



2011–2012 eOrganic Webinar Evaluation Report

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eOrganic is the Organic Agriculture section of eXtension—an online collaborative effort of Land Grant Universities across the United States. The eOrganic project provides online information resources about organic agriculture to farmers, Extension educators, organic certifiers, researchers, and the general public. Please find our resources at http://www.extension.org/organic_production.

Summary

eOrganic has been offering webinars (web-based seminars) that are free and open to the public since 2009. As of March 31, 2012, 78 webinars have been offered, and they've been attended by more than 7,600 farmers, Extension educators and university personnel, NRCS staff, and others interested in certified organic production.

This report includes a summary of attendance data gathered between December, 2009 and March, 2012, and evaluation feedback gathered between December, 2010 and March 2012. In addition to information about the eOrganic webinar audience and their feedback on the utility of eOrganic webinars and other eOrganic resources, this report documents specific impacts of eOrganic webinars on farmers and advisers. Also included are suggestions from participants on topics for future resources, and suggestions on how the webinars could be improved, both of which will be used in planning for the webinar series of the coming season.

Average attendance numbers in eOrganic webinars and broadcasts is 111, and the average number of attendees in webinars only is 143. Participants in webinars and broadcasts include an average of 29% farmers, 12% Extension personnel, 11% university researchers or educators, 20% agriculture professionals, and many others, including organic certifiers, government agency researchers and staff, nonprofit organization staff, and Master Gardeners from throughout the United States and beyond (typically Canada). Views of the archived recordings posted to eOrganic's YouTube channel have increased from 5,800 to over 42,000 in the past year.

Across all topic areas, feedback from participants on eOrganic webinars was positive. In surveys administered immediately after the webinars, 98% participants agreed that their understanding of the topic had been improved to some degree, and 96% reported that they intended to apply the knowledge they gained in the webinars in their work. The technical level of the webinars was viewed as appropriate by 83% of participants, and 85% participants reported that webinars were “very easy” to access. In all surveys, 83% participants stated that they would recommend the eOrganic webinars they attended to others.

In follow-up surveys conducted 9–16 months after the webinars, 88% of respondents reported that they had applied the knowledge gained from webinars in their work to some degree during the subsequent months. When farmers in particular were asked whether the webinar contributed to changes in their farming practices, 57% answered “Yes.” eOrganic webinars influenced changes in farming practices and the ability of advisers to better inform their constituents on a wide variety of subjects.

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Evaluation Goals

In 2011–12, eOrganic conducted evaluations of its webinars. The goals of the evaluation process include the following.

1. To determine the size of our audience and whether we are reaching our target audience to improve our outreach efforts
2. To get feedback on the quality, utility and impact of our webinars from webinar participants
3. To solicit feedback from participants on information needs for future webinars and other resources from webinar participants, and how to improve the webinar process
4. To learn the extent to which webinar attendees are already using our other eXtension resources such as articles, videos, other live webinars, recorded webinars, and Ask an Expert

Reaching our Target Audience: Webinar Attendance Data, Google Analytics and YouTube Views

To determine the size of our audience and whether we are reaching our target audience of farmers, Extension agents, researchers, and agricultural professionals who work with organic farmers, attendance and registration data were compiled from reports generated by GoToWebinar®, a web conferencing platform used by eOrganic to host webinars and live conference broadcasts. We also compiled Google Analytics of webinar pages and YouTube views of recorded webinars.

Webinar Attendance

eOrganic has hosted a total of 78 webinars and individual broadcast conference sessions between December 2009 and March 2012. The total number of people who have participated in all eOrganic webinars and broadcasts given is 7,608. 12,743 people pre-registered for the webinars, so participant rates were approximately 60% of those who registered. Of those who participated in the webinars and broadcasts:

- 107 attended 1 webinar offered in 2009
- 2,509 attended 29 webinars in 2010
- 2,541 attended 26 webinars and broadcast sessions in 2011
- 2,451 attended 22 webinars and broadcast sessions offered between January and March 2012

The following data is based on attendee reports for 7,514 attendees who participated in 77 webinars and broadcasts (data for 1 webinar in 2010, attended by 94 people, is not available).

