# Organic News

## Upcoming Programs

**Sunday-Tuesday, August 4-6 –** Southern Family Farmers & Food Systems Conference annual event jointly hosted by the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, Small Producers Initiative at Texas State University, and Council for Healthy Food Systems.

**Tuesday, August 20** – South Plains Organic Cotton/Peanut Field Tour near Seminole. 8 am to 1 pm. Dr. John Cason, Dr. Calvin Trostle, Dr. Ken Lege Dr. Emi Kimura, and Dr. Carol Kelly will be speaking. The tour will start with registration at 8:00 am. Two continuing education credits for TDA Pesticide Licenses will be offered on the tour.

**September is National Organic Month**

**Friday, September 13, and 20** – Travis County Hydroponic Workshop with a tour. Dates are being firmed up, but the program will include some organic production information for hydroponic production on Sept. 13. Contact Kayli Crauthers, Extension Ag/NR in Travis County at kayli.crauthers@ag.tamu.edu

**Monday, September 23** – South Texas Peanut Tour

**Thursday, September 27** – Central Texas Peanut Tour

**Thursday, November 1** – TDA Cost Share Signup Deadline. Again, this year USDA is offering up to $750 towards your organic certification costs. There are a lot of certified organic operations that never apply because they think it is too much of a hassle! This is easy….

## Organic Cotton and Peanut Tour

Working with organic producers, specialists, and researchers, a great organic tour of both peanut and cotton production has been planned for **Tuesday, August 20th in the Seminole area**. The tour will start with registration at **8:00 am** at the **Gaines Co. Civic Building** in Seminole at 402 NW 5th Street (Corner of NW 5th and NW Ave. D). **The tour will leave at 8:45 am from the Civic Building and return**

**at 12:20 pm for a sponsored lunch.** Two continuing education credits for TDA Pesticide Licenses will be offered on the tour.

**The first stop on the tour will be at the Neil Froese Peanut Farm** just north of Seminole on CR 108 and CR 109 east of Hwy 62 North. At this organic peanut field tour participants will discuss growing organic peanuts and production in 2024. Dr. John Cason, Texas A&M AgriLife Research Peanut Breeder will talk about a research variety trial in this field for organic peanuts. Dr. Calvin Trostle, Extension Agronomist – Lubbock, will be on hand to discuss OMRI approved Bradyrhizobium inoculant options and provide some information on legumes in cover crops. Bob Whitney, Extension Organic Specialist, will discuss some organic production ideas and issues.

The next stop will be at the **Rob Warren Farm** south on FM 1429 across Hwy 180 to CR 421 (Fairview Rd.) where his farm is a few miles down on the left. Tour participants will have a chance to talk about organic cotton on both upland and Pima fields including



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some skip row cotton. Dr. Ken Lege', Extension Cotton Specialist and Dr. Carol Kelly, Texas A&M AgriLife Research Scientist for Cotton Breeding will be on hand to discuss cotton production and breeding in 2024. Dr. Emi Kimura, Extension Agronomist will share highlights of the ongoing Organic Cotton Grant Project with the group.

Rob Warren will also share some highlights of his new adventure growing organic grapes. Currently there are only 3 certified organic growers in the state, but interest is growing.

After lunch a few minutes will be spent on an Organic Cotton Market Update along with an update on new GOTS rules for organic cotton.

Sponsors for the Organic Cotton/Peanut Tour include the Texas Peanut Producers Board, May Cotton Seed, Trico Peanut, Natural Eco System Restoration, Nature Safe Fertilizers, Kunafin "The Insectary," South Plains Compost, Golden Peanuts, Pro Farm Group, Brownfield Seed and Delinting, Texas Earth.

## Tyler Cox is the new Texas TOPP Program Coordinator

As many of you know Timber Darnell, our first Texas TOPP Program Coordinator moved to be with family in Nebraska. She did a great job getting things up and running for Texas TOPP but now I am glad to introduce you to Tyler Cox who is starting August 1st. Tyler has an undergraduate degree from Tarleton State University in agricultural services and development and he just recently finished his master's degree in spring of 2024 in agricultural and consumer resources with an emphasis in agribusiness. Tyler will be down the hall from me at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Stephenville but expect to see him out and about at many Texas meetings. He is responsible for developing programs that reach out to folks interested in organic agriculture and help any who want to transition to organic. He will also be working on some organic research and extension programs that help organic producers and increase our overall organic knowledge.

## Brian Guess is back working in Texas!

Brian Guess is the new Technical Sales Representative for Lallemand, a company which focuses on the development, production and marketing of selected microorganisms and related products many of which are used in row crop agriculture and even animal health.

