



Our vision for transforming our food system

MOFGA's vision is a future where local organic farming nourishes all people, and sustains thriving ecosystems, healthy communities, and fair economies. We'll accomplish this through our mission to transform our food system by supporting farmers, empowering people to feed their communities, and advocating for an organic future.

The focus of our work 2025-2030

MOFGA is uniquely positioned to enact change through **education**, **advocacy**, and **connection** given the relationships and leadership that have been developed over the last 53 years. These levers will drive our impact in the next 5 years on transforming our food and farming systems while building long term resilience into our work. We will also work to secure and **sustain** the resources and systems needed to continue our work in the long term. We seek to use our expertise in the most impactful ways with responsiveness and adaptability and provide support for our dedicated, knowledgeable, and innovative staff.

Where we've come from and where we're headed

MOFGA is the oldest and largest statewide organic organization in the U.S. The last five years have shown that MOFGA is more relevant and necessary today than ever before. MOFGA has risen to support our network of over 1,000 farms through every crisis of the last five years including the covid pandemic that disrupted the food system overnight, PFAS contamination, dairies losing their milk contracts, and excessive climate-related weather and storms. MOFGA has established itself as a first responder in understanding farmer needs, convening partners, developing programs and providing resources.

Through crisis response, we've also strengthened our core programming for food producers including our Beginning farmer programs, the Journeyperson program, supporting transition to organic production, improving technical assistance for crop and livestock producers for: production, food safety, business planning, marketing, and climate adaptation. Despite successful programming, the threats to farm viability continue to increase with top challenges including access to land, access to markets, the increasing cost of production and being able to provide competitive wages. Combined with an increasing age of farmers, we've seen an overall reduction in farms, especially in the dairy





industry that has been hit with stagnant prices, rising costs of production, and industry consolidation. We've seen growth in organic nursery crops and flower farms, which have higher profits per acre - an obvious choice for farmers who are limited to farming on small acreage. MOFGA has been responsive to understanding shifting needs and developing new resources and ways of supporting these farms.

In addition to responding to emerging needs, we've maintained our core effort to engage more farms in adopting organic¹ farming practices. We want to help *all* farmers reach their goals through the adoption of organic practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve soil carbon sequestration, build healthy soil, improve animal welfare, improve farm worker health and keep water clean. As a result, we've grown our impact by certifying 291 new organic businesses in the last 5 years. We also helped many existing certified farms maintain their certification and further improve their practices, and we supported many non-certified farms to adopt new organic practices even if becoming certified is not their goal.

The pandemic also disrupted our established ways of engaging with our members. We quickly shifted to online programming to continue providing our members with means of connection to each other and the education needed to grow food, connect with nature and minimize stress during this time. These changes resulted in program growth and accessibility for our members during an important time for learning how to increase food security, community resilience and care for personal well being. Meanwhile, the experience of PFAS contamination in Maine and climate change have been stark reminders about the need to be thoughtful stewards of the land through organic gardening, homesteading, orcharding and forestry practices. We all can play an important role in feeding our communities.

We have spent much of the last 5 years adapting organizationally to the capacity strains of this reactive response mode and recognize that now is the time to identify the necessary internal systems and resources to support our continued work over the next 5 years and

¹ MOFGA's definition of organic: Organic agriculture is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It emphasizes the use of management practices in preference to the use of off site inputs, taking into account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. These goals are met, where possible, through the use of cultural, biological, and mechanical methods, as opposed to using synthetic materials to fulfill specific functions within the system.





beyond. We've learned critical lessons about the need to hone in on our priorities to achieve our mission, create space to quickly adapt to emerging needs, adopt cross-departmental structures for increased collaboration, and develop more ways to resource our work. We expect continued unprecedented challenges in the years ahead and our work to grow connections with farmers and members through education and advocacy for an organic future is more important than ever.

Our key constituents are farmers and people who want to support local food systems and feed their communities - our members. With economic and societal changes, the pipeline for becoming a farmer has shifted, and our support for entering that pipeline will include more support for farm workers. Meanwhile, our community audience is a broad group of eaters, gardeners, homesteaders, fairgoers, and more. The uniting feature of this audience is MOFGA membership. MOFGA members are a networked community that is working to build resilience in our food system. By focusing our efforts on these two audiences, we will work toward a future where farmers are able to start and remain in business, people are able to choose and access local organic food, and farmers are able to adopt organic practices and choose to become certified.

Mission:

Transforming our food system by supporting farmers, empowering people to feed their communities, and advocating for an organic future.

Values:

- **Collaboration** - We actively seek input for our work from others in our own teams, in other teams, and in our community. We trust each other and believe that we are stronger when we work together.
- **Resiliency** - We approach our work and each other with positivity, openness and a generous spirit. We adapt to challenges with a sense of calm and optimism. We provide support to each other that allows us to continue to achieve our goals.
- **Impact** - We prioritize our time, energy and resources on the efforts that will make the most progress towards accomplishing our mission.
- **Equity** - We strive for a workplace, programs and community engagement that are equitable for all. We recognize barriers and advantages held by individuals and communities.





- **Integrity** - We stay true to our mission, and maintain clarity of purpose. We don't compromise on the things that are most important to us.

