



**ORGANIC SEED ALLIANCE | 2022 ANNUAL REPORT**





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OSA's Leadership Team (from left): Jared Zystro, Micaela Colley, Cara Loriz, Cathleen McCluskey

Thank you for encouraging our evolution

Dear Friends,

Organic Seed Alliance (OSA) has grown financially by over 220% in the past 10 years. We see this in our business statements, but we also feel it in our organization and program work. During 2022 we celebrated amplified outcomes from OSA programs alongside the growing pains of an organization that is evolving.

Changes included hosting our first fully virtual Organic Seed Growers Conference: 70 educational and networking sessions to 1,200 registrants over 7 days. The vibrancy and diversity of the conference blossomed as we intentionally shifted the power we hold as a convener to a dedicated conference committee comprised of grass roots seed practitioners, Black, Indigenous, people of color organization leaders, extension researchers and others in the seed movement.

In 2022, we reported on changing opportunities and challenges in the State of Organic Seed report and

published a federal Policy Platform for seed as Washington D.C. decision makers scrutinized consolidation in the seed industry. We bid farewell to departing staff and board members and welcomed new colleagues as we continued organizational development work to identify strategies and staff roles that will adapt like the seed we cultivate. We also closed out one of our most significant research partnerships: the Northern Organic Vegetable Improvement Collaborative.

One thing that hasn't changed is that our work is fueled by the encouragement and generosity of our supporters, partners and funders. Thank you to all who contributed to OSA in 2022 and to the many talented collaborators who made the outcomes and resources highlighted in this report possible. You all have strengthened OSA to face the changes and challenges ahead.