- 3,999 (53%) are unique individuals (meaning that they attended either one or more than one webinar or broadcast). Of these:
 - 2,657 (66%) attended only 1 webinar or broadcast
 - 1,342 (34%) attended more than 1 webinar or broadcast

Of the 7,608 total attendees of 78 eOrganic webinars and broadcasts:

- 6,605 attended webinars
- 1,003 attended broadcasts of live, in-person conference sessions

Average Attendance Numbers

The overall average number of attendees of eOrganic webinars and broadcasts is 98. This includes broadcasts of multiple sessions from the same conference and several webinars and broadcasts that appealed to small, specialized audiences.

The average number of attendees in webinars and broadcasts has increased over the years as follows.

- In 2010, the average number of attendees was 87
- In 2011, the average number of attendees was 97
- In 2012, the average number of attendees was 111

The average number of attendees in webinars only (excluding broadcasts) in all years (based on 6,605 attendees of 61 webinars) is 108, ranging from a minimum of 22 participants to a maximum of 271 participants. Webinars-only attendance has also risen over the years as follows.

- In 2010, the average number of attendees to 29 webinars was 87
- In 2011, the average number of attendees to 19 webinars was 120
- In 2012, the average number of attendees to 12 webinars was 143

The average number of attendees of the 17 live broadcast sessions from 5 conferences in 2011 and 2012 (based on 1,003 attendees) was 59, and ranged from 29 to 284. However, several conferences broadcast multiple sessions, and if attendees are grouped by conference rather than by individual broadcast session, the average number of attendees per conference is much higher at 167.

Demographics

Job Categories

5,950 of 7,514 (79%) of the webinar and broadcast participants were asked to complete information about their job categories during pre-registration. Of these:

- 1,731 (29%) checked Farmer
- 712 (12%) checked Extension Personnel
- 665 (11%) checked University Researcher or Educator
- 1,202 (20%) checked Ag Professionals
- 1,640 (28%) checked Other

Geographic Distribution

According to the attendee reports, webinar and broadcast attendees were from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as 10 Canadian provinces, and several other countries such as Mexico and Norway. The 270 attendees who logged in to the USDA Organic Systems Research Conference broadcasts in 2011 were from 37 states plus Ontario and British Columbia. More information about the regional distribution of webinar participants can be found in the results of the Webinar Immediate Feedback Surveys below.

Google Analytics and YouTube Analytics

Google Analytics

eOrganic webinars are created in GoToWebinar®, and then a pre-registration page is made for each webinar and published on eXtension.org. Following the webinar, the registration page is changed to display the recording of the presentation as an embedded YouTube video. “[Webinars by eOrganic](#)” is the page that links to all upcoming and archived webinar pages—it was the most popular of all eOrganic public content pages from November 2011 through March 2012 with between 1,255 and 3,644 views per month.

YouTube Views of Webinar and Broadcast Recordings

As of May 2012, the complete archived recordings of eOrganic webinars and broadcasts can be found on the [eOrganic YouTube channel](#). Most recordings had been placed there prior to that date, and in total, they have been viewed more than 42,500 times. In mid-April 2011, the recordings had received only 5,800 views, so the recordings have been used much more extensively during the past year. The channel, which also contains eOrganic videos, has over 1,000 subscribers and over 760,000 total views. While the majority of viewers were from the United States, the YouTube webinar archive greatly expands our global reach. YouTube Analytics of the 5 most popular webinars and broadcasts shows that people viewed them from 143 different countries.

Results from Immediate Feedback Surveys of Webinar Participants

Since December 2010, participants in webinars and conference broadcasts have been asked to complete an online survey about the webinar they attended. This request was displayed on the slide that appeared during the webinar question-and-answer period, and in an email sent immediately after the webinar with the survey clearly identified in the subject line. With this protocol, the average response rate to the immediate feedback surveys has been 63%.

The following results are from 47 immediate feedback surveys administered from December 2010 to March 2012. Average percentages reported give equal weight to each webinar, regardless of the number of survey participants. Weighted averages were also calculated by the number of survey participants; however, these did not vary significantly from the results below. The surveys were intended to evaluate respondents’ perceptions of the educational value, utility, technical level, and accessibility of webinars, and to ask whether respondents would recommend webinars to others. Participants were also asked to recommend future topics and to suggest how the webinars could be improved.

