

A woven basket filled with blue corn cobs and kernels. The cobs are arranged in a fan shape, showing the rows of blue kernels. The kernels are scattered throughout the basket, some still attached to the cobs and some loose. A handwritten sign is placed in the foreground, partially covering the kernels. The background is a light-colored, textured surface, possibly wood or stone.

Organic Seed Alliance
2021 Annual Report

WELCOME MESSAGE

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As Organic Seed Alliance edges closer to 20 years of good seed work, we embrace this opportunity to look back on 2021, learn from our experiences, and celebrate our seed community.

Both our program and organizational investments expanded significantly this past year. We explored new strategies, engaged in social equity and management trainings, and enlarged our seed community through compelling regional, national, and international events, publications and programs.

Our supporters and funding partners sustained our work to deliver crop-specific guides for seed producers, mentorship and internship opportunities for student seed growers, the first National Organic Program course in sourcing organic seed, and so much more. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the outcomes highlighted in this report and buoyed our financial health to surpass the \$1 million mark in 2021.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cara Loriz".

Cara Loriz
Executive Director

MISSION

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

VISION

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.

ABOUT US



Organic Seed Alliance (OSA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that works to ensure an abundant and diverse supply of ecologically grown seed, tended in perpetuity by skilled and diverse communities of seed stewards. To advance this mission, we serve growers working with seed across the US at any scale through participatory research, practical education, policy advocacy, and network development. We prioritize partnerships with organizations and individuals aligned with our values, and we convene spaces where divergent viewpoints can be expressed and explored. In all our work, we ally ourselves with and embrace opportunities to amplify movements for community sovereignty, racial equity, and social justice.

OSA's programs are woven of technical expertise, rigorous methods, practical experience, and deep reverence for seed work. We are in awe of the processes of life, and root our organizational systems in the wisdom of ecology. We continually seek input from growers working with seed, ensuring that we are directed by, and accountable to, the people we serve.

Each year, OSA educates thousands of farmers and other agricultural community members through on-farm and online events and resources. Our research program involves organic plant breeding and seed production research, and our advocacy efforts focus on policies that strengthen decentralized, organic seed systems.

Over the last four decades, the seed industry has rapidly consolidated. Much of our commercial seed is now owned and managed by a small number of transnational firms. Intellectual property practices (e.g., utility patents on seed) stand out as a major cause. This control has stifled innovation in plant breeding and has created barriers to improving the availability and integrity of organic seed.

OSA works to address consolidation through regional seed networks that result in transformative change at the national level. Our collaborative research projects emphasize diversity, ecology, and shared benefits. Our educational



efforts build the base of knowledge necessary for stewarding seed and enhancing diversity through on-farm plant breeding and seed production. And our policy advocacy work promotes the benefits of organic seed while simultaneously confronting threats to genetic integrity and growers' rights.

Growing Our Team

2021 was an Organic Seed Growers Conference planning year and we entered it unsure if an in-person gathering would be possible. Like our brassica friends, the gathering is biennial, and we were committed to hosting it in February of 2022 in whatever format we could. We came to the decision to plan for a virtual event – a first for our team and conference participants – and to make it the best gathering to date. With this we developed a full-time staff position to support dreaming and delivering the conference and other educational programming online on the new Organic Seed Commons platform.



Information and Events Coordinator
Rebekah Korenowsky Woods

We welcomed Rebekah Korenowsky Woods to the OSA team on summer solstice as the Information & Events Coordinator. In this role, Rebekah connects people to resources and to each other through the Organic Seed Growers Conference, Organic Seed Commons, and other events and programs. As a systems-thinker and problem-solver, Rebekah previously conducted research and restoration at the land-water-human interface and stewarded collaborative community relationships for several environmental nonprofit organizations. Rebekah's education includes a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Geology from Ohio University and coursework in the Master of Environmental Studies program at The Evergreen State College. On the creative side, Rebekah is also a fiber artist who uses natural materials and home-grown or scavenged dyes to create simple, functional pieces.