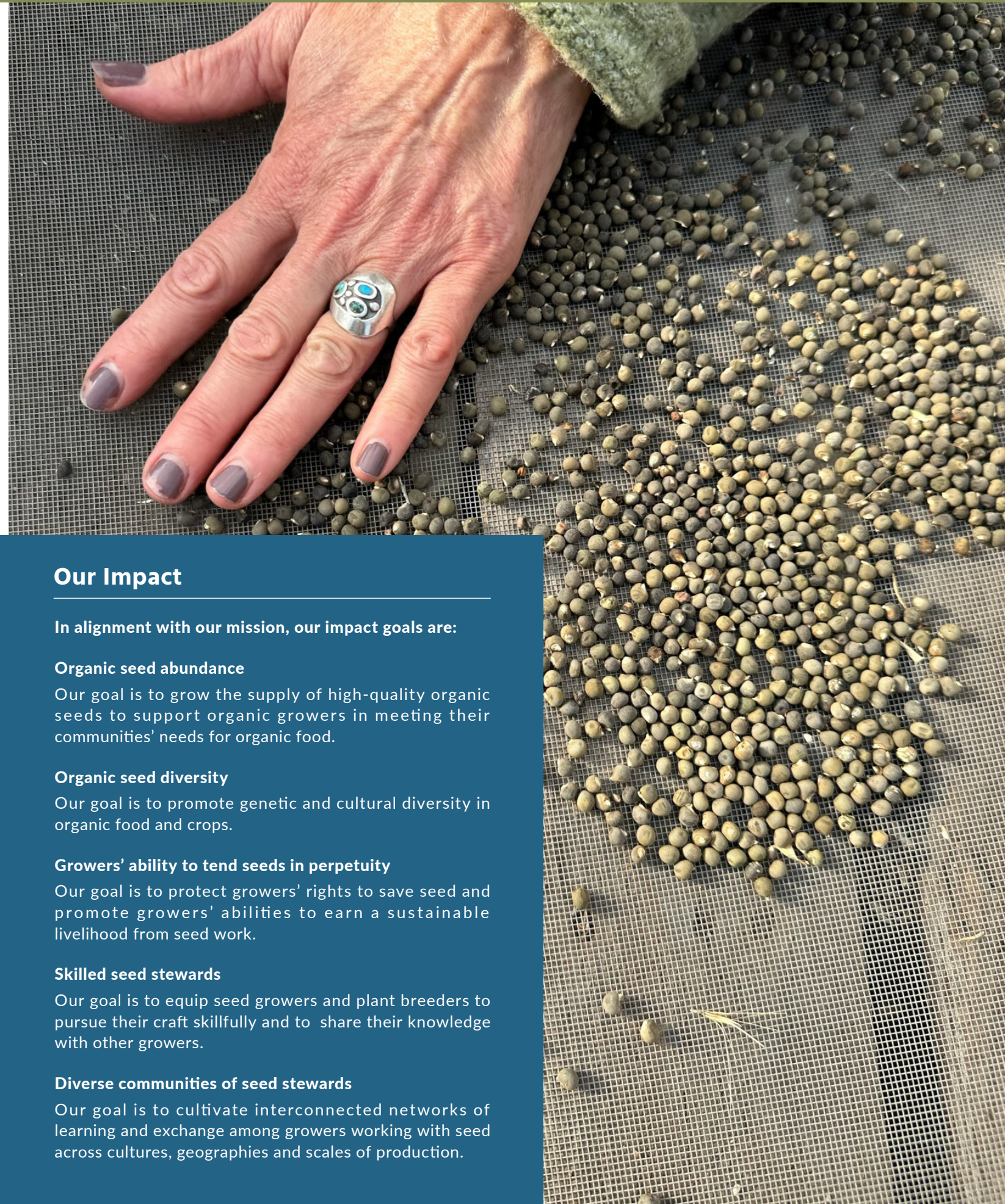
*Cara Loriz*

Cara Loriz Executive Director | On behalf of the OSA Leadership Team



Micaela Colley describes seed saving systems at OSA's research farm in Chimacum, WA

OSA's vision and how we articulate our mission work is evolving as we continue strategic planning and organizational growth. We will be issuing a new strategic framework in mid-2023 and are sharing a preview of our updated vision, mission and impact language developed in 2022 here.



## Our Vision

Seed grows an equitable, abundant and resilient future of food

### Our Mission

Organic Seed Alliance puts the power of seed into the hands of growers. Our work promotes an abundant and diverse supply of organic seed, tended in perpetuity by skilled, diverse and interconnected communities of seed stewards.

To advance this mission, we serve growers working with seed across the U.S. through three program areas: 1) collaborative research on crop improvement and seed production for organic systems, 2) education on the agronomic, economic and socio-political elements of seed work, 3) legal and cultural advocacy toward policies that support organic agriculture and farmers' rights to save seed. Our approach emphasizes relationship building and network development across program areas.

## Our Impact

In alignment with our mission, our impact goals are:

### Organic seed abundance

Our goal is to grow the supply of high-quality organic seeds to support organic growers in meeting their communities' needs for organic food.

### Organic seed diversity

Our goal is to promote genetic and cultural diversity in organic food and crops.

### Growers' ability to tend seeds in perpetuity

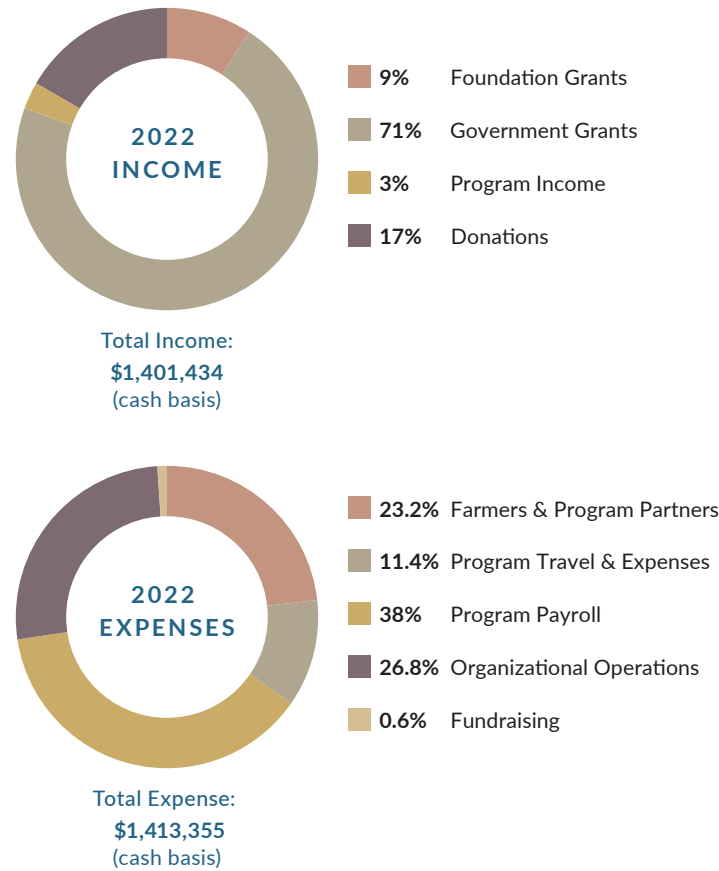
Our goal is to protect growers' rights to save seed and promote growers' abilities to earn a sustainable livelihood from seed work.

