



ORGANIC FARMERS ASSOCIATION

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Our Mission and Guiding Principles

The steering committee of the Organic Farmers Association drafted the following mission, purpose, vision, values, and guiding principles statements. The intention is for the first elected Governing Council (early 2018) to review and refine these proposed statements and finalize them as one of their initial responsibilities.

Mission Statement

OFA provides a strong and unified national voice for domestic certified organic producers.

Purpose Statement

OFA builds and supports a farmer-led national organic farmer movement and national policy platform by:

- developing and advocating policies that benefit organic¹ farmers;
- strengthening and supporting the capacity of organic farmers and farm organizations;
- supporting collaboration and leadership among state, regional and national organic farmers organizations; and
- welcoming support and cooperation with like-minded individuals and organizations.

Vision Statement

Organic agriculture is the basis of a viable United States food and agricultural policy and production system.

Values

1. We support the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movement's (IFOAM) definition that organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs that may be harmful to human and environmental health. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.
2. We endorse the IFOAM Principles of Organic Agriculture for Health, Ecology, Fairness and Care.²

¹ OFA acknowledges that across the country different terms are used within the agricultural community. When OFA uses the term "organic farmers," it includes certified organic farmers and ranchers as well as organic producers exempt from certification (grossing under \$5,000 annually).

² IFOAM Principles of Organic Agriculture: <http://www.ifoam.bio/en/organic-landmarks/principles-organic-agriculture>.

3. A strong association is grounded in inclusive, transparent, and fair group decision-making processes.
4. Strong, clear and consistent organic standards, certification and enforcement are critically important.
5. Transparency and integrity must prevail in all aspects of the organic regulatory system and marketplace.
6. An organic marketplace must ensure fair pricing, fair contracts, fair wages and economic viability for farmers and farmworkers.
7. All people involved in a vibrant organic food system deserve to be treated fairly and have a voice at the table.
8. Widespread control of organic farm and ranch land by principal farm operators³ fosters investments in long-term land stewardship and improved environmental and economic viability.
9. Fair and competitive agricultural markets support healthy rural economies and communities.
10. National agricultural policies must support the increase of organic farmers, production, and acreage in the United States to meet the domestic demand for organic products.
11. Organic farmers have the right to farm without contamination from genetically engineered crops, synthetic pesticides, and other environmental contaminants.
12. Organic agriculture has a crucial role in mitigating climate change; enhancing carbon sequestration; building agricultural resilience; building soil health and preventing soil erosion; protecting and conserving ground and surface water quality; maintaining and enhancing biological and genetic diversity; protecting farmer and farmworker health and economic sustainability; and providing nutritious, high-quality products grown without toxic synthetic chemicals, carcinogens, fossil fuel-derived fertilizers, endocrine disruptors or genetically engineered organisms.
13. Organic food provides health and nutrition benefits that warrant the fostering of organic agriculture as a national priority.

Guiding Principles

1. **Leadership.** The Organic Farmers Association (OFA) is led by certified organic farmers and will provide a place where the media, elected officials, and regulatory agencies can find the voice of the organic farming community.
2. **Independence.** OFA is an independent association. Its political agenda and priorities represent the majority positions of certified organic farmers across the United States.
3. **Working Together.** OFA is a collaborative network of and for certified organic farmers and organic farmer organizations.
4. **Unified Voice.** OFA is committed to a strong and unified farmer voice that includes participation of a large percentage of organic farmers across the country. It is also committed to working with all farmers to make organic certification more accessible, affordable, and applicable to their markets and farm businesses, and will listen to and support (when possible) the concerns of transitioning farmers who are not yet certified organic.
5. **Diversity.** OFA must operate under a structure that allows the full diversity of the organic farming movement (types of products, farm size, farmland ownership, regions, cultures, gender, race and ethnicity) to be clearly heard, without any one segment dominating all others.

³ *Principal Farm Operators are defined as those who run the farm, do the day to day work, make day-to-day management decisions, and invest their own capital in the farm.*

6. Membership. OFA membership is open to certified organic farmers, as well as organizations or caucuses within organizations that represent certified organic producers.
7. Farmer Dialogue is Crucial. OFA shall act as a community forum for its members where they can share perspectives on, and deepen their understanding of, the effects of current and proposed agricultural policy and market circumstances on their individual operations. OFA should serve to empower organic farmers and work to keep OFA members and partners well informed and mobilized on emerging issues and policy positions, in order to develop policy positions that will best represent the interests of certified organic farmers as a whole. .
8. Working for Change. We are committed to meaningful change for organic farmers that embodies social, environmental, and health values of the organic movement for current and future generations. To do this, we commit to link our own individual experiences with the larger organic movement, promoting organic farmers as essential change agents, creating space for creative and collaborative problem-solving, and by electing farmers in leadership positions that embody and uphold OFA guiding principles. We commit to staying focused on our mission, being timely with action, working for results, being true to our collective voice, and being courageous in our actions.
9. Open, Respectful and Inclusive Relationships. We understand that functional relationships build the foundation of trust. OFA leadership is committed to serving as representative leaders holding the best intentions for each other and operating with openness and respect. We are willing to ask and be asked the hard questions that shake up our assumptions and open the door to new thinking and growth.
10. Collaboration. We know that by learning and working together we deepen relationships and create a more powerful foundation for achieving shared goals of farmers, organizations, and leaders.
11. Conflict is Normal. We understand that we share differences in organic production methods and climate restrictions, culture, business interests and policy interests. When addressed openly and respectfully, conflict can bring issues into focus, mobilize constituencies, and develop better understanding around an issue. We are committed to handling conflict together in a constructive, friendly, honest, and patient manner.⁴
12. Race and Gender Matter. We believe that the ways in which we work with each other and in organizations and movements must reflect the values we hold for the world. We also understand that the conditions that limit or support leadership, organizational and movement success are directly impacted by structural racism, sexism and inequality; thus, OFA is committed to addressing issues of race, gender and equity in our work.

⁴ *Watershed Conflict Resolution: Some Guiding Principles*, Cornell Cooperative Extension, <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/handle/1813/3332/Watershed%20Conflict%20Resolution.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>