OSA toured researchers from Tuskegee University through our research farm when they visited as part of a Farm Justice & Food Systems Workshop hosted by the Chimacum Center and nearby Woodbridge Farm, an event to cross-pollinate ideas around equitable farm models, land access, food policy, and justice. Pictured left to right: Monyai Chavers, Marquess James, Terence Jackson, Dr. Jas, and Melony Edwards



Growing Our Leadership Skills

As our team grew to welcome Rebekah, field interns at our Washington-based research farm, and advocacy interns supporting our intellectual property rights work, OSA directors rolled up their sleeves to hone their leadership skills. Our directors took a transformative training through The Management Center that, coupled with utilizing their impressive resource library and equity lens, is helping us make organizational changes focused on creating the conditions for current and future staff's success and for a healthy workplace culture.

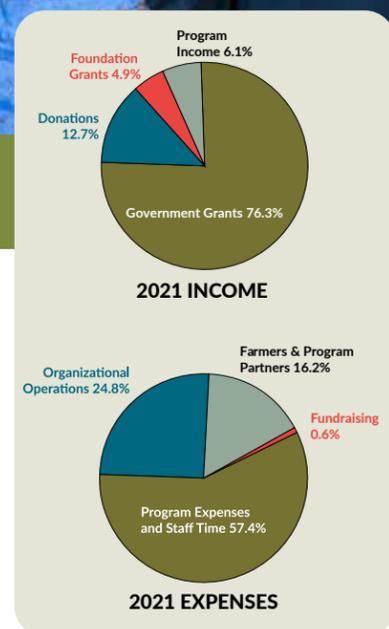
Growing Organizational Change for Justice

We take our commitment to racial equity seriously, with eyes wide open to the internal work we need to do to evolve our organization and the seed communities with whom we work. We know the work never ends, just like seed work. It takes commitment, education, thoughtfulness, strategy, partnership, and a willingness to act imperfectly. 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. Our application was accepted to participate in the Organizational Change for Racial Justice training offered by the Food Systems Leadership Network to help us get closer to achieving this vision. Throughout the two-month training our cohort developed and began implementing a plan for operationalizing racial justice and equity within OSA. Seed represents hope for the future, and we will be accountable for our role in co-creating a future where seed systems are ethical.

FINANCIALS



A Winnow Wizard, an easy-to-use seed cleaning machine OSA is placing with partner organizations, is demonstrated during a workshop at Viva Farms. David Alvarez Photo



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHT
Investing in farmers, educators, and advocates to grow the organic seed movement

Sharing knowledge, engaging farmers as co-researchers in the field, and partnering with organizations that share our values is key to the success of OSA's programs. In 2021, OSA paid over **\$169,000** to more than **70** farmers trialing varieties in development, seed growers leading workshops and field days, advocates growing a Pacific Northwest seed coalition, Spanish translators from within the seed community, and professional educators.

Outcomes: These funds not only compensated them for their contributions to research, education, and advocacy programs but also supported burgeoning seed grower businesses with "seed money" and equipment.

Total Income: \$1,007,483	Total Expense: \$1,044,180	Total Operational Reserves and Restricted Program Receipts: \$307,353
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RESEARCH

“As a small seed company, we love having access to fresh, new genetic material that we can further trial and select for our particular needs. It helps us play a part in breeding on a level that is conducive to our financial and company size. Without programs like this, sourcing new genetic material becomes very difficult for a small seed company without a breeder on staff.”

BRIJETTE PEÑA,
SAN DIEGO SEED COMPANY

FARMS GROWING TOMATO TRIALS

17

STATES WHERE TRIALS WERE GROWN

8

NEW ORGANICALLY BRED VARIETIES TESTED

60+



OSA has long recognized that the success of organic farmers depends, in part, on having access to appropriate varieties. OSA conducted research on dozens of crops in 2021, including 330 varieties or populations in development at our Chimacum research farm alone. While all the crops in our trialing and breeding programs are important, we'd like to highlight one that market farmers depend on most.

Tomato Research by Region

When we surveyed over 1,000 organic producers as part of our *State of Organic Seed Report*, tomatoes were the vegetable crop listed as most in need of improvement for organic systems. However, not all organic tomato growers have the same needs. To the east of the Rocky Mountains, because of the rain and high humidity in the summer, organic tomato growers need varieties that can naturally withstand devastating foliar diseases like early blight and Septoria leaf spot. West of the Rockies, organic tomato growers need varieties that can thrive in the typically hot dry summers. OSA, in partnership with many farmers, seed companies, and organic researchers, has been working on projects to address these regional organic tomato needs.

