



Women Now Lead Four Key U.S. Organic Food and Farm Groups

Women directors at OFRF, OMRI, OTA, The Organic Center celebrate at Expo West

For Immediate Release

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Santa Cruz, CA (March 7, 2011) – 2011 is a historic year in the organic food and farming movement. With Maureen Wilmot named to the executive directorship of the [Organic Farming Research Foundation](#) (OFRF) in January, four leading U.S. organic food and farming advocacy organizations are now headed by women for the first time. Joan Boykin is the executive director of [The Organic Center](#), Christine Bushway is the executive director of the [Organic Trade Association](#) (OTA), and Peggy Miars is the executive director of the [Organic Materials Review Institute](#).

The four women will celebrate the continuing rise of women in organic leadership at OFRF's 14th [annual luncheon](#) on March 10 at the Natural Products Expo West in Anaheim, CA. The event takes place in Ballroom B, on the third floor of the Anaheim Convention Center from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. During the program, Wilmot will acknowledge the historical significance of this moment by calling Boykin, Bushway, and Miars to the stage at approximately 12:20 p.m. The women plan to meet following the luncheon to discuss emerging issues in the organic community and on-going collaboration.

"The fact that women are leading these four major national organizations at the same time is a delightful coincidence," said Ms. Wilmot. "In the last three years, the boards of all four organic organizations have chosen the best and the brightest to lead the way, and it just so happened we were all women."

"The participation, passion, and leadership of women working in organic businesses reflects their commitment to organic agriculture and an improved future state they are helping to create for our children's children's children," said Ms. Boykin.

"The active leadership of women in the organic sector reflects the aim of organic agriculture to address concerns that affect all people on our great planet. The Organic Trade Association in 1990 chose a woman to be its first executive director, and I am the third in that great tradition. Three of the past four presidents of OTA elected since 2001 have been women. Although there are many OTA member companies headed by great men, there also are many great women entrepreneurs who run their own organic businesses. I believe this mutual respect between men and women in the sector bodes well for the future and vision of organic agriculture as it continues to grow," said Ms. Bushway.

"Because women are the backbone of most families in America, it is not surprising that women lead key organizations in the organic community. Women have led the way in buying organic for our families, advocating for production practices that protect the environment, and ensuring that organic laws and regulations uphold the integrity of organic products. As a baby boomer, I remember when women's rights were still young, so it is very gratifying to see this leadership transformation in organic," said Ms. Miars.

Having women in leadership positions in the organic agriculture sector is only natural given the significant role women have in the U.S. farm and food economy. Today, the majority of food purchases are made by women and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that 22 percent of all organic farmers are women.

The quartet of women in leadership positions comes at a time when women have made significant advances in other national organic farming institutions as well. Kathleen Merrigan, a former OFRF board member and lead author of the Organic Foods Production Act, is now deputy secretary of agriculture at the USDA and LaRhea Pepper is co-founder and senior director of Textile Exchange (formerly Organic Exchange). In addition, board presidents at both OFRF (Deirdre Birmingham) and OTA (Julia Sabin) are women.

About the Organizations:

Organic Farming Research Foundation

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) is sowing seeds to transform agriculture by working for the continuous improvement and widespread adoption of organic farming systems. OFRF sponsors organic farming research and education projects and shares the results with organic farmers. Our research provides farmers with the informational tools they need to be successful growing good, organic food. We also work to create federal farm policy designed to bring more farmers and more acres into organic production. Founded in 1990, OFRF is the leading farmer-driven organic advocacy group in the country.

Organic Materials Review Institute

The Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides an independent review of input products intended for use in certified organic production, handling, and processing to determine compliance to the National Organic Standards. Acceptable products are OMRI Listed® and appear on the *OMRI Products List*. OMRI also provides guidance on various generic material inputs under the National Organic Program and operates an organic seed information service to help growers find organic seeds.

Organic Trade Association

The Organic Trade Association (OTA) is the membership-based business association for organic agriculture and products in North America. OTA is the leading voice for the organic trade in the United States, representing over 6,500 organic businesses across 49 states. Its members include growers, shippers, processors, certifiers, farmers' associations, distributors, importers, exporters, consultants, retailers, and others. OTA's Board of Directors is democratically elected by its members. OTA's mission is to promote and protect the growth of organic trade to benefit the environment, farmers, the public, and the economy.

The Organic Center

The Organic Center is an independent nonprofit 501(c)(3) research and education organization whose mission is to advance evidence-based scientific research on the health and environmental benefits of organic food and farming, and to communicate those benefits to the public. All of The Organic Center's research reports, publications, consumer guides, and videos are available free of charge on our website, www.organic-center.org.