**Average response rate for all webinar and broadcast immediate feedback surveys:
63%**

Respondents' primary professional roles

- 27% Farmers
- 12% Extension
- 13% University Researchers or Educators
- 8% Nonprofit Organization Staff
- 19% Agricultural Professionals
- 22% Other (many of them government agency staff members, organic certifiers, students, Master Gardeners, and home gardeners)

Respondents' regions

- 31% Northeast
- 24% Central
- 12% South
- 18% West
- 15% Other (5–27 percent used the “Other” option to note that they worked in more than one region, or in other countries)

Learning

75% said the webinar “moderately” or “significantly” improved their understanding of the topic.

Utility

78% of respondents answered that they intended to apply the knowledge gained “somewhat” or “a lot.”

Technical level

An average of 84% said the technical level was “just right.” An average of 6% said “too technical” and 11% said “too basic.”

Recommendation of eOrganic webinars to others

83% said “yes”, they would recommend it to others, and 14% said “maybe.” 3% reported that they would not recommend the webinar to others.

Outreach

59% reported hearing about the webinar through notification by eOrganic, 17% from a friend or colleague, 7% from eXtension.org, and 6% from another organization’s website. Only 1% heard about the webinar from a social network, and 0% from a blog or online magazine. 8% heard about it from another source including other listservs.

Accessibility

85% reported that accessing the webinars was “very easy.” 10% reported that it was “somewhat easy.” 3% said “somewhat difficult,” and 1% said “very difficult.”

Experience with other eOrganic and eXtension content (Articles, Videos, Ask an Expert)

Many participants had not tried these other eOrganic products. An average of 62% reported having tried other live webinars sponsored by eOrganic; 47% had accessed eOrganic articles, 36% viewed videos, 43% viewed recorded webinars; 15% had submitted questions to “Ask an Expert.” These results did not vary more than 2 percentage points from last year, except that an average of 4% more people had accessed recorded webinars—possibly due to an expanded effort this year to mention our archive in webinar announcements and during the live events, and a merging of the upcoming and archived webinars pages.

Articles

Among those who had accessed eOrganic articles, an average of 100% found them to be helpful to some degree, including 48% who found them to be “very helpful” (up from 44% in last year’s survey).

Videos

Among those who had viewed eOrganic videos, an average of 99% found them to be helpful to some degree, including 51% who found them to be “very helpful” (up from 48% in last year’s survey).

Live webinars

Among those who had tried other live webinars produced by eOrganic (besides the one that was the subject of the immediate survey), an average of 100% found them to be helpful to some degree, including 59% who found them to be “very helpful” (up from 55% in last year’s survey).

Recorded webinars

Among those who had accessed eOrganic recorded webinars, an average of 100% found them to be helpful to some degree, including 60% who found them to be “very helpful” (up from 56% in last year’s survey).

Ask an Expert

Among those who had tried the “Ask an Expert” service, 96% found it to be helpful to some degree, including 40% who found them to be “very helpful” (up from 33% in last year’s survey).

Results from Follow-up Evaluation of Webinars

A survey was sent to participants of 5 eOrganic webinars 9–16 months after the webinars took place, to evaluate the impact of the webinars on the participant’s knowledge, intentions, and/or practices. In addition, a combined follow-up survey of 3 dairy webinars was sent to 199 attendees. The following results are combined from all these follow-up surveys.

Average response rate to 5 follow-up surveys: 32%

Response rate to combined survey about 3 dairy webinars: 19%

Respondents’ Primary Professional Roles:

- 41% Farmers
- 10% Extension
- 13% University researchers or educators
- 6% Crop consultant or other agricultural professional
- 8% Government agency staff

- 15% “Other”

Respondents’ Regions:

- 37% Northeast
- 23% Central
- 11% South
- 14% West
- 15% used the “Other” option to note that they worked in more than one region, in other countries, or to specify particular locations.

