We at Organic Seed Alliance are grateful to have persevered through a challenging year thanks to a community of seed supporters that believe in our mission.

With your help, we were able to pivot during this pandemic year, sharing seeds with communities in need and donating thousands of pounds of produce from our variety trials and plant breeding projects to food banks and a local hospital. While many organizations were forced to shutter, our research, education and advocacy work did not slow down, and we successfully shifted programs online, increasing access and growing our library of free digital resources.

Listening sessions on critical issues — from agricultural innovation to intellectual property rights — engaged hundreds and our first virtual tour of our Washington farm, broadcast on Instagram Live, brought research on new and improved organic varieties into the devices of nearly 1,000 people. Our fully interactive online seed production course graduated 23 seed growers in its first year. And we were incredibly fortunate to deliver our popular biannual Organic Seed Growers Conference in February before the virus spread. It featured a seed ethics intensive that prepared us to respond as calls for social justice intensified and to act on an organization-wide commitment to dismantle systemic racism in agriculture.

Financially, we did feel the impacts of the pandemic as several foundation grant programs benefitting our work were cut back or put on hiatus. Proceeds from 2019 and a Payroll Protection Program loan kept our mission moving forward, as did the unwavering support of individual donors and many long-time funders. Thank you for affirming the essential nature of our work and of seed itself, and for helping us cultivate food and farming systems that are diverse, resilient and socially just.

Gratefully,

Cara LORIZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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.

Finding solidarity in our alliance

Organic Seed Alliance is not a membership organization. We are an Alliance. We are built of partnerships and create spaces for these partnerships to emerge and thrive outside our influence. Any individual or organization whose work, values, vision, or sense of shared responsibility aligns with ours (however imperfectly) is part of this Alliance, whether we’ve been working together for years or have yet to meet.

MISSION

Our commonality is the seed that we steward for the generations to come. Our crops may be different. Our paths of stewardship may twist and bend at different points. We might disagree with each other at times. But we build relationships through our work, our values, and our shared responsibility to seed. These relationships, whether constantly aligned or often debating, form our Alliance. We’re grateful to be doing this work built on these partnerships, because we know that we can do so much more together to ensure seed stays in the hands of the many rather than the few.

The mission of Organic Seed Alliance – the work of teaching farmers to save, grow, and improve seed, and advocating for policies that support their success – is imperative now more than ever. And working in solidarity with you, our Alliance, is the only way to get it done.

Our commitment to racial equity

2020 demonstrated clearly that racial injustice in agriculture and all institutions demands action. OSA believes that ethical seed systems must be socially and racially just, which is why we are listening to communities of color and working to center their voices in the organic seed movement.

OSA’s efforts to address institutional racism in our communities began in earnest in 2019 and grew in 2020 as we established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion core group of staff and board members to lead our efforts. The full staff and board completed a training led by Soul Fire Farm in November 2020, “Uprooting Racism in the Food System,” and developed an action plan to operationalize our anti-oppression values. In support of so many peacefully and constructively engaged in this work, OSA issued the following statement in the summer of 2020:

US agriculture is built on stolen land, stolen seed, and the labor of stolen people. These racist actions and policies are not left behind in history – they are perpetuated daily in our fields and institutions. We must do better. We must be better – as humans and as seed stewards. And we must reckon with this history honestly if we are going to reverse its effects.

Organic Seed Alliance is committed to raising the voices of leaders in anti-racism work. We are committed to listening to and taking actions with our friends, organizations, and leaders who are doing this work in the agriculture community.

We know the work never ends, just like seed work. It takes commitment, education, thoughtfulness, strategy, partnership, and a willingness to act imperfectly. Seed represents hope for the future, and we believe in a future where seed systems are ethical. Achieving this vision is only possible if we dismantle the racism perpetuated in our policies, institutions, cultural norms, and personal behaviors, to create space for justice, reconciliation, and visionary leadership. It’s time for deep work and real change.
Pivoting during a pandemic

In response to COVID-19, OSA adapted to new needs, expanded outreach efforts and donated seed and produce from our research projects to classrooms and communities. In 2020, OSA donated:

- Over 5,250 lbs of organic produce to local food banks and community kitchens from our research farms in Washington and Northern California.
- Over 3,000 gms of vegetable and flower seed to elementary classrooms, lunch programs and the WA State Immigrant Relief Fund.
- Expertise and regionally adapted seed to develop dozens of "seed blankets," bags of organic matter and salad mix seeds for ready-to-grow gardens, a collaboration with Washington State University Colville Reservation and the Washington State Food Systems Team.

"Organic Seed Alliance developed a seed mix of fast-growing greens that we were able to distribute to the residents of the Colville Indian Reservation. This 'Salad Bowl Milpa Seed Blanket Mix' basically jumped out of the ground four days after planting! We were able to cut and harvest out first salad greens 29 days after planting. This made for a very new and exciting 'fast food' for our clients."