### Skilled seed stewards

Our goal is to equip seed growers and plant breeders to pursue their craft skillfully and to share their knowledge with other growers.

### Diverse communities of seed stewards

Our goal is to cultivate interconnected networks of learning and exchange among growers working with seed across cultures, geographies and scales of production.



Total Operational and Program-dedicated Reserves: \$289,641  
 Total Capital Funds: \$612,320

### Supporting seed growers across the country

In 2022, funding of OSA's programs hit its highest mark in the organization's 19-year history. OSA delivered on USDA organic research priorities and beginning farmer educational needs through federal grant programs that surpassed \$997,500 in income. Over \$138,000 in funds were dispersed through a Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program project and a COVID relief impact grant, providing mini-grants to support beginning seed growers, seed equipment and funding to farmers of color collectives and model farms, and as compensation for experienced seed producer mentors and guest instructors.

In addition to putting Beginning Farmer & Rancher funds into the hands of growers, OSA programs funded farmers to conduct variety trials, grow on-farm seed increases, share their experiences at conferences, travel to attend seed symposia and summits, coordinate seed hubs, participate on our conference advisory committee, review OSA publications and policy reports and evaluate our programs. In total, over **\$252,000** in expenses funded participation in OSA programs by farmers and farm support organizations.



Researchers at West Virginia University describe their work with tomatoes during the Student Organic Seed Symposium, a July 2022 conference supported by an Organic Research and Extension Initiative grant.

### Regional Breakdown

By region, the \$252,000 in funds supported farmers in:

- 9%**  
Pacific Northwest (Idaho, Oregon, Washington)
- 12%**  
Mid Atlantic (Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania)
- 12%**  
Midwest (Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, Wisconsin)
- 25%**  
Southeast (Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Tennessee)
- 32%**  
California
- 10%**  
All other states and regions

### First federal audit on the way

OSA is grateful for the opportunity to support farmers through our research, education and advocacy programs. An outcome of the high level of federal grant support received in 2022 is that OSA triggered the Federal audit requirement for the first time. Our full financial and single Federal audit will be conducted during the summer of 2023 and submitted to the USDA by September 30.



*“The NOVIC trials were great community educational tools for gardeners and farmers.”*  
Wild Dreams Farm



Photo: Anders Gurda

Research projects including tasting evaluations like these during an Organic Field Day at the West Madison Agricultural Research Station

**NOVIC project wraps up after 12 years and even more new varieties**

The Northern Organic Vegetable Improvement Collaborative (NOVIC) wrapped up in 2022 after 12 years of funding by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI). The purpose of this program was to develop new vegetable varieties for organic agriculture; improve the ability of farmers and seed producers to grow organic seed and train the next generation in plant breeding for organic agriculture.

NOVIC was led by plant breeding researchers at Oregon State University, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Cornell University and Organic Seed Alliance with collaborators including variety trial coordinators, organic farmers, seed companies, independent breeders, organic farmers, independent plant breeders and the USDA. Projects included plant breeding, participatory variety trials, and training farmers and graduate students in variety testing and plant breeding, work that was celebrated and shared at field days and in presentations held across the country.

**NOVIC by the numbers**

<b>10</b> crops advanced for organic production	<b>18</b> new commercial varieties released to date and many more in the pipeline	<b>68</b> farms engaged in variety trials
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Participatory plant breeding for organic agriculture is an emerging field that requires time, multi-year funding and relationship development. One key lesson of the project was the significant cost, time and skills needed to foster a participatory network and achieve a return on investment. While both farmers and researchers reported struggling with capacity limitations, they also found great value in the deepening of their knowledge of a crop, its seed and how it fits in the broader food and farming system. Engaging the NOVIC network for more than a decade has expanded access to genetic diversity and encouraged changes in awareness necessary to embed that diversity on the farm.

**The scope of OSA’s 2022 research projects**

In 2022, OSA partnered with farmers, seed companies, universities and other institutions to identify and improve varieties for organic agriculture, as well as identifying the best varieties and practices for organic seed production. These projects included the Tomato Organic Management and Improvement Project (TOMI), the Student Collaborative Organic Plant Breeding Education (SCOPE) project, the Carrot Improvement for Organic Agriculture (CIOA) project, the Upper Midwest Collaborate Plant Breeding Network and the California dry farm seed production research project. Altogether, over 100 varieties and breeding lines were tested at over 22 farms across the U.S.