Learning

An average of 76% answered that the webinar “moderately” or “significantly” improved their understanding of the topic. 37% of respondents said “significantly improved” (with a range of 24–56%).

Utility

An average of 60% answered that they had applied the knowledge gained “somewhat” or “a lot.” The highest rating, “a lot,” was given by an average of 16% of respondents. An average of 57% of farmer respondents affirmed that their webinar experience had contributed to changes in their farming practices.

Experience with other eOrganic and eXtension content (articles, videos)

The proportion of follow-up survey respondents who said they had tried other eOrganic resources has increased this year—with the exception of Ask an Expert, the use of which decreased one percentage point in spite of being promoted at the end of each webinar.

Other live eOrganic webinars (besides the one that was the subject of the immediate survey) had been tried by 83% of respondents (up from 62% last year), and eOrganic articles published on eXtension.org had been tried by 65% of respondents (up from 58% last year). Recorded eOrganic webinars had been tried by 68% of respondents (up from 46.4% last year), and videos produced by eOrganic had been tried by 55% of respondents (up from 43% last year); 25% had submitted questions to “Ask an Expert” (down from 26% last year).

Articles

Among those who had tried eOrganic articles, 98% found them to be helpful to some degree, including 52% who found them to be “very helpful” (up from 40% last year).

Videos

Among those who had tried eOrganic videos, 99% found them to be helpful to some degree, including 54% who found them to be “very helpful” (up from 46% last year).

Live webinars

Among those who had tried other live webinars produced by eOrganic, 99% found them to be helpful to some degree, including 54% who found them to be “very helpful” (up from 51% last year).

Recorded webinars

Among those who had tried eOrganic recorded webinars, 97% found them to be helpful to some degree, including 66% who found them to be “very helpful” (up from 54% last year).

Ask an Expert

Among those who had tried eOrganic “Ask an Expert” services, 92% found them to be helpful to some degree, including 42% who found them to be “very helpful” (up from 39% last year).

Impacts: Specific Changes in Farming Practices and Advice Given to Farmers by Agricultural Professionals as the Result of eOrganic Webinars

In the follow-up surveys sent to participants in 8 eOrganic webinars 9–16 months after the live sessions, participants were asked how the webinars affected changes in their farming and advisory practices. The following section documents specific changes on farms and agricultural professional recommendations that survey respondents said were the result of the webinars they attended.

Assessing N Contribution and Rhizobia Diversity Webinar

Webinar offered on December 14, 2010, available at <http://www.extension.org/pages/31037>.

- 81% of farmer respondents said that the webinar contributed to changes in their farming practices
- 85% of respondents said they applied the knowledge gained in this webinar to their work

12 farmers stated that they made the following changes as a result of attending the webinar:

- 2 (17%) calculated how much biomass is in their legume cover crops
- 1 (8%) calculated how much nitrogen is in their cover crop biomass
- 1 (8%) calculated how much nitrogen was made available to non-legume cover crops
- 3 (25%) changed the species of legume cover crops planted
- 1 (8%) started planting cover crops for the first time
- 6 (50%) changed the way in which they used legume cover crops (new rotation, mixes, etc.)
- 4 (33%) inoculated their legume cover crops
- 4 (33%) made other changes on their farm as a result of the webinar

11 farmer advisers provided information on the following topics as a result of the webinar:

- 3 (27%) provided information on calculating how much biomass is in legume cover crops
- 2 (18%) provided information on calculating how much N is in legume cover crop biomass
- 2 (18%) gave advice on calculating how much N is available to non-legume crops from legume cover crops
- 7 (64%) provided information on selecting species of legume cover crops
- 6 (55%) provided information on planting cover crops for the first time
- 5 (45%) provided information on changing the ways to use legume cover crops
- 3 (27%) provided information on inoculating cover crops
- 2 (18%) provided farmers with other information based on what they learned at the webinar, including how to fit a cover crop in a crop rotation

Some additional stated impacts and comments of webinar participants:

- Using mixes instead of a single crop
- Still haven't applied the knowledge but intend to
- I have always cover-cropped. I just learned so much more about it in the webinar
- Gained better understanding of the power of legumes and investigating varieties

Evolution, Status and Future of Organic No-till in the Northeast U.S. Webinar

Webinar offered on March 22, 2011, available at <http://www.extension.org/pages/33063>.