Many in the Texas organic agriculture industry remember Brian as working for Marrone Bio and now being with Lallemand he will be working in Texas again. I enjoy working with Brian because sustainable farming, which includes organic systems, is his passion. Here is a quote from Brian, *"Supporting the American farmer is my daily goal. Leaving a healthy soil & ecosystem behind for the next generation to farm is my mission. If you need help controlling a specific pest or pathogen in your operation, I'm just a phone call or email away. As the Technical Sales Representative for Lallemand.*



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*I'm here to support you from a technical aspect on all of our products. As you are aware, when using biological materials, the application nuances are key to achieving maximum performance of a product. I look forward to supporting you and helping maximize the ROI of your operation."*

**Welcome back Brian Guess!**

FieldWatch is a non-profit company whose mission is to develop and provide free mapping tools intended to enhance communications that promote awareness and environmental stewardship activities between crop producers, beekeepers, seed companies and pesticide applicators. They make field locations available to applicators so that sensitive areas like organic fields don't get sprayed or even drifted on**. FieldWatch in Texas should be available for the 2025 crop season**

Here is a great perspective by Kevin Findlay, Findlay Organics.

*"My dad was the first one to introduce me to FieldWatch. About 10 years ago, we picked up some new rented ground, and my dad said that we needed to add it to FieldWatch. And I was surprised I didn't know what he was talking about. He told us that we use FieldWatch to make sure our organic acres are registered. That was my initiation into it! Here's a really cool example. Last year, we wanted to test out a product that needed an aerial application. I went to the applicator's hangar, and the first thing he asked me was, "Where is this field?" Then he pulled up FieldWatch. This made me feel good about hiring him because he is the "go-to" for aerial application in our area, and the first tool he pulled up was FieldWatch. He used it to plan out his day. He's making sure of wind and location of fields.*

*"FieldWatch is like an insurance policy, letting people know, "Hey, this is an organic field." Having the experience with this pilot made me realize this guy in the ag industry is truly using FieldWatch. It made me feel assured I was using the right applicator."*

## Trace Genomics

Thanks to Dr. Justin Tuggle for sending this information to me about Trace Genomics. This is a fairly new company that basically tells you what kinds of microbes you have in the soil, good or bad, to then help make decisions of what you need to do. It may be a new variety, a biostimulant or a soil treatment.

**A quote from Trace Genomics**

*"We engage in hi-definition DNA sequencing down to the functional gene level. This lets us mine the soil microbiome to identify specific functions, commonly referred to as "indicators," which can provide actionable insights to help you maximize soil health. One example is a phosphorus solubilization indicator, which analyzes the quantified capability of microbes in the soil to release bound phosphate and make it plant available."*

I am exploring some possibilities to experiment with this technology to give you some feedback. Dr. Jeff Brady does a lot of work with soil microbes and microbe interactions with crops, and we are hoping to pull some samples for a comparison.

## Applying Field Bindweed Gall Mites

Some time back I wrote a blog post about using some biological methods for controlling field bindweed. I liked the idea of introducing the Field Bindweed Gall Mite (*Aceria malherbae*) to areas of field bindweed and hoping they would help to



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*QR code for Mite Article*

keep this weed from taking over fields. Sounds easy till you try finding the mites!

Will it work? I don't think any of us know for sure, but we have to try!

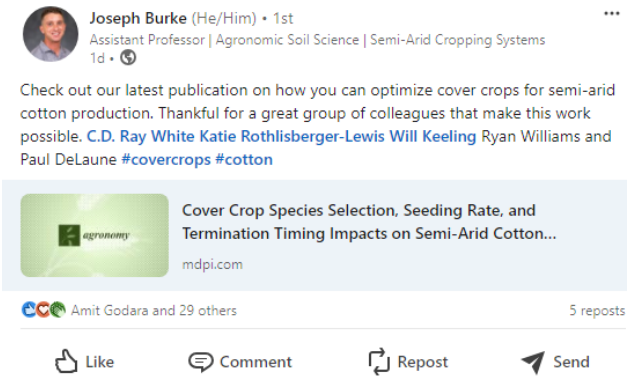
The field bindweed gall mite is not going to eradicate field bindweed on the South Plains. But our hope is that as the field bindweed comes out each spring the gall mite is also out and feeding on the field bindweed. This will significantly slow the growth of the bindweed and hopefully keep it in check. Something we don't have now!

## Using Beneficial Insects in Organic Crop Environments

Beneficial insects, also known as biological control agents, play a crucial role in managing pest populations in organic crops, especially organic row crops. These insects help reduce the need for chemical pesticides, promote biodiversity, and support sustainable farming practices. Here's a guide on how to integrate beneficial insects into your organic farming system, specifically for crops like cotton, peanut, corn, sorghum, rice, and wheat.

*QR Code for Beneficial Article*

## Cover Crops in South Plains Cotton - Not possible, or is it?




I was scrolling through my LinkedIn recently and saw a post by Dr. Joseph Burke that I just had to check out!

Dr. Burke and the other researchers did a great job looking at cover crops in the South Plains and they did this research over multiple years with very different weather in those years. What's the conclusion? There is just too much information to share in this newsletter but **just use this QR code to read a summary!**

## Where are the Organic Farms and Organic Handlers located?

Texas organic is a growing industry. This growing industry includes over 396 farms and 539 organic handlers, up from 428 just a year ago. Scan this QR code above for more information. **Use this QR Code to read the article. Thanks for all you do!**



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