Through TOMI, the Tomato Organic Management and Improvement project, breeding trials with farmers and researchers across the US, identified delicious, high yielding tomato varieties with foliar disease resistance. At the same time, collaboration with UC Davis and support from the Ida and Robert Gordon Family Foundation is leading to the development of tomatoes that produce flavorful, marketable fruits when grown with limited water. Some of the California tomato breeding sites have been "dry-farm" sites, where the tomatoes received no irrigation or rainfall during the growing season. Although blossom end rot is common under these conditions, we were able to identify new potential varieties that yielded well and resisted the blossom end rot.

Outcomes: Identification and development of dozens of organic tomato varieties with regional resilience and at least 14 adapted for dry-farming (more in the metrics highlight below). In 2021, OSA published the Organic Tomato Seed Production Guide for farmers.

EDUCATION



5325
CONSTITUENTS ENGAGED IN

47
WORKSHOPS, WEBINARS
OR PRESENTATIONS

On topics ranging from do-it yourself seed cleaning equipment to addressing intellectual property restrictions.

Changes in 2021 made OSA’s educational programs accessible to seed growers from around the world as we delivered wide-ranging workshops and engaging events on our new Organic Seed Commons social networking and curriculum delivery platform.

Thanks to partnering organizations and growth in our program capacity and event staff, we delivered two “firsts” for OSA in 2021 that we’d like to highlight—one on the international stage and one much closer to our home base of Port Townsend, Washington.

Inaugural Washington Organic Seed Summit December 6-8, 2021

In partnership with Viva Farms and Washington State University Food Systems program, OSA hosted the first Washington Organic Seed Summit, an event designed to support the expansion of organic seed production in the state and funded by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. The summit attracted 120 participants and featured 10 workshops led by 24 speakers, including a keynote address on “Cultural Connections to Seed” from Kellee Matsushita and Ariana de Leña of Second Generation Seeds, a company dedicated to deepening Asian Americans cultural heritage through seeds.

Outcomes: Summit attendees identified practices they will adopt and next steps to growing the network of Washington seed growers; ongoing feedback is informing a second summit scheduled for January 2023.

“I hope you know how much the work and outreach you do positively impacts the world. THANK YOU.”

A WASHINGTON ORGANIC SEED SUMMIT ATTENDEE



Organic World Congress Seed Ambassadors Program September 7-8, 2021

After a year-long pandemic delay, over 130 participants from 30 countries gathered for this two-day symposium, part of the Organic World Congress, which meets every three years in a different part of the world, this time in Rennes, France. The aim of the event was to build relationships and exchange knowledge within the organic seed and plant breeding community to ensure crop diversity and maximum benefit to organic and ecological agriculture. As the date approached, uncertainty over COVID surges due to the Delta variant kept in-person registrations low. In addition to supporting programming in France, OSA offered to host a parallel online event that included hybrid programs, quite a scheduling challenge given the world time differences and heavy translation lift. It paid off—more than 80 attendees participated online. OSA also supported the participation of 15 seed growers from Latin American countries through a grant from New Field Foundation’s Seed, Soil, and Culture fund.

Outcomes: Sessions on agricultural resiliency, seed diversity, the next generation of plant breeders, and community networks, and seed banks yielded important next steps for the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. International knowledge exchange continues through ongoing networking on the Organic Seed Commons platform.