- 29% of farmer respondents said that the webinar contributed to changes in their farming practices
- 92% of respondents said they applied the knowledge gained in this webinar to their work

18 farmers stated that they made the following changes as a result of the webinar:

- 1 (6%) tried the roll crimp system
- 4 (22%) improved yields of cover crops
- 5 (28%) planted different cover crops
- 7 (39%) planted cover crops earlier
- 2 (11%) terminated cover crops later
- 2 (11%) increased fertilization of cover crops
- 5 (28%) made other changes to their cover crop management program
- 7 (39%) made other changes on their farm as a result of the webinar

17 farmer advisers provided information on the following as a result of the webinar:

- 11 (65%) provided information on cover crop plantings
- 8 (47%) provided information on factors that improve yields of cover crops
- 6 (35%) provided information on equipment in reduced tillage systems
- 7 (41%) provided information on cover crop species for reduced tillage systems
- 3 (18%) provided farmers with other advice based on what they learned at the webinar

Some additional stated impacts and comments of webinar participants

- Planned to use the information as a Master Gardener
- Planned to teach about cover crop species
- Looked at the roll/crimp system
- Helped others make a change
- Planned to teach options to a student group
- Used living mulch, intercropped between cash crops
- Used all the info
- I used the information for a course I teach in weed ecology and management
- It helped me with thinking about my research

Grafting for Disease Management in Organic Tomato Production Webinar

Webinar offered on March 22, 2011, available at <http://www.extension.org/pages/32969>

- 69% of farmer respondents said that the webinar contributed to changes in their farming practices
- 84% of respondents said they applied the knowledge gained in this webinar to their work

48 farmers stated that they changed the following practices as a result of the webinar:

- 21 (44%) grafted tomatoes on their farm
- 34 (71%) learned how to graft tomatoes
- 26 (54%) purchased grafting supplies
- 17 (35%) installed a heating chamber
- 10 (21%) experienced greater yields as a result of grafting
- 10 (21%) increased profits as a result of grafting

- 4 (8%) grafted other crops

17 farmer advisers provided information on the following as a result of the webinar:

- 25 (71%) provided information on the benefits of grafting
- 24 (69%) provided information on how to graft tomatoes
- 21 (60%) provided information on supplies needed for grafting
- 16 (46%) provided information on how to find rootstocks for grafting
- 15 (43%) provided information on how to find grafting supplies
- 3 (9%) provided farmers with other advice based on what they learned at the webinar

Some additional stated impacts and comments of webinar participants:

- Hosted a grafting workshop
- Will start to graft tomatoes this year
- I learned tomato grafting and was able to achieve 80% success rate on my grafts. The method taught was very helpful and made this possible
- I will be doing a comparison between grafted and non-grafted tomatoes this spring. Looking forward to seeing significant increases in yields and plant vitality
- 2012 crop plan tomato varieties changed to use grafted transplants. We will also attempt on other crops
- Cleaner working areas
- I will try to graft tomatoes again this year, hopefully with better results
- I appreciated the opportunity to learn about grafting in order to make an informed decision NOT to use the technique on my farm
- Graft tomatoes. Grafted tomatoes are resistant to disease and drought and lasted until November
- Had never considered grafting before. We will graft more tomatoes this year to offer for sale to our clients through the extension and to demonstrate the concept.
- This webinar was extremely interesting and valuable. While I have not yet applied what I learned, I do plan to do so. I have discussed what I have learned with other producers I know through my NGO work.
- The webinar really exposed soil problems more common in the south, but which we in the Midwest might have to face, so it was good to have a solution:., grafting, (which is used in SE Asia to a large percent) The webinar also made me want to try new stuff!
- Started experimental grafting
- I am new to the grafting concept so having this webinar as a resource was a huge confidence booster as well as a starting point for other research. I had a hard time marketing and selling my product because clients didn't see the advantages to pay a much higher price.
- Tried and somewhat successfully grafted some heirloom and hybrid tomatoes
- Purchased grafted tomatoes for a school garden project
- Better grafting chamber
- I didn't expect to utilize the information but to learn
- Know it doesn't belong here but having the webinars archived is a wonderful and have referred several people to it

Using Winter Killed Cover Crops to Facilitate Organic No-till Planting of Early Spring Vegetables Webinar

Webinar offered on March 7, 2010, available at <http://www.extension.org/pages/31013>.

