seed Alliance is working to embrace the full potential of seed—from farm to fork—through collaborative research projects that closely engage farmers, university researchers, and food and farm organizations and businesses. We take a regional approach to breeding and seed production, leveraging our national collaborations to develop resilient, regionally-adapted varieties, and to grow both the success of farmer seed stewards and the supply of organic seed.

IN 2019, OSA:

Evaluated over **200 NAMED VARIETIES** and over **600 BREEDING LINES**. Breeding projects included cabbage, carrots, sweet corn, tomatoes, and quinoa

Engaged **34 FARMERS** as on-farm research partners, **4** of them **ON INDEPENDENT ORGANIC BREEDING PROJECTS**

Partnered with **12 UNIVERSITIES** and **14 SEED COMPANIES** on research trials and variety improvement projects

Participated in **8 FARM FIELD DAYS** and **5 CULINARY TASTING EVENTS** featuring regional varieties

RESEARCH THAT MEETS CULTURAL AND CULINARY NEEDS

OSA is thrilled to partner with Viva Farms, a non-profit farm business incubator for aspiring and limited resource farmers in Skagit Valley, in searching for field corn varieties that will mature in the short growing season in Western Washington and that can be made into tortillas. This project grew out of an effort to assist immigrant farmers adapting culturally significant varieties to their new regions and is funded by New Field Foundation. Several of the Latinx farmers at Viva Farms were looking for corn to produce high-quality tortillas similar to the ones they enjoyed in their home state of Oaxaca, Mexico. From sourcing and trialing varieties, to nixtamalizing corn, to a tortilla tasting, this cross-cultural, seed-to-table project was a celebration of the power of partnerships and seed work. Thanks to all involved: the nine trialing farms, seven seed companies, the growers and crew of Viva Farms, the Port Townsend High School Spanish class, and the Bread Lab.

EDUCATION

EVENTS: 6,000 SERVED

Our team traveled to **11 STATES** and participated in **37 EVENTS** to deliver seed education, share resources, and advocate for strong policies. Over **5,100 PEOPLE ATTENDED** these state, regional, and national events. OSA also co-hosted **ORGANICOLOGY**, a biennial gathering that brings together **OVER 800 PEOPLE FROM EVERY SECTOR OF THE ORGANIC MOVEMENT** to cross-pollinate ideas, inspirations, and opportunities for growth.

PUBLICATIONS: 2,000 SHARED

Individuals representing **ALL 50 STATES** downloaded over **2,075 PUBLICATIONS** from our online library of resources. OSA's library includes manuals on how to conduct on-farm plant breeding, seed production, and variety trials; proceedings from all of our Organic Seed Growers Conferences; and policy reports, webinars, recordkeeping tools, and more. All of our resources are available **FREE OF CHARGE**.

SEED INTERNS: 24 MENTORED

OSA partners with the Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture on a **SEED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**, now in its second year. This program connects beginning seed growers with experienced growers who want to train the next generation of seed stewards. In **2019**, the program connected **24 INTERNS** with **16 HOSTS** and the program continues to grow.

NEW REGIONAL SEED SUMMITS

OSA has been convening the national Organic Seed Growers Conference for over 20 years. During that time, we've seen the organic seed movement grow and flourish in regions throughout the country. In 2019, OSA participated in the Northeast Organic Seed Summit and co-hosted the first ever Southeast Organic Seed Summit and Upper Midwest Seed Summit. We also hosted the 5th annual California Organic Seed Summit. These summits foster thriving regional seed systems and we're committed to providing support for their continued growth.



ADVOCACY



OSA advocates for legislative, policy, market-driven, and grassroots initiatives that result in strong and decentralized seed systems that support organic seed growers.

3 POLICY COALITIONS

BUILDING UNITY IN THE ORGANIC COMMUNITY

Investing in our coalition memberships is essential to growing power and impact in the organic policy space. As active members of the National Organic Coalition, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, and Organic Farmers Association, OSA is able to leverage these large networks of advocates while adding value to policy initiatives in Washington, DC, and beyond.