Priority 1 | Climate Change Legislation

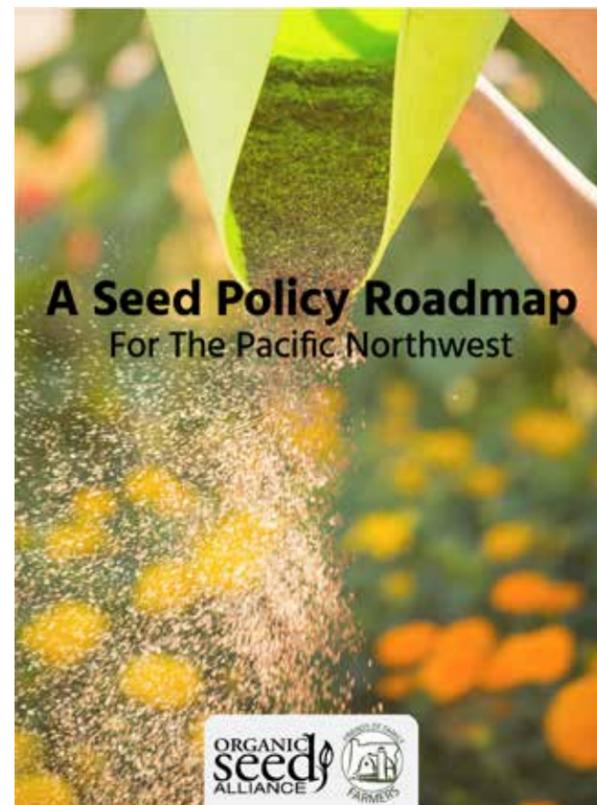
Organic agriculture should be front and center in policies that address the role of agriculture in combatting climate change.

What can Congress do to help?

- Support climate change legislation:
 - Cosponsor Rep. Pingree’s Agriculture Resilience Act [H.R. 5861 in last Congress].
 - Cosponsor the Climate Stewardship Act [S. 2452 (Sen. Booker) and H.R. 4269 (Rep. Haaland) in the last Congress].
- Members of Congress should urge USDA to strengthen enforcement of existing organic rules that require on-farm practices to build soil health and pasture-based systems.



OSA and NOC discuss climate change legislation with Montana Senator Jon Tester



Policy work is essential to advancing organic seed as the foundation of a healthy food system, and to ensuring seed remains an open, public resource. OSA is a proud member of several policy coalitions and associations, including the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), National Organic Coalition (NOC), Organic Farmers Association, Organic Trade Association, and the International Federation of Organic Movements (IFOAM). While our programs engage in policy actions, discussion, and research primarily at the national level we are also called to support state level seed policy needs and highlight a critical new regional policy resource below alongside our national initiatives.

A Policy Roadmap for the Pacific Northwest

Policy plays a critical role in ensuring that growers have access to the seed they need and that the genetic integrity of our organic seed supply is preserved. In 2021, OSA partnered with Oregon-based Friends of Family Farmers to develop a roadmap to equip seed advocates with state-level policy resources to support the protection and expansion of organic and non-GMO seed production in the region. While focused on the Pacific

Consolidation of the seed industry is fueled in large part by the misuse of intellectual property rights on crop varieties and their traits. In order to build a more equitable and resilient food system, plant breeders and seed growers depend on policy that supports competition and ensures their ability to save and share seeds.

PAULINA JENNEY,
MISSOULA, MT

“INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS, RACE, AND COLONIALISM”

469

PEOPLE REGISTERED

249

LIVE ATTENDEES

177

ONLINE VIEWS

Northwest, the resource also supports advocates in other states who are exploring ways to strengthen their region’s seed system. Seed policy advocates in Oregon have worked tirelessly to protect the quality and genetic integrity of high-value vegetable seed crops threatened by GMO relatives that easily cross-pollinate with organic and other non-GMO varieties and by diseases introduced by large-scale canola production.

Outcomes: Thanks to ongoing support from the Bullitt Foundation, OSA will continue to work with policy partners in the region to implement legislative needs outlined in the Roadmap to protect this critical seed-growing region for generations to come.

Seed Patent Watch

OSA’s Seed Patent Watch project serves as a resource on IPR associated with seed, and as a platform for discussion, research, and policy change, where ideas and experiences are planted to grow impactful change. The project shines a light on problems with IPR, including utility patents on plants and genetic traits, while offering pro-active solutions for developing a fair seed system.

In 2021, OSA hosted a panel discussion with Spanish translation to create space for a conversation on race and IPR. The virtual event, titled “Intellectual Property Rights, Race, and Colonialism: A Community Conversation,” featured Anjali Vats from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and author of *The Color of Creatorship: Intellectual Property, Race, and the Making of Americas*. (Dr. Vats is also a recent addition to OSA’s board of directors.) Ernesto Hernández, a law professor from Chapman University, also joined the discussion and shared his expertise on GMO policies and Mexican maize.