- 68% of farmer respondents said that the webinar contributed to changes in their farming practices
- 89% of respondents said they applied the knowledge gained in this webinar to their work

24 farmers stated that they changed the following practices as a result of the webinar:

- 14 (56%) planted a winter killed cover crop
- 13 (52%) reduced tillage in their rotations
- 2 (8%) obtained or modify equipment to facilitate reduced tillage
- 13 (52%) planted a multi-species cover crop mixture
- 11 (44%) changed which cover crops they planted
- 4 (16%) changed which equipment they used for reduced tillage
- 3 (12%) made other changes on their farm as a result of the webinar

15 farmer advisers provided information about the following as a result of the webinar:

- 12 (71%) provided information on planting winter killed cover crops
- 8 (47%) provided information on reducing tillage
- 5 (29%) provided information on equipment for reducing tillage
- 12 (71%) provided information on cover crop mixtures

Some additional stated impacts and comments of webinar participants:

- I can better study and understand cover crops in my research
- Extended the cultivated area in cover crops and changed the mix
- Instead of planting winter rye by itself, or planting a legume crop by itself, I switched to a winter rye and hairy vetch mix because as I understand it the rye will take up the available nitrogen causing the legume to produce more nitrogen resulting in more overall nitrogen than a legume planted without the addition of the rye
- Retaining strips of cover crops between cultivated rows for the entire season, shifting the growing rows into those that were kept as cover crops for the up-coming season, and inter-planting again with strips of cover crops
- Planting this season's growing rows with winter-killed cover crops
- I attend these seminars to learn more about the work that farmers do and the thought processes that influence their decisions. Usually there is no specific application of this knowledge directly to the work I do.
- Developed Master Gardener basic training in vegetables that included information learned. MG reported using the information in demonstration gardens and educational programs
- I included a section on cover crops for conventional and small acreage farms in an annual land management series on 'building soils for better crops'. We discussed our current use (or lack thereof), what research is currently being done for our systems, and how we might incorporate them into our current management practices.
- New ideas for cover crop combinations as well as new resources

Local Dirt: Beyond Marketing. Find Buyers, Sell Online, Source and Buy Product...Yourself Webinar

Webinar offered on March 15, 2011, available at <http://www.extension.org/pages/33119>.

- 43% of farmer respondents said that the webinar contributed to changes in practices
- 82% of respondents said they applied the knowledge gained in this webinar to their work

22 farmers stated that they changed the following practices as a result of the webinar:

- 7 (32%) joined Local Dirt or another online direct marketing site
- 6 (27%) joined a social network to promote their businesses
- 8 (36%) created an online profile for their business
- 8 (36%) improved an online profile for their business
- 4 (18%) made other changes on their farm as a result of the webinar

17 farmer advisers provided information on the following as a result of the webinar:

- 10 (59%) provided information on Local Dirt
- 6 (35%) provided information on other online marketing websites
- 3 (18%) provided information on using social networks to promote farm businesses
- 3 (18%) provided information on optimizing use of online marketing tools
- 5 (29%) provided information on finding local produce using online services
- 3 (8%) provided farmers with other advice based on what they learned at the webinar

Some additional stated impacts and comments of webinar participants:

- None yet, but have recommended this tool for other producers I've met at conferences
- I created a Facebook page
- Took notes, made some new contacts, found some new resources
- Started using social media more to promote business

Combined Dairy Webinar Survey for 3 Webinars

How to Calculate Pasture Dry Matter Intake Webinar

Webinar offered August 20, 2010, available at <http://www.extension.org/pages/28554>.

Maximizing Dry Matter Intake Webinar

Webinar offered September 16, 2010, available at <http://www.extension.org/pages/28807>.

