

## Principles for Transitioning to Organic Farming: e-Learning Materials and Decision Case Studies for Educators



## Our Team – University of MN

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## Our Partners

- Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)
- University of Wisconsin, Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS)
- eOrganic
- Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)
- Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (U of MN Extension)



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## Modules

- Crop production fundamentals of organic agriculture and how to transition
- Similar to lectures, but with interactive elements such as quizzes, music, and animation
- Educators can use the modules directly in classes and workshops, or in hybrid courses with both online and in-person teaching

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## Module Topics

What is Organic?	Alternative Crop Production
<b>Resources for Transition</b>	Soil Health
Certification / Record Keeping	Soil Fertility
History of Organic	<b>Weed Biology</b>
Crop Rotation	<b>Weed Management</b>
First Steps in Transition	Avoiding GMO Contamination
Row Crop Production	Cover Crops
Small Grains Production	Economics of New Crops
Forage Crop Production	Marketing

## Decision Case Studies



- Profiles of real-life problems of organic producers in our region
- Designed with an open-ended structure so participants can decide how they would solve the problem

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## Decision Case Structure

- Background of farmers
- Dilemma
- Possible solutions
- Appendices – more information
- Questions for discussion
- Teaching Notes for instructors
- Epilogue
- Example later



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## Decision Cases – Completed

1. Problems using cover crops
2. Organic farming as new career
3. Deciding to convert a profitable apple orchard to organic
4. Using a new rotation to reduce tillage
5. Managing fire blight organically
6. Controlling Canada thistle
7. Determining whether to use plastic mulch for weed control in an organic vegetable operation
8. Deciding whether to convert a grass-fed beef operation to organic
9. Managing soybean aphid in organic soybean
10. **An organic grower struggling to provide enough nutrients to his crops**

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## Decision Cases – In Progress

1. A conventional field crop producer not far from retirement deciding whether to convert to organic
2. Enterprise diversification on an organic grain farm
3. Difficulties in transitioning rented land
4. Several more are planned

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## Our Target Audience

Transitioning farmers

Undergraduates



Materials will be used by Extension Educators, University and college instructors, crop advisors, and regional organizations

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## Outreach

- Listening sessions
- Undergraduate classroom activities
- Transitioning workshops
- Website with project materials



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## Funding

This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under grant number 2013-51106-21005.



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