A Wisconsin Organic Task Force was convened at Governor Doyle’s request in the fall of 2004. This original Task Force came up with four recommendations to strengthen the future of organics in Wisconsin:

1. Create a Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council to advise the Secretary, the Governor, the Legislature, and other state agencies on actions that will further the organic industry in the state.
2. Create an Inter-Agency Implementation Team to develop a basis for interagency coordination on efforts to expand organic agriculture in Wisconsin.
3. Hire an Organic Specialist at the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP).
4. Hire an Organic Specialist within the UW System.

In the three short years since the Task Force issued its report, there has been great progress towards meeting the original recommendations.

DATCP established the Organic Advisory Council in the fall of 2006. Secretary of Agriculture Rod Nilsestuen reviewed nominations and selected 12 members to serve on the advisory team. The OAC has been very active ever since. The council has met eight times and made significant progress on critical issues.

An Interagency team incorporating 10 state and federal agencies supports the OAC. In addition, DATCP hired Laura Paine to be the State’s Organic Specialist, and UW CALS established an Organic Specialist position, hiring Dr. Erin Silva within the UW Agronomy Department in August 2006. Pretty impressive progress in a short amount of time!

We plan to provide you with periodic updates when we have new progress to share. Please look for more from the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council in the future.

Mission Statement

The Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council brings together public and private resources to promote Wisconsin’s national leadership position in Organic Agriculture. By advising the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection and other organizations on critical organic issues, the council supports organic production, processing, and purchasing opportunities for Wisconsin farmers, processors, and consumers.
Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council Membership

If you ever have the opportunity to sit in on an OAC meeting, you will see that we have a very diverse and interesting mix of organic voices participating on this council.

The voice of the Wisconsin Organic farmer is represented by Tricia Bross (Direct market vegetables) and Rich Lange (dairy & livestock).

Organic business in the state of Wisconsin is represented by Paulette Bradley (Wisconsin Organic Marketing Alliance Cooperative), Jerry McGeorge (Organic Valley), and Robert Wills (Cedar Grove Cheese).

Our Non-Profit representative on the OAC is Harriet Behar (Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Services).

For the Consumer perspective, Margaret Bert-Mittelstadt joins us from Outpost Natural Foods Cooperative.

Our Certification Representative is Bonnie Wideman of Midwest Organic Services Association.

Lastly, our members at large include: Dave Engel (Rising Sun Jersey Farm, Nature’s International Certification Services), Christine Mason (Standard Process, Inc.), and Jim Munsch (Deer Run Farm).

Our membership represents organics from the corporate and cooperative perspective right down to the farmers market perspective. Our representation is also distributed geographically across the state.

Membership within the OAC is on a revolving 3 year term.

Leadership Within the Organic Advisory Council

The OAC is chaired by Harriet Behar, Outreach Coordinator for Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Services and Jerry McGeorge, Director of Cooperative Affairs for Organic Valley. Christine Mason of Standard Process, Inc. serves as secretary and editor for this quarterly newsletter.

They state, “As leaders of the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council, we guide representatives of our stakeholder community of organic farmers, processors, businesses that work with organic producers, and consumers in efforts to foster growth of Organic Agriculture in Wisconsin.

We currently have five subcommittees: consumer education, organic integrity issues, farmer education, government & legal affairs, & market development.

Through these committees, we have focused ourselves and cooperating agencies in addressing issues of importance to the organic sector.

By building upon Wisconsin’s current leadership position in organics, we hope to build regulatory and educational alliances for the mutual benefit of all residents of our state, improve our environment through the use of organic production methods, and continue to grow diverse organic opportunities for producers, processors, and consumers in our state.”

Organic Agriculture in Wisconsin 2007 Status Report

Wisconsin’s third Status Report on Organic Agriculture was published in February. This biennial publication summarizes the growth of this vibrant sector of Wisconsin Agriculture.

The Status Report is a cooperative effort of the UW Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, and the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council.

Since 2004, Governor Doyle has made it a priority to grow Wisconsin agriculture and to position our state to take advantage of growing consumer demand for food produced without chemicals. Organic production contributes to the diversity of Wisconsin agriculture and benefits the environment, the economy and the consumer.

The Organic Agriculture in Wisconsin: 2007 Status Report provides essential benchmarks as we prepare for the future. This year’s issue highlights the importance of organic dairy in the state.
Wisconsin Organic Interagency Implementation Team

Professionals from 10 separate government agencies assist the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council by participating in meetings and other pertinent events. Having so much representation in one room makes it possible to get organic perspectives considered in many different areas of state government. It also makes progress much faster when a qualified representative is in the room to let us know which organic objectives are the most feasible and which organic objectives may encounter some road blocks.

Interagency participation greatly increases the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council’s efficiency and progress and it is with sincere gratitude that we would like to recognize the following Interagency participants:

Pat Murphy
USDA Natural Resources Conservation
Service State Office

Russ Raeder
USDA Farm Service Agency State Office

Kevin B. Shelley
University of Wisconsin Nutrient & Pest Management Program

Dr. Jed Colquhoun
University of Wisconsin-Extension Horticulture Specialist

Carla Wright
WI Department of Natural Resources

Irv Possin
WI Department Of Commerce

Don Jaworski or Jim Gibson
WI Technical College System

Jennifer Heaton-Amrhein
DATCP-Agricultural Resource Management

Perry Brown
WI DATCP-Director of Agricultural Business & Sector Development, Division of Agricultural Development

Coordinators:
Laura Paine
Grazing & Organic Agriculture Specialist

WI DATCP-Division of Agricultural Development

Dr. Erin Silva
University of Wisconsin Agronomy Department

Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council Milestones

- Developed a set of recommendations for the federal farm bill for Secretary Nilsestuen. These recommendations were forwarded to Wisconsin’s congressional delegation.
- Developed a comprehensive report on the August 2007 flooding impacts on vegetable farmers.
- Provided input on DATCP’s proposed Seed Law revisions.
- Published, in cooperation with UW-CALS and DATCP, the 2007 Status of Organic Agriculture Report.
- Working on establishing a directory of organic farms in Wisconsin.
- Developed a mission statement and logo for the council.
- Working with the Secretary’s office to change the Organic Advisory Council from an ad hoc to a standing council.
The Wisconsin Organic Advisory Logo was designed with assistance from Laurie Lawrence, DATCP’s Graphics Specialist.

The clover represents both the livestock that are grazed on clover in this state as well as the row crops and vegetable crops that rely on clover as a natural fertilizer and cover crop.

Please look for this logo to represent the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council in the future!

Wisconsin’s Organic Leadership Position

Among States, Wisconsin ranks:
- #1 in number of organic dairy farms and in organic milk production (25% of total).
- #2 in no. of certified organic farms (918).
- #1 in organic livestock (23%).
- #1 in organic laying hens (22%).
- #3 in production of organic beef.
- #5 in production of organic hogs.
- #7 in total acres of certified organic farmland.
- #8 in production of certified organic vegetables.
- The number of certified organic farms and processors grew by 17% between 2006 & 2007.