6 POLICY INITIATIVES

1,795 SUBSCRIBERS to our policy action alerts

STRENGTHENING ORGANIC INTEGRITY

OSA works closely with the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and broader organic

community to keep the topic of seed at the forefront of organic policy discussions. This year OSA was instrumental in the NOSB passing proposals that ensure a future where more organic food is grown from organic seed. Ahead of the fall NOSB meeting, we surveyed organic field corn companies representing seed planted to over 70% of organic corn acreage in the U.S. The survey was essential to informing our policy recommendations on the topic of seed integrity. We surveyed these companies on their testing practices, costs, and experiences with GMO contamination to better understand how organic policy can improve the genetic integrity of seed used by organic farmers.

RESISTING HARMFUL POLICIES

OSA joined the resistance to the USDA's relocation of its preeminent agricultural research agencies, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Economic Research Service. OSA also provided recommendations to the USDA for strengthening GMO regulations, calling on the department to develop

a new policy framework that protected the integrity of organic seed and the health of rural communities. Finally, OSA organized against an Oregon Department of Agriculture proposal to allow increased canola production, which would put the livelihoods of seed growers in this prime seed-growing region at severe risk.

CELEBRATING ORGANIC POLICY PARTNERSHIPS

The National Organic Standards Board's spring meeting convened in our backyard of Seattle this year. Among the highlights was the NOSB unanimously passing a proposal to strengthen the National Organic Program's guidance document on organic seed. Guidance documents help clarify the regulations for certifiers and provide instruction on how best to enforce them. OSA co-hosted a lively reception for NOSB meeting participants with PCC Community Markets and Organically Grown Company. The event was held at PCC's headquarters overlooking the expansive

Puget Sound, providing a beautiful setting to celebrate the organic movement.

FARM AID

OSA was honored to participate in the 2019 Farm Aid event at Alpine Valley Music Theatre in East Troy, Wisconsin. As an organization, Farm Aid works year-round to build an agricultural future that centers family farmers, and once a year they host a music festival to raise money to support their work and vision. This daylong event celebrates family farmers and builds awareness about the importance of good food, soil, and water. OSA spent the better part of the day at our organic seed exhibit under the Homegrown Village tent, where organizations educated concert-goers about the good work happening from the ground up to shape our food and farming systems. We greeted thousands of people, many of whom were eager to play our "Guess the Seed" game and participate in our photo booth.



NEW RESOURCES



Now more than ever, farmers are looking for practical resources. This year, we added a number of new tools to our online resource library. These tools help seed growers plan and expand their businesses, market their seeds, manage economic risk, and conduct on-farm variety trials—activities that are key to their success and that of the organic seed supply.

200 DOWNLOADS

Our business planning tools and manuals were downloaded over 200 times. These resources help seed growers with enterprise budgeting, record keeping, labor tracking, and seed production planning.

416 HOURS

Farmers spent over 400 hours with our new Variety Trial Tool, which helps them design a variety trial from start to finish, ensuring data they can trust. Variety trials help growers identify the best varieties for their farms and the communities they feed.



72 SEED GROWERS

NEW ORGANIC SEED PRODUCERS DIRECTORY CONNECTS SEED GROWERS AND BUYERS

In 2019, OSA launched a new Organic Seed Producers Directory. This online tool connects organic seed producers with seed companies and wholesale seed buyers. Organic seed producers register their business with information about their farm and the seed they grow. Seed buyers use this platform to find producers based on their location, capacity, crop specialty, and other qualifications. More than 70 seed growers joined the directory in its first year, representing 18 states and 2 Canadian provinces.



MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

130: Number of times OSA was mentioned in media articles

890: Number of times OSA was mentioned on social media

THE NEW YORK TIMES SHINES LIGHT ON ORGANIC SEED

In June, The New York Times published a powerful opinion piece by Chef Dan Barber of Blue Hill Farm, titled: “Save Our Food. Free the Seed.” The piece follows the story of how market consolidation has reduced seed options for farmers, especially organic growers, and greatly impacted the quality of our food – minimizing flavor, good nutrition, and even the diversity of colors available. The piece describes history-altering events – such as the patenting of life—while also celebrating the work of farmers, independent seed companies, and public plant breeders who are generating more diversity in our fields and on our plates. OSA was honored to be part of the collection of organic seed leaders highlighted in the piece. This New York Times piece reached 119 million people.