Laurie McKenzie and Micaela Colley select roots at the winter carrot nursery located at the University of California Desert Research Station in El Centro, California



*"I had never grown seed crops before and I am now growing 8 seed contracts!"*

*"I brought 4 new varieties to market during the course"*

*"We depend on this seed production course to help the next generation of Hawaii's seed growers."*

*— Individual students had to say about the program.*

Farmers and researchers learn about organic breeding projects during OSA's 2022 Washington Field Day

**Free educational resources used around the world**

OSA regularly publishes and distributes seed education resources and makes them available in our free access online library. Our publications include manuals on how to conduct plant breeding, seed production, and variety trials; record keeping materials; proceedings from our Organic Seed Growers Conference and policy reports, webinars, and more. Our donors' support at every level facilitates our ability to release new resources.

In 2022, OSA's free online publications were downloaded

**1,751** times.

**In 2022, we added these to our resource library collection:**

- Northern Sweet Pepper Trial Report 2019-2021
- Sweet Pepper Breeding and Seed Saving Guide
- Breeding Carrots for Production, Resilience, Flavor, and Fun in Organic Systems
- Introducción al Mejoramiento en Granjas Orgánicas
- State of Organic Seed, 2022
- 2022 State of Organic Seed Webinar
- 2023 Policy Platform for Seed
- Policy Brief: Climate Change & Seed
- Farm Bill Virtual Listening Session 2022
- CBN x OSA California Variety Showcase
- Proceedings from the 11th Organic Seed Growers Conference

**Training the next generation of US seed growers**

In 2022, we completed our last full year of funding support from the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program for Organic Seed Production for Beginning Farmers: An internship program, online course and national co-learning community. The 6-month in-depth course trained each student in synchronous and asynchronous online course, facilitated peer to peer knowledge exchange and applied, hands-on seed growing either as an intern on a host farm or with a mentor providing one-on-one in person training.

Through this program, we've developed a national network of 30+ experienced seed mentors across all regions of the US and expanded the diversity and inclusivity of participants by 98% (based on project summative evaluation) by partnering with leaders of programs, including Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance, serving socially disadvantaged farmers of color.

**Graduates of the seed production course report they are growing new seed varieties:**

**66%**  
are growing more seed for on-farm use

**40%**  
increasing farm income from seed

**33%**  
adding new seed markets

**100%**  
of respondents would recommend the course to other beginning seed farmers

National, biennial conference goes virtual

Over 1,200 participants from 49 US states and 47 countries from across the Earth joined OSA to co-create the 11th Organic Seed Growers Conference held virtually February 4-11. The biennial gathering is the largest conference in the US focused solely on organic seed and creates spaces where experienced and emerging seed stewards can convene timely conversations, educational trainings and strategy sessions. The 2022 conference was held on Organic Seed Commons, an online platform also launched by OSA in 2022, where seed communities connect, learn and grow with one another.

The event agenda was envisioned and developed by the Conference Planning Committee informed by their seed networks across the US, and led by Organic Seed Alliance's outreach director Cathleen McCluskey.

What the planning committee and participants created together was truly transformational and inspiring. We heard from many folks about how the event impacted them and ideas for making it even better in the future.

All From the series From Organic Seed Alliance

- Seed Production for Market Growers**  
Organic Seed Alliance  
171 views • 1 year ago  
1:39:02
- Protecting Seed's Diversity (Spanish)**  
Organic Seed Alliance  
33 views • 1 year ago  
1:39:01
- A2 | Breeding Barley for Organic Systems**  
Organic Seed Alliance  
89 views • 1 year ago  
1:20:54
- A4 | Black Seed Stories**  
Organic Seed Alliance  
125 views • 1 year ago  
1:10:35
- B1 | Rocky Mountain Heritage Grain Trials**  
Organic Seed Alliance  
67 views • 1 year ago  
1:30:17



The Heirloom Collard Project: A Model for Collaborative Seed Work (English)

Organic Seed Alliance 175 subscribers  
 Like 3 Dislike Share Clip ...