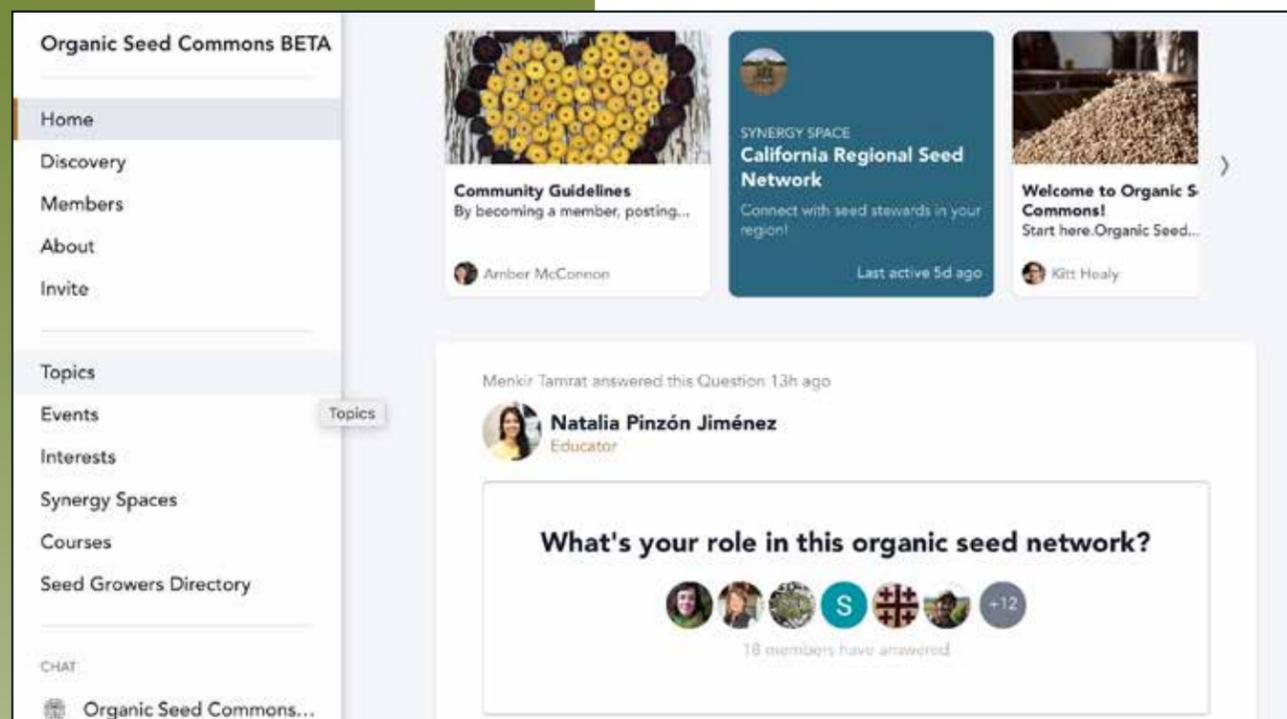


Organic Seed Search

The USDA’s National Organic Program (NOP) requires the use of organic seed when commercially available, yet many producers continue to rely on non-organic seed. In 2021, OSA was honored to partner with the Accredited Certifiers Association to develop an Organic Seed Search course for the National Organic Program’s Organic Integrity Learning Center. The course is designed to support organic certifiers, organic inspectors, and organic operations in better understanding

the organic seed requirement and the benefits of sourcing organic seed, how to document organic seed searches, and best practices for enforcing the requirement.

OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY



One of the positive outcomes of pandemic-induced change has been the adoption of technology to meaningfully interact in the digital realm. OSA's efforts to build an interconnected community online began in 2020 but grew significantly in 2021 as we developed the Organic Seed Commons networking platform.