OSA AUTHORS CIVIL EATS PIECE ON SEED INDUSTRY CONCENTRATION

Thanks to the work of Dr. Phil Howard at Michigan State University, we have a clear image of seed industry consolidation at the highest level. With four seed conglomerates now controlling over 60% of the commercial seed market, consolidation poses a major risk to our food supply and farmers’ right to control their seed. In this piece we offered a green shoot of hope: There is a movement of seed stewards afoot who are making an immediate difference by generating more diversity on their farms and on our plates. We can all support seed growers who align with our values and take back control of our seed supply. This Civil Eats piece reached 15,328 people on Twitter and Facebook.



“I have never talked to a farmer who is comfortable with this level of concentration. It’s unprecedented.”

Kristina Hubbard

Director of advocacy and communications
at the Organic Seed Alliance



MAJOR FUNDERS, PARTNERS, AND BUSINESS MEMBERS



FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATE GIFTS (\$5,000 AND OVER)

Blooming Prairie Foundation
Ceres Trust
Clif Bar Family Foundation
Farm Aid
High Stakes Foundation
Johnny's Selected Seeds
The Ida & Robert Gordon Family Foundation
The Joseph and Catherine Johnson Family Foundation
Nell Newman Foundation
Raynier Institute & Foundation
Row 7 Seed Company
Seattle Foundation
UNFI Foundation

USDA PROGRAM GRANTS

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
USDA Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)
USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)
USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program
Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
Minnesota Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Montana Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Washington State Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
California Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

NATIONAL RESEARCH PARTNERS

Carrot Improvement for Organic Agriculture (CIOA): University of Wisconsin - Madison, Washington State University, Purdue University, University of California - Riverside, University of California - Bakersfield
Northern Organic Vegetable Improvement Collaborative (NOVIC): Oregon State University, University of Wisconsin - Madison, Cornell University, USDA
Tomato Organic Management and Improvement Project (TOMI): Purdue University, Oregon State University, University of Wisconsin - Madison, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
A National Agenda for Organic and Transitioning Research: Organic Farming Research Foundation, Washington State University (WSU) Social and Economic Sciences Research Center

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Association of Official Seed
Certifying Agencies

Carolina Farm
Stewardship Association

Culinary Breeding Network

The Delta Institute

Dry Farming Collaborative

eOrganic

Finnriver Farm and Cidery

Jefferson County Seed Library

Midwest Organic and Sustainable
Education Service

Multinational Exchange for
Sustainable Agriculture

National Organic Coalition

National Sustainable
Agriculture Coalition

Oregon Tilth

Organic Farm School

Organic Farmers Association

Organic Farming
Research Foundation

Organically Grown Company

PCC Community Markets

Seed Sages

Seed Savers Exchange

Seed to Kitchen Collaborative

Sustainable Food Trade Association

University of British Columbia
Centre for Sustainable Food
Systems

University of California - Davis
Department of Plant Sciences

University of Wisconsin - Madison
Seed to Kitchen Collaborative

Viva Farms

Washington State University:
Extension and Food Systems Team

Working Food



2019 BUSINESS MEMBERS

Adaptive Seeds

Blue River Organic Seed

Bridges Organic Produce

The Good Seed Company

Harris Seeds Organic

High Mowing Organic Seeds

Mountain Rose Herbs

Organically Grown Company

Osborne Quality Seeds

Port Townsend Food Co-op

Prairie Road Organic Seed

Sow True Seeds

Southern Exposure Seed Exchange

Wholesum Harvest

STAFF AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS



STAFF

Micaela Colley, Program Director

Kitt Healy, Research & Education Associate, Midwest

Kiki Hubbard, Advocacy & Communications Director

Cara Loriz, Executive Director

Cathleen McCluskey, Outreach Director

Amber McConnon, Southern California Hub Coordinator

Laurie McKenzie, Research & Education Associate, Northwest Region

Katie Miller, Research Field Assistant

Steve Peters, California Research & Outreach Associate

Jennifer Turney, Financial Manager

Jared Zystro, Research & Education Assistant Director

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sebastian Aguilar, Board President, Chickadee Farm, OR

Amy Grondin, Vice President, Sustainable Seafood Consultant, WA

Adrienne Shelton, Board Secretary, Vitalis Organic Seeds, NH

Adam Wagner, Board Treasurer, Oregon Blueberry Farms & Nursery, OR

Heron Breen, Board Member, Fedco Seeds, ME

Ira Wallace, Board Member, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, VA



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