

# Farm Bill Farmer Survey



ORGANIC FARMERS  
ASSOCIATION



**TO SUBMIT VIA MAIL:**  
**Post by March 1, 2022:**

Organic Farmers Assoc.  
PO Box 709  
Spirit Lake, IA 51360

## Introduction

This survey is designed to provide another format for farmers to provide input into a nationwide organic farmer meeting process to gain feedback on the organic program for the 2023 farm bill. The individual survey information will be kept confidential, and only shared as group or anonymous data. The data collected will be shared at the National Organic Farmer Meeting on March 2, 2022 and be used to inform the report aimed to be released in April 2022.

All survey questions are optional and you are encouraged to skip to questions that are of interest to you and your farm. The demographic data is required but only shared in summary so that we can analyze feedback from different groups of farmers.

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## About You

\* 1. Please select the description that best describes you.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I own or operate a certified organic farm.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> transitioning to organic certification.                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I own or operate a farm currently transitioning to organic. | <input type="checkbox"/> I own or operate an organic farm that is not certified organic. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I own or operate a farm considering                         | <input type="checkbox"/> I am not a farmer.  |

\* 2. Age

- |                                   |                                |                              |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Below 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> 31-50 | <input type="checkbox"/> 51+ |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|

\*3. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

\*4. Race/Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

\* 5. General Commodities & Market (Please select all that apply)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesale Marketing | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic Vegetable    | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic Livestock     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Marketing    | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic Pulse Crops  | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic Dairy         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organic Grain       | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic Nuts & Other | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic Pasture & Hay |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organic Fruit       | <input type="checkbox"/> Specialty            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                 |

\*6. Please provide your contact information. Some information is required (state). Providing your email or phone number will allow us to contact you if we want to hear more from you regarding your survey feedback and to send you the final report.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Territory (Where you farm) : \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section #1 – Farm & Market Viability

### Market development, label claims, fraud prevention

A healthy market for organic products into the future requires a clear market distinction backed by strong standards and enforcement. Industry consolidation and fraud threaten farm and market viability and consumer trust in organic. This section will explore factors that are holding back growth in organic markets and identify solutions across sectors, geographies, demographics, and markets. We will explore how to support farm viability and develop strong organic markets in the face of competing label claims, fraud, industry consolidation, and other challenging industry dynamics.

#### Market Development

7. What factors are holding back growth in organic markets? Check all that apply:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> processing and distribution capacity            | <input type="checkbox"/> inconsistent enforcement of standards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> transportation or logistics                     | <input type="checkbox"/> workforce availability                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of research to address production problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                |

8. Where are the greatest needs and opportunities in organic market development?

9. How can USDA programs and/or organic standards help support domestic organic production as a means of reducing reliance on imports?

10. Indicate the degree with which you agree or disagree with this statement (circle):

USDA programs should help facilitate connections between farmers and buyers.

*Strongly agree      Agree      Neither agree nor disagree      Disagree      Strongly disagree*

#### Modernizing the Organic Seal

11. Should the USDA Organic seal be updated and modernized to capture improved organic standards?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

12. Should additional claims be added to the USDA Organic seal? (e.g. adding “non-GMO” or “climate- friendly” to the Organic Seal?)

☐ Yes      ☐ No

13. Does the organic seal need new or improved standards behind it to make additional claims?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

14. Should the organic standards be improved so that no additional claims are needed?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

#### Competition in Marketing Claims

15. Do organic farmers feel pressure to use additional certification/marketing claims for areas that are inadequate in the organic standards?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

16. What labels do you see most commonly accompanying organic certification? (Check all that apply)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animal welfare approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Grassfed       | <input type="checkbox"/> Local                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-GMO                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Cage-free      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fair Trade              | <input type="checkbox"/> Pasture Raised |   |

17. Do you prefer that the organic standards cover these issues?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

### Enforcement & Fraud Prevention

18. What works and what could be improved around the complaint, investigation, noncompliance, and settlement process?
19. What other legal authorities, resources, or support do we need to detect and prevent organic fraud?

### Farm Viability

20. Do you see organic certification as a tool for your farm's economic viability?

☐ Yes ☐ No

21. What aspects of farm viability are especially important to consider for small farms, socially-disadvantaged farms, geographically isolated farms, and beginning farmers?

22. What mechanisms are needed to support farm succession to the next generation of organic farmers?

23. Indicate the degree with whether you agree or disagree with this statement (circle):

USDA and the federal government should do more to reduce or address consolidation in organic markets.

*Strongly agree      Agree      Neither agree nor disagree      Disagree      Strongly disagree*

## **Section #2 – Organic Transition**

### **Overcoming barriers to a successful organic transition and managing market impacts**

Organic farming presents a promising opportunity for U.S. farmers, yet less than one percent of