The 20th Annual Iowa Organic Conference will be held virtually this year on Monday, November 23, from 9 AM to 1 PM, in keeping with COVID-19 regulations. A half-day of exciting synchronous presentations and interactions with industry experts will take the place of the normal meeting. Participants can register for the event at https://www.regcytes.extension.iastate.edu/iowaorganic/ and be provided log-in instructions for participating that day. The conference is a joint activity between the Iowa State University Organic Ag Program and the University of Iowa (UI) in Iowa City. The usual trade show of vendors will be replaced with a virtual show of exhibitors and sponsors, including organic grain buyers, organic seed purveyors, organic and local food system non-profit organizations, and government offices working with transitioning and certified organic farmers.

The keynote speaker of the virtual conference is Tom Harding, an international expert in organic marketing and trade: https://ota.com/thomas-harding
Tom brings a message of hope for surviving the pandemic through organic practices and will discuss how the general public is purchasing more organic products than ever: https://ota.com/news/press-releases/21328

Other speakers include Dr. Joseph Heckman, soil scientist from Rutgers University and organic farmer himself, talking about ways to keep your soil active and productive to support bountiful organic crops and livestock: https://plantbiology.rutgers.edu/faculty/heckman/Joseph_Heckman.html
This session will be a tribute to a long-time Iowa organic soil science researcher and favorite conference speaker, Dr. Cindy Cambardella, who recently passed away: https://www.organic-center.org/remembering-dr-cynthia-cambardella

Also speaking will be Jordan and Whitney Clasen of Grade A Gardens, a certified organic farm in Johnston, Iowa, famous for its mouth-watering vegetables and inspiring, COVID-conscious Farmers’ Market in Des Moines this year: https://www.facebook.com/gradeAgardens/ Come learn about their innovative practices and inspiring message in these challenging times!

A well-anticipated tradition of past Organic Conferences was the fantastic conference meals prepared by UI award-winning Executive Chef, Barry Greenberg, and his team. This year, Chef Greenberg and Anne Watson will present a virtual cooking demonstration, using local and organic produce, meats, and dairy products assembled into a gourmet meal.

For additional conference information on the conference, visit the webpage or contact Kathleen Delate at kdelate@iastate.edu or 515-294-5116.