Setting Up a Grazing System Webinar

Webinar offered October 1, 2010, available at <http://www.extension.org/pages/28799>.

- 50% of farmer respondents said that one or more of these webinars contributed to changes in practices
- 94% of respondents said they applied the knowledge gained from one or more of these webinars to their work

7 farmers made changes as a result of the webinar on How to Calculate Pasture Dry Matter Intake:

- 3 (43%) calculated DMI from pasture using the subtraction method
- 4 (57%) calculated DMI from pasture

- 2 (29%) kept ration change records

4 farmers made changes as a result of the webinar on Maximizing Dry Matter Intake:

- 1 (25%) changed stocking rate
- 1 (25%) increased pasture as part of total DMI
- 1(25%) improved documentation of feed sources
- 2 (50%) changed pasture management based on animal behavior
- 1 (25%) changed ration to decrease feeding protein in barn
- 1 (25%) changed energy supplementation
- 1 (25%) made management changes that improved livestock health/productivity
- 1 (25%) made a conscious effort to improve the thickness of swards

5 farmer respondents made changes as a result of the webinar on Setting Up a Grazing System:

- 2 (40%) made management changes that improved pasture quality
- 2 (40%) measured DMI from pasture
- 1 (20%) installed pasture “accessories” (i.e. water, fencing, lanes, shades)

3 farmer advisers provided information or advice to farmers on the following topics as a result of one or more of the dairy webinars:

- 11 provided information on calculating DMI from pasture using the subtraction method
- 11 provided information on taking more or better records of feed rations
- 12 provided information on calculating DMI from pasture
- 5 provided information on keeping ration change records
- 11 provided information on changing stocking rates
- 13 provided information on increasing pasture as part of total DMI
- 8 provided information on improving documentation of feed sources
- 15 provided information on changing pasture management based on animal behavior
- 4 provided information on changing rations to decrease feeding protein in barn
- 5 provided information on changing energy supplementation
- 12 provided information on making management changes that improved livestock health/productivity
- 16 provided information on making management changes that improved pasture quality
- 12 provided information on management changes that improved pasture production/increased dry matter from pastures
- 12 provided information on measuring DMI from pasture
- 16 provided information on installing pasture “accessories” (i.e. water, fencing, lanes, shades)

Suggested Topics for Future Webinars

In all surveys from April, 2011 to March, 2012, the following topics were the most frequently requested for future webinars:

- Disease management (in soils, transplant production)
- Fly control (since these comments came in, a recent broadcast was held that included 3 presentations on this topic)
- Forages: stockpiling, forage and small root cover crops, forages for goats and sheep, management, forage radish, small grains mixed with forages, organic corn
- Grazing (rotational grazing, grazing annual legumes and corn, Midwestern prairie grasses, pasture management, seasonal grazing)
- Herd health (animal ailment management, mastitis, parasite prevention and management)
- High tunnel production (layout, design, pest control, irrigation, renewable energy in, what to plant in fall and spring transitions)
- Hydroponics
- No till vegetable production
- Organic dairy production (milk quality, calf raising, animal welfare, milk quality)
- Organic livestock production
- Organic seed production and breeding (saving and cleaning seeds, isolation distances, growing, wind pollination, selection strategies, breeding vegetables, on farm breeding, breeding potatoes)
- Pasture infrastructure (fencing, lanes, and water)
- Permaculture
- Insect management (pest control, and beneficial insects, pollinators, natural beekeeping, IPM)
- Postharvest handling
- Soil management (in different soil types, microbial populations, nutrition strategies, soil food web, scientists on destruction of soil with glyphosate, compost, compost tea, carbon sequestration, preserving tilth, improving soils for crops and pastures)
- Urban agriculture
- Weed control (for large scale organic row crop farmers, for market gardeners: mulching, small scale implements, grains, equipment, cultural, approved herbicides, perennial weeds, cultivation, weed burners)

Suggestions from Attendees for Improving Webinars

There were several webinars and broadcasts in which, due to connectivity problems at presenters' locations or conference venues, faulty headsets, or unexpected malfunctioning of the webinar software, the sound quality was variable or poor. After these webinars, participants commented on the need for reliable audio and sound checks. During broadcasts, survey respondents requested that the presenter always repeat the questions from the live audience, in cases when they did not do this. Based on these experiences, eOrganic is diligently working with presenters and broadcast venue staff to prevent as many of these problems as possible in future webinars.

