



GRAIN MILLERS

Dear Chair of SBARE:

For the past 25 years Grain Millers has bought organic, oats, barley, flax and rye out of North Dakota. We are one of North America's largest organic grain mills and the world largest organic oat mill. While we see growth in our conventional business year over year at 1%, our organic demand has grown at double digit levels for the past 3-4 years. The organic demand has pushed many companies like ours to look off shore for supply to meet this demand because supply in the US has not kept the same pace. The preference is always to purchase grain in North America, but the supply is just not there.

Our growers face many struggles that an extension agent would be able to help them with. I have listed a few of the top struggles our growers face on a year to year basis.

- Three year transition period
 - Where to market during this time.
 - How to make it through the transition years into organic.
 - How to prepare their soil for a long term rotation.
 - Understanding the paperwork involved.
- Soil Nutrient Management
- Weed Control
- Crop Rotations (What will work best for a given farm and soil type)

Organic farming is not always just a 'belief', but it is also another way to farm with great financial success. Many of the new farmers coming into organic are young. Organic farming is an option for them to take on less financial risk in getting started into farming. The biggest fear we hear from these new farmers is just not having someone to go to with questions. An extension agent would be the missing piece of the puzzle. Organics is a \$39 billion dollar industry in the US being driven by consumers. Right now other countries are reaping the benefit of this growth, as they are the ones supplying the grain.

Grain Millers as a company has devoted money in areas like research and development, marketing, and infrastructure. With that, what we have found is that we are a lot stronger as an industry when all parties are involved; producers, industry, government, and consumers. Having an organic extension agent would help harness this relationship of working with the growers, and help drive this market forward.

Sincerely,

Grain Millers INC.