Leaders of the Heirloom Collards Project share their enthusiasm for this important crop during the 11th Organic Seed Growers Conference

*"This conference offered a doorway into the world of seed for all audiences from professional seed producers to home gardeners and everyone in between."*

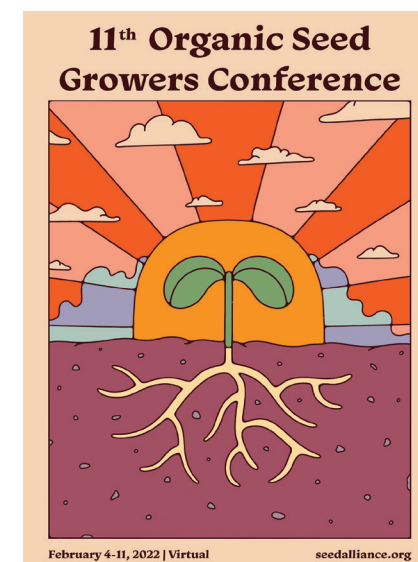
*"We have nothing but positive feedback! It has been amazing in all ways informative, competent, fun, engaging... we are filled with gratitude and amazed by your competence."*

*"The keynotes, the repeated use of the shared agreements, and the organizer introductions helped to set the tone for authenticity and honesty, willingness to sit with uncomfortable conversations, willingness to listen and share."*

- 2022 Organic Seed Conference Participants

Snapshot of the conference by the numbers:

- 1,202** participants from 47 countries and 49 US states and territories
- 491** of those participants were new to OSA programs
- 70** sessions total, 40 live sessions
- 14** sessions offered real-time interpretation in Spanish and French
- 29** sessions were recorded and remain available for viewing
- 30** "Meet-up" sessions organized by topic, region or affinity group



Session recordings, research posters, virtual farm tours, art galleries and more are available in Organic Seed Commons. You can find them [here](#)



Congressman Derek Kilmer (above) learns to drive a tractor at the OSA research farm following a Town Hall session with farmers (right)



In addition to these milestone publications, OSA hosted or participated in these advocacy events:

4 advocacy presentations, webinars and listening sessions

Engaging **1,175** participants

With **11** partner organizations

*“Seed policy should advance organic seed as a foundational input of a healthy food system”*

*Karl Sutton  
Organic seed grower  
Polson, Montana*

OSA’s advocacy program conducts legal and cultural advocacy toward policies that support organic agriculture and farmers’ rights to save seed. This program directly contributes to 1) organic seed abundance, 2) organic seed diversity and 3) growers’ ability to tend seeds in perpetuity.



**New Policy Platform for Seed**

OSA has served as an expert on seed policy, providing formal comments to the National Organic Program and USDA on the importance of seed and the need for equitable seed policies. In 2022, we published a comprehensive policy platform for advancing equitable and resilient seed systems in the next Farm Bill and beyond. The platform provides recommendations on how Congress, regulatory agencies and state governments can support organic seed producers and the diversity of our national seed supply. It provides a roadmap for promoting seed as the foundation of a diverse, healthy and accessible food system.

**Key objectives of the 2023 Policy Platform for Seed include:**

- Level the playing field for seed growers and independent seed companies
- Advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in policies and policymaking
- Resist the privatization of seeds and genetic traits
- Increase investments in public plant breeding as a climate change solution
- Support ecological seed production by expanding organic seed acreage
- Protect the genetic integrity of organic and other non-GMO seed
- Increase the diversity and quantity of organic seed available in the marketplace

**State of Organic Seed shows small-scale success, large-scale challenges**

State of Organic Seed (SOS) is an ongoing project to monitor organic seed systems in the US. Every five years, OSA releases this progress report and action plan for increasing the organic seed supply while fostering seed grower networks and policies that aim to decentralize power and ownership in seed systems. The 2022 report is our third update, allowing us to compare new data with our 2011 and 2016 findings.

More than ever, organic seed is viewed as the foundation of organic integrity and as an essential component to furthering the principles underpinning the organic movement: health, ecology, fairness and care. New in the 2022 report is a deep dive into regional seed networks and their contributions to the seed system.

**The good news:**

- Small-scale organic vegetable growers are planting more organic seed
- Organic farmers believe organic seed is important to the integrity of organic food
- Organic plant breeding investments continue to increase
- Organic seed networks mostly reflect an evolution toward resilience

**Some of the challenges:**

- Most organic farmers still rely on conventional seed and the largest operations still use relatively little organic seed
- Organic seed producers are concerned about utility patents and risks to organic integrity from contamination by nearby genetically engineered crops
- Climate change is severely impacting organic seed growers
- Organic seed producers need more support

OSA is working to meet these needs by advocating for: more public plant breeding and seed initiative funding, more training resources for seed producers, strengthening the organic seed regulation and more equitable seed policies that decentralize power in agriculture.



