

Organic Seed Alliance

# Strategic Framework 2023

## Introduction

Over the last 20 years, Organic Seed Alliance has worked to grow knowledge and power for growers who work with seed. OSA's three program areas – research, education, and advocacy – have been grounded in the desire to increase the quality and quantity of organic seed available to organic farmers by developing networks and connections between seed growers, seed companies, university researchers, policy advocates and other seed organizations.

OSA's network continues to deepen and diversify, shifting to take on the shape of the world around us. In the spring of 2021 Organic Seed Alliance staff and board began a collaborative strategic planning process which yielded this strategic framework. This strategic framework provides a roadmap for the next 5 years of OSA's development, orienting the organization and our partners toward the shared goal of building a more equitable and resilient organic seed system.

## 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.

### Impact goals:

#### *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



photo by Shawn Linehan

# Program Statements

## Advocacy

OSA's advocacy program conducts legal and cultural advocacy toward policies that support organic agriculture and farmers' rights to save seed.

OSA's advocacy approach champions organic agriculture and farmers' rights, targeting key policymakers and amplifying seed grower voices to enhance organic seed abundance, diversity, and ensure growers' perpetual rights to seed cultivation, all while fostering equity and community involvement.

## Research

OSA's research program conducts collaborative research on crop improvement and seed production for organic systems

OSA's research program emphasizes collaborative efforts in crop improvement and seed production tailored for organic systems, aiming to bolster organic seed availability, diversify organically-adapted crops, and nurture a vibrant community of seed stewards, all while pioneering participatory research models for a resilient organic future

## Education

OSA's education program offers learning opportunities about the agronomic, economic and socio-political elements of seed work .

OSA's education program empowers growers with comprehensive knowledge on seed-related agronomy, economics, and socio-politics, emphasizing hands-on learning through publications, webinars, and events, while championing peer-to-peer exchanges to cultivate skilled and diverse seed stewards for a sustainable future.

## Outreach

OSA's outreach program supports relationship building and network development across program areas and partnerships

OSA's outreach program fosters robust networks and relationships among seed growers, integrating diverse knowledge-sharing platforms like Organic Seed Commons and events, to holistically advance organic seed abundance, diversity, and stewardship, while championing the collective wisdom of diverse seed communities.

## What 'Organic' Means to OSA

We support organic certification as the strongest public standard for accountability in sustainable agriculture, and we celebrate the benefits of certification for growers, workers, consumers, and the planet. We also recognize that organic certification is not the right fit for every grower, and that barriers exist to certification and the organic marketplace. Our community includes certified and non-certified organic growers; our work focuses on organic and agroecological practices, knowledge, and philosophies as they exist throughout agriculture. We acknowledge that the organic farming practices we promote largely originate within and continue today through the leadership of Black, Indigenous, People of Color and immigrant communities. We commit to building our organizational capacity for diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) work, as outlined below, so that we can advocate with integrity for the evolution of the National Organic Program, organic seed industry, and organic food industry toward greater equity, transparency, and commitment to dismantling structural racism where it persists in U.S. agriculture.

### Strategic Objectives for Organizational Development

**Objective 1:** Secure unrestricted philanthropic contributions to support strategic initiatives to reduce dependence on grant funding and allow the financial flexibility for staff to comfortably pursue emergent internal organizational development and external constituent needs.

**Objective 2:** Build internal DEI systems and staff skills to increase organizational DEI capacity to create an environment in OSA's workplace and events where people of all identities can thrive because they know that transparent and effective systems are in place to nurture trust, accountability and collective well-being.

**Objective 3:** Formalize OSA's network development/ convener role, scope and strategy to make OSA's network development and convening work a legible part of OSA's services, with clear goals, boundaries and accountability measures, so that OSA's partners and constituents know what they can expect or ask of OSA in this area.

**Objective 4:** Develop and implement a regional strategy so OSA's staff and partners know what they can expect of OSA in the regions where we work, and understand how decisions about regional programs and partnerships are made.

### Scope

OSA's core constituents are growers working with seed, meaning seed producers, grower co-ops, independent plant breeders and independent retail seed companies, primarily operating at a small to medium scale. Certain research and education programs or policy initiatives may include or focus on large scale seed industry entities, or seek to develop relationships between our small to medium and large scale seed industry entities.

While OSA's primary constituents are within the United States, we welcome opportunities for international partnership and exchange. Our domestic focus includes building capacity to offer collaborative support for seed work within the 5 US territories and 3 freely associated states as well as the 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages in the United States when culturally appropriate and in equal partnership with Indigenous and local entities.

OSA strives to be an effective and active accomplice to the visionary organizations leading on racial equity and sovereignty in seed systems. As a historically and currently white-led organization, leading these efforts is outside OSA's scope and core skillset. Building our own DEI capacity so

that we are an excellent partner and workplace for people of all identities IS within our scope and central to our priorities for organizational development. As we seek to support the work of seed sovereignty advocates, we also acknowledge that we operate in the U.S. seed system which is heavily influenced by intellectual property (IP) restrictions. We seek to change those systems from within by advocating for intellectual property rules that ensure farmers' rights to save seed and breed new varieties in perpetuity.