How we do our work:

- **Empower and engage communities to shift power to transform the food system.**
We trust that communities can best determine their own needs and develop equitable food systems. We will help create the conditions that are necessary for the change they aim to achieve (includes leadership opportunities and opportunities for rest and connection, safe spaces for learning).
- **Find common ground to collaborate and share resources.**
We are all eaters; a healthy food system for all involves everyone! We know that we can have the most impact by collaborating with other organizations, agencies, institutions, communities, and individuals.
- **Center relationships and lived experiences especially of those historically and currently harmed in our food systems.**
We listen and learn to provide more holistic support, accessibility, and representation.
- **Respond to community needs.**
We actively seek community voices and input in our programs as we adapt to changing landscapes (participatory, explore possibilities iteratively, and empower staff to navigate systems). Engage with language justice teams to reach a broader audience.
- **Operate within a framework of abundance and resiliency.**
When we work together, we are all stronger. We believe that the resources we share are not finite and that resource availability can expand as our community expands.
- (new) **Celebrate the process by which change occurs in addition to what is achieved.**
- (new) **Support ongoing programming iteration.** *Monitor, evaluate, research, and learn in an interactive process for evaluating our work and shifting activities to meet our objectives.*

Vision:

A future where local organic farming nourishes all people, and sustains thriving ecosystems, healthy communities, and fair economies.





Goal:

Over the next five years, MOFGA will work to strengthen community resilience by encouraging more people to adopt organic farming and gardening. This effort will lead to greater involvement from farmers, gardeners, policymakers, and community members in agriculture and gardening that supports the environment, meets local needs, boosts economic stability, and fosters opportunities for connection and well-being.

To do this, we will secure the financial resources required to sustain our work growing community resilience by Educating, Advocating, and Building Community.

Core Objectives:

1. **EDUCATE:** Spread awareness and encourage the use of organic practices that improve soil health, support biodiversity, and strengthen climate resilience by increasing knowledge and making it easier to implement these practices.
2. **ADVOCATE:** Promote solutions and push for policies that center organic practices and provide economic resilience for farms.
3. **CONNECT:** Provide opportunities for people to connect around organic farming and gardening.
4. **SUSTAIN:** Ensure MOFGA has the resources it needs to continue its work effectively in the long term.

Objectives, Activities and Outcomes:

Objective 1. EDUCATE: Spread awareness and encourage the use of organic practices that improve soil health, support biodiversity, and strengthen climate resilience by increasing knowledge and making it easier to implement these practices.

Activities:

- A. Provide farmers and members technical assistance, educational workshops, network navigation and financial support to increase the use of organic growing practices
- B. Educate the public about the role of organic agriculture, including certified organic, in building healthy soil and addressing climate change





- C. Center the Common Ground Country Fair and MOFGA's campus in our educational programming and utilize the fair to connect people to year round educational opportunities
- D. Amplify education programs through communication channels with compelling stories

In five years:

- Farmers and gardeners will gain knowledge and skills in organic practices through their participation in MOFGA educational events and programs,
- Farmers and gardeners will adopt or improve organic practices, and commercial producers will certify with MOFGA Certification Services (MCS),
- MOFGA audiences will understand and support the importance of soil-based organic practices in climate change resilience and improving soil health.

Objective 2. ADVOCATE: Promote solutions and push for policies that center organic practices and provide economic and climate resilience for farms.

Activities:

- A. Grow advocacy engagement at the local, state and federal levels to advance the adoption of organic practices for farming and land management and promote farm viability.
- B. Provide resources to support farmers and farm workers meet their economic and quality of life goals and be able to choose to certify organic with MOFGA Certification Services
- C. Advocate for state and federal programs that promote and subsidize the cost of transitioning to and maintaining organic certification
- D. Continue to establish and defend high standards at the federal level for organic certification, soil-based organic farming practices and differentiation in the market

In five years,

- People will have more opportunities and resources to access to locally produced certified organic products,
- Farmers and farm workers will have more services and resources to farm organically,
- Farmers and farm workers will have increased support for economic stability, and





- Farmers, communities, and ecosystems will benefit from the decreased use of toxic substances by using organic land management practices.

Objective 3. CONNECT: Provide opportunities for people to connect around organic food, farming and gardening.

Activities:

- A. Grow membership through programs that reflect the communities in Maine and the diverse stakeholders in our food system
- B. Provide member audiences with more connections to each other, our farming community, and year round opportunities related to the Common Ground Country Fair
- C. Support volunteer leadership opportunities for members
- D. Employ equity strategies and continue learning opportunities for staff and members

In five years,

- MOFGA's membership will grow and become more diverse;
- Participants in MOFGA's programming will feel more connected to each other and supported in using organic practices, and becoming certified, and
- More people will develop connections to local organic farmers and food producers.

To accomplish this programmatic work we must focus internally on the following objective.

Objective 4. SUSTAIN: Ensure MOFGA has the resources it needs to continue its work effectively in the long term.

Activities:

- A. Sustainably balance the annual budget through a mix of increasing philanthropic and earned income, making strategic cuts as necessary by assessing the impact of programs, and having program expenses cover centralized services.
- B. Scale programs appropriately based on the resources available and increase and diversify funding from members, donors, grants, sponsorships, earned income and planned giving in a sustainable manner.





- C. Support staff capacity to achieve high-impact programs and services through targeted and collaborative work plans, and improved efficiencies of our internal organizational systems.
- D. Ensure staff receive competitive pay and benefits, and feel valued and appreciated.

In five years:

- MOFGA will have the financial resources to effectively achieve its goals,
- MOFGA will maintain the physical resources necessary to achieve its goals, and
- MOFGA staff will have what they need to be supported and successful in their work.