OSA is grateful to the many institutions, organizations, businesses and farms that supported our mission in 2022.

## Foundations and Granting Organizations (\$5,000 and over)

- Clif Family Foundation
- Farm Aid
- IA O'Shaughnessy Foundation
- Seattle Foundation
- Farmers Advocating for Organics/Organic Valley
- Bullitt Foundation
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

## 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

## 11th Organic Seed Grower Conference Committee

- Bonnetta Adeeb, Steam Onward and Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance
- Jay Bost, GoFarm Hawaii
- Alice Formiga, eOrganic
- Rue Genger, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Nate Kleinman, Experimental Farm Network
- Petra Page-Mann, Fruition Seeds
- Natalia Pinzón Jiménez, Farmer Campus
- Karl Sutton, Fresh Root Farm
- Alexis Yamashita, Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance and Southern Exposure Seed Exchange

## 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
- New Deal Grain
- Cambridge Pacific

## 2022 Program Partners

- Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA)
- Agricultural and Land-Based Training Association
- Ahiki Acres
- Bella Terra Seeds and Starts
- Brim Seed Co.
- Bumble Prairie Growing
- Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA)
- Carter Farms
- College of the Redwoods
- Commonwealth Seed Growers
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers
- Culinary Breeding Network
- Cultivating the Commons
- Dragonfly Farms
- Ecofarm
- Eldur Heron Farm
- eOrganic
- Empowered Flowers
- Experimental Farm Network
- Feral Heart Farm
- Finnriver Farm and Cidery
- Green Things Farm Collective
- Hearty Fork Farm
- Highland Economics
- Huerta del Valle
- International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)
- Jefferson County Seed Library
- The Kohala Center
- La Cocina
- Mavrolas and Associates
- The Meadow Project
- Meadowlark Hearth Farm
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)
- National Organic Coalition (NOC)
- Nature & Nurture Seeds
- Northeast Organic Farming Association
- No-Till Growers
- Open Circle Seeds
- Oregon Organic Coalition
- Oregon State University
- Oregon Tilth
- Organic Farmers Association (OFA)
- Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)
- Organic Trade Association (OTA)
- Pinehurst Community Action
- Pure Nelida Farm
- Quail Seeds
- Radicle Botanical
- Rhizobia
- Rustling Roots

- Saltwater Seeds
- San Diego Seed Company
- Seed Sages
- Seed Savers Exchange
- Seed to Kitchen Collaborative
- SeedLinked
- Seed rEvolution Now
- Seven Sisters Botanica
- Sogn Valley Farm
- Soil and Souls
- Sunfield Education Association
- Tilth Alliance
- Truelove Seeds
- Twisp River Seeds
- Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance
- 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 Redlands
- University of Wisconsin-Madison Seed to Kitchen Collaborative
- University of Vermont Extension
- Utopian Seed Project
- Vilacus Farms
- Viva Farms
- Washington State University
- The Whole Grain Connection
- Watershed Productions
- West Virginia University
- 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



## 2022 Staff

- Micaela Colley Program Director
- Melony Edwards Northwest Research, Education & Outreach Associate
- Kiki Hubbard Advocacy & Communications Director
- Kayla Ierlan Farm Manager
- Rebekah Korenowsky Woods Information & Events Coordinator
- Cara Loriz Executive Director
- Michael Lordon Midwest Research & Education Associate
- Cathleen McCluskey Outreach Director
- Amber McConnon California Research & Education Assistant
- Laurie McKenzie Northwest Research & Education Associate
- Florentina Rodriguez Advocacy Intern, Grass Roots Coordinator
- Jasmine Sarp California Field Intern, California Research and Education Assistant
- Jennifer Turney Financial Manager
- Jared Zystro Research & Education Assistant Director

Washington Field Crew: Ellen Janda, Christina Wilkerson, Leeza Regensberger

## 2022 Board of Directors

- Amy Grondin, President
- Tessa Peters, Vice President
- Angela Day, Treasurer
- Benjamin Uchitelle-Pierce, Secretary
- John Foster
- Emily Rose Haga
- Adrienne Shelton
- Anjali Vats
- Ira Wallace

*How Love burns through the Putting in the Seed  
On through the watching for that early birth  
When, just as the soil tarnishes with weed,  
The sturdy seedling with arched body comes  
Shouldering its way and shedding the earth crumbs.*

Robert Frost (1874-1963), excerpt from "Putting in the Seed"