Linda McLean
Director, WSU Colville Reservation Extension
Nespelem, Washington

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2020 Income</th>
<th>2020 Expenses</th>
<th>Cash Basis</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;E, Advocacy Payroll</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmers, R&amp;E contractors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>GO payroll, PTO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office and Business Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising Salaries &amp; Expenses</td>
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<td>Individual and Business Donations, interest.</td>
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<td>Foundation Grants</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program income</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To maintain pre-pandemic program delivery levels, OSA sought and received a Payroll Protection Program loan in April of 2020, which was fully forgiven in early 2021.
In 2020, fields of organic variety trials and plant breeding projects flourished despite the pandemic. Organic Seed Alliance and farmer-scientist collaborators continued to test crops for agronomic performance and culinary potential, research that can realize the full potential of seed — from farm to fork.

We also conducted a national survey of organic producers in partnership with the Organic Farming Research Foundation to learn about the challenges and research priorities of organic operations, hearing from 1,099 growers. These results will be published in our five-year monitoring report, “State of Organic Seed,” in 2021/22.

Whether identifying the most resilient, regionally adapted varieties or understanding the needs of organic farmers, our research contributes to the success of farmers and the supply of high-quality organic seed.

Engaged 37 farmers as on-farm research partners working with 15 major crop groups and advancing hundreds of varieties or breeding lines. 30 carrot breeding lines were advanced and 3 new varieties are being released in partnership with the US Department of Agriculture.

Research that meets cultural and culinary needs

Northwest farmers, chefs, and tortilla makers are eager to identify regionally adapted dry corn varieties suitable for traditional Latinx cultural cuisines. As corn is not a traditional crop of the Pacific Northwest, the key is identifying varieties that don’t require short day-length to trigger flowering, and will mature and dry down in our mild climate before the fall rainy season sets in. In 2020, our second year of dry corn research, OSA engaged Mexican heritage farmers, Viva Farms and a Seattle-based tortillaria to test 30 dry corn varieties grown on five western Washington farms. While flavor and texture are key culinary traits for hand-made tortillas, the diversity of varieties also yielded a range of tortilla colors. Participants in this research project have expressed enthusiasm both for growing Northwest-based Latinx cultural cuisines with authentic flavors and for diversifying our local staple crops.

Trials will continue in 2021, retaining the farmers’ and chefs’ favorites from previous trials and introducing exciting new crosses and populations for local selection. In addition to adapting corn for the region, this research is also cultivating relationships and an emerging network of corn lovers. Project participants are uplifting the cultural heritage and sacredness of corn while collaborating to bring corn diversity to the next generation of farmers and eaters in our region.

“Organic Seed Alliance has gone above and beyond to help Viva farmers in so many ways. Their work benefits our community by helping us access crops that are regionally adapted to our Western Washington climate, including culturally relevant seed varieties. They work hard towards inclusivity by providing scholarships and translation, and as a result, Viva farmers have been able to attend workshops and conferences and have even gotten their own seed contracts. Thank you, Organic Seed Alliance!”

Danielle Halstead
Development and Communications Manager, Viva FarmsMount Vernon, WA
While in-person events ended in early 2020 and field-based learning went virtual, OSA delivered education to thousands of farmers and organic advocates and expanded our online resources to grow more seed knowledge during the pandemic.

Events: 5,000 served

Exciting organic seed and culinary events safely held in the first few months of 2020 drew nearly 1,300 people to OSA presentations, farmer trainings, variety tastings, panel discussions and conferences. After shifting to online programming, another 3,700 attended OSA webinars, listening sessions, presentations and forums.

Publications: 2,139 shared

In 2020, OSA publications were downloaded 2,139 times free of charge. OSA publications are available on our online library of resources and include how-to manuals on plant breeding, seed production, and variety trials; proceedings from all Organic Seed Growers Conferences; and policy reports, webinars, recordkeeping tools, and more.

Seed interns: 23 mentored

In 2020, OSA and our partners developed and delivered a highly interactive online course on organic seed production for on-farm interns. Satisfied students touted “connecting with other seed growers and course instructors” and “participating in live discussions with guest speakers” as enriching their educational experience. With help from nine host farms, we graduated 23 students in this first year of shifting to this interactive platform. Word is getting out — we received 150 applications for the 2021 course!

Convening the organic seed community

Prior to the pandemic’s spread, the 10th Organic Seed Growers Conference drew more than 400 participants in Corvallis, Oregon, from February 12-15, 2020. Participants represented 36 U.S. states and 12 countries. An additional 100 people joined the conference via live webinar. OSA co-hosted the event with Oregon State University, Washington State University’s Food Systems Program, and eOrganic.

More than 80 experts presented on topics ranging from organic seed growing, plant breeding, seed economics, policy advocacy,
seed ethics, and more. This milestone 10th biennial conference theme invited participants to “Reflect. Renew. Resolve.”