Several respondents commented on the need for researchers to be able to explain how their results can be put into practical application by farmers. Some commented that researchers shouldn't just show tables or assume that the audience knows what acronyms stand for. Several respondents thought presenters should be able to answer questions about organic certification regulations in relation to their work or have a co-presenter who could do that. Some respondents wanted information related to specific regions of the country. Some, though not all of these issues can be resolved by mentioning them to presenters before they finish preparing their talks, and also by making sure that the webinar scope and audience is accurately described.

Respondents who had trouble launching GoToWebinar® expressed frustration. This can happen for various reasons; for example, in some cases if Java is not updated. In response, we have included information on the webinar page about updating Java, and we that participants connect to the webinar 10 minutes early in and alert them that they will have to download software. Two responses asked that we switch to another program that provides support for Linux. It is possible that we may switch programs in the future if we find another web conferencing platform that better meets our needs.

One request was made for webinars in Spanish, and one respondent suggested holding webinars in the evening.

We have received positive feedback in response to changes made as a result of last years' survey comments and suggestions. For example, we have been uploading handouts for as many webinars as possible and making them available to presenters before and at the start of the webinars. This has been very well received. Other changes that have evoked positive comments are the prompt posting of recordings, inclusion additional resources for further reading, and the contact info of presenters if they are willing to make that available. We've also set up CCA credit for several webinars; however, these have not yet proved popular so may need to be better publicized.

Select Testimonials from eOrganic Webinar Participants in 2011–2012

“What I liked best about this program...and a couple of others I've seen...is good visuals that help the audience see what the presenter actually did or how they did it. The presenters have been very knowledgeable in their subject matter and are capable of answering important follow-up questions from the audience. The things you folks are doing well include....making it very easy to access the webinar; then archiving it for future use; keeping the program to a defined time period without it rambling on. The email announcements from eOrganic are also good communications tools for upcoming programs. Keep up the good work...and high quality programs!”

“The webinars are invaluable for me. I live in a rural area where tourism has supplanted agriculture. Opportunities for continuing education would involve a drive of up to 180 miles, which I can only do rarely. Thanks!!!”

“Thank you for a very informative webinar—several of us here at the NOP were able to attend and really appreciated all the effort that went into putting the session together.”

“I would like to express my enormous appreciation to you for your work at the conference last week. The availability your live webinars and archives substantially expands the reach of the first—and extremely popular—USDA Organic Farming Systems Research Conference.”

“I appreciate that you post your webinars and presentation materials online. Yesterday I found out that, because of security concerns, my office IT support no longer allows for us to access webinars from our designated office computer. However, I was able to view the webinar the next day. Thanks for that!”

“Obviously the presenter had a very thorough knowledge of the topic. I would like to hear more about perennial weeds, but recognize this was not the presenter's specialty. I especially appreciate the information about new tools for weed management for small scale farmers—this is the kind of info we are all hungry for! Other than some minor technical problems which were resolved quickly, I thought it was excellent! I appreciate that I was able to hear this webinar from the comfort of my home, without having to travel anywhere, and will definitely check on the other webinars in your archive.”

“I was listening while working at my desk, and I was able to learn some interesting things about vetch without having to travel to an expensive workshop. It is very convenient. Thanks for doing these kinds of events!”

“Sarah Brown of Oregon Tilth did an excellent, superb, great job. I am actually going to go back and listen to it a SECOND time. It tells me a lot that I didn't know. Please make sure that she knows that at least one of the people who went over the info was really impressed and wanted to thank her. I attend a lot of meetings that are nothing short of useless and I appreciate the change.”

“Great job presenting. Very nice PowerPoint. Polls were fluently implemented. Content was just what I wanted to hear. Time for questions. One of the best I've attended!”

“Love that you offer these webinars and that they're so easily accessible afterwards from the archive list. My winter months will be spent listening to the majority of them! Thanks again”