

LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD FARMERS!

To Help Develop Best Strategies for Transitioning to Organic

The University of Maryland and Future Harvest

Organic grain markets consistently offer appealingly high prices (think \$10 corn and \$20 soybeans), but the 3-year transition process from conventional to organic production can be financially risky and requires skill, strategy, and know-how. This Great Grain Project will arm farmers with the best economic, soil health, and production information for a profitable transition to regenerative organic grain production. In addition, it will provide a reliable support network that transitioning farmers can tap into throughout the process.

The Great Grain Project has 4 major components:

- **Research.** A team from the University of Maryland, led by Dr. Ray Weil, will conduct field research to identify rotation, cover crop and soil management combinations that best optimize profitability, soil health, and weed suppression during the transition from conventional to organic grain production. The research will be conducted on 5 to 6 collaborating farms, as well as on the UMD research stations at Beltsville and Poplar Hill.
- **Mentorship.** Future Harvest will offer a free mentorship program for farmers transitioning from conventional to regenerative organic grain. Farmers new to organic grain production will be paired with experienced organic farmers in our region who will provide advice and guidance on best practices for transitioning and organic production.
- **Economic analysis.** University of Maryland Extension economist Dale Johnson will work with collaborating farmers to identify opportunities for enhancing economic efficiencies in production and marketing during the transition to regenerative organic grain production. A directory of buyers of transitional grain will be developed and made available through Future Harvest's website.
- **On-farm workshops.** University of Maryland Extension and Future Harvest will team up to hold 4 workshops on-farm each year highlighting project research findings as well as market opportunities and infrastructure innovations for farmers engaged in organic grain production in our region.

Farmers can participate in 3 ways:

1. Become an on-farm research partner

Join the effort to hone in on the most practical and cost-effective approach to transitioning to organic production. Contact Dr. Ray Weil at rweil@umd.edu for more information.

2. Join the mentorship program

Become a paid mentor, or join as a mentee for free! Contact Niamh (pronounced "Neve") for more information at niamh@futureharvestcasa.org.

3. Attend on-farm workshops

Interested in learning about the results of all this work? Reap the benefits by attending our workshops! Email Niamh ("Neve") at niamh@futureharvestcasa.org or Nate at nrichard@umd.edu for more information.



DEPARTMENT OF
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