We have an obligation to use the conference platform to create spaces and learning opportunities to address systemic issues in the greater organic seed community. To this end, our 2020 event included the seed ethics intensive and conference track, and a keynote address on systemic racism in U.S. agriculture from Ricardo Salvador, senior scientist and director of the Food and Environment Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists. His address provided a painful reminder that US agriculture was built through the exploitation of people and charged everyone to understand this history as we collaborate on creating a more just food system.

“In my 38 years of working in agricultural extension, I consider this event to be the bellwether conference that can set future directions. We all have a responsibility to take this movement to the next level.”

Glen Teves  
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources  
Hoolehua, Hawaii
OSA advocates for legislative, policy, market-driven, and grassroots initiatives that result in strong and decentralized seed systems that support organic seed growers. Priorities in 2020 included work toward a national seed policy platform; new partnerships to develop listening sessions on intellectual property and excluded methods; and exploration of the intersection of racial equity and seed policy.

What: Seed Commons & Ownership: A Listening Session on Intellectual Property Rights, Nov 25, 2020. IPR decisions affect all growers, regardless of how they farm or garden (organic or otherwise) and have very real ethical and cultural implications for community seed systems.

Hosts: Organic Seed Alliance, Vermont Law School’s Center for Agriculture and Food Systems and National Center for Appropriate Technology Serving 144 farmers, seed growers, seed companies, plant breeders, gardeners, and researchers during live session; recording viewed an additional 113 times.

What: A Listening Session on Excluded Methods in Organic Agriculture, Dec 12, 2020. In 2016, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) passed a policy proposal that provides a framework for evaluating whether a plant breeding or crop improvement method should be allowed or excluded from organic practice and has since provided clarity on a dozen methods. Jason Cavatorta with EarthWork Seeds Inc. provided an overview of the NOSB’s work and described methods still in question.

Hosts: Organic Seed Alliance, the National Center for Appropriate Technology, and the Society of Organic Seed Professionals Serving 100 farmers, seed growers, seed companies, plant breeders, seed policy advocates, and researchers during the live session; recording viewed an additional 180 times.

We also delivered “A Listening Session to Help Shape Future Innovation in U.S. Agriculture,” on June 30, 2020, hosted by National Center for Appropriate Technology and Organic Seed Alliance in partnership with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, with 337 attending and the recording has been viewed an additional 117 times.

We also delivered “A Listening Session to Help Shape Future Innovation in U.S. Agriculture,” on June 30, 2020, hosted by National Center for Appropriate Technology and Organic Seed Alliance in partnership with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, with 337 attending and the recording has been viewed an additional 117 times.

Growing unity in the organic community

In 2020, Organic Seed Alliance expanded our policy coalition partnerships to 4 by joining the Organic Trade Association. Combined with our active engagement as 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.

“I’m grateful to be able to turn to Organic Seed Alliance for guidance and support as I navigate the uphill battle of protecting Oregon’s vegetable specialty seed industry. It has been good to know there are other seed policy advocates out there also fighting the good fight.”

Amy Wong
Policy Director
Friends of Family Farmers
OSA authors Civil Eats piece on seed patent threats

In September, Civil Eats published an op-ed written by OSA Advocacy Director Kiki Hubbard and Outreach Director Cathleen McCluskey describing how several small organic seed companies in the U.S. received a letter from BASF notifying them of utility patent claims on the multinational’s vegetable seed holdings. The letter describes several broad traits, such as tomatoes with pink fruits and drought tolerant plants. OSA used this op-ed as an opportunity to explain why we believe utility patents are the wrong intellectual property rights (IPR) tool for seed and that other more reasonable tools and models exist.

OSA is committed to understanding the threats of patents to the many seed growers we support and has launched the Seed Patent Watch project to convene conversations, share educational resources, and identify injustices in the patent system.

The Civil Eats article reached 98,000 devices and it was shared with 108,000 on social media.
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Norcliffe Foundation
Patagonia
New Field Seed, Soil and Culture Fund
The Delta Institute

Government/Agency Funders
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  - USDA Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)
  - USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)
  - USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program
  - Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program
Minnesota Department of Food & 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

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National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)
National Organic Coalition (NOC)
Oregon State University
Oregon Tilth
Organic Farm School
Organic Farmers Association (OFA)
Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)
Organic Trade Association (OTA)
Seed Savers Exchange
Seedshed
Seed to Kitchen Collaborative
SeedLinked
Society of Organic Seed Professionals
University of British Columbia Centre for Sustainable Food Systems
University of California-Davis Department of Plant Sciences
University of Florida-Gainesville
University of Wisconsin-Madison Seed to Kitchen Collaborative
Vermont Law School’s Center for Agriculture and Food Systems
Viva Farms
Washington State University
Extension
Food Systems Team
Sustainable Seed Systems Lab
Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC)
Working Food

National Research Partners
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Northern Organic Vegetable Improvement Collaborative (NOVIC) – Oregon State University, University of Wisconsin Madison, Cornell University, Colorado State University
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
Upper Midwest Collaborative Plant Breeding Network – University of Wisconsin-Madison, SeedLinked, eOrganic

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