Organic Seed Commons is a shared space where anyone interested in organic seed can connect with colleagues and collaborators across the broad spectrum of seed work. On a micro level, members can use the Commons to discover **events, opportunities, and potential project partners**; to **share information and ask questions**; and to access **resources and tools** to support their businesses. On a macro level the Commons will be a social ecosystem within which the "seed community" can evolve and amplify itself through **thousands of grassroots relationships** blossoming and coalescing into larger shapes, movements and moments.

Prior to its public launch in early 2022, Organic Seed Commons hosted the Seed Production Course as well as several scheduled events.

In 2021, Organic Seed Commons hosted:

- Special events including the week-long California Organic Seed Summit, the two-day Organic World Congress Seed Ambassadors Consortium, and the inaugural Washington Organic Seed Summit
- Ask-the-experts and tomato seed growing workshops
- The interactive, 6-month Organic Seed Production Course
- Emerging regional seed networks and interest groups

ORGANIC SEED COMMONS MEMBERSHIP

9

DECEMBER 2020

512

DECEMBER 2021

2021 PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

Foundations (\$5,000 and over)

Blooming Prairie Foundation
Clif Family Foundation
Farm Aid
Ida and Robert Gordon Family Foundation
Seattle Foundation
UNFI Foundation

Government/Agency Funders

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 Rancher Development Program

Minnesota Department of Food & 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 Organic Program of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

OSA Business Members

Adaptive Seeds
Bridges Organic Produce
High Mowing Organic Seeds
Hummingbird Wholesale
Organically Grown Company
Port Townsend Food Co-op
Southern Exposure Seed Exchange
Vitalis Organic Seeds

2021 Program Partners

Accredited Certifiers Association
AP Ventures
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA)
Commonwealth Seed Growers

Crossroads Farm
Culinary Breeding Network
Cultivating the Commons
eOrganic
Empowered Flowers
Farm Folk/City Folk
Finnriver Farm and Cidery
Friends of Family Farmers
Green Things Farm Collective
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)
Jefferson County Seed Library
Meadowlark Hearth Farm
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)
National Organic Coalition (NOC)
Nature & Nurture Seeds
Northeast Organic Farming Association
Oregon State University
Oregon Tilth
Organic Farmers Association (OFA)
Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)
Organic Trade Association (OTA)
Organic World Congress
Paukala Farms
Physic Ventures
Pure Nelida Farm
Rhizobia
Riverbend Farm
San Diego Seed Company
Seed Sages
Seed Savers Exchange
Seedshed
Seed to Kitchen Collaborative
SeedLinked
Sunfield Farm
Twisp River Seeds
University of British Columbia Centre for Sustainable Food Systems
University of California-Davis Department of Plant Sciences

University of Florida-Gainesville
University of Hawaii
University of Wisconsin-Madison Seed to Kitchen Collaborative
University of Vermont Extension
Utopian Seed Project
Vilacus Farms
Viva Farms
Washington State University Extension
Food Systems Team
Sustainable Seed Systems Lab
Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC)
The Whole Grain Connection
Working Food

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

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



“Within every seed there is a promise. A promise that there is hope for tomorrow and hope for our future. It is a natural truth that has passed the test of time and it is a promise that we truly need right now.”

TYLER LEVINE

**HAWAIIAN SEED KEEPER,
OSA SEED PRODUCTION
COURSE GRADUATE**

2021 STAFF

Micaela Colley, Program Director

Melony Edwards, Northwest Research, Education & Outreach Associate

Kitt Healy, Midwest Research & Education Associate

Kiki Hubbard, Advocacy & Communications Director

Rebekah Korenowsky Woods, Information & Events Coordinator

Cara Loriz, Executive Director

Cathleen McCluskey, Outreach Director

Amber McConnon, California Research & Education Assistant

Laurie McKenzie, Northwest Research & Education Associate

Katie Miller, Research Field Assistant

Steve Peters, California Research & Outreach Associate

Jennifer Turney, Financial Manager

Jared Zystro, Research & Education Assistant Director

INTERNS

Washington Field Crew: Jessika Blackport, Aba Kiser, Sam Scheidt

Advocacy Interns: Will Gallagher, Paulina Jenney

2021 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

Brijette Peña, Board Member, San Diego Seed Company, CA

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

Read about our 2022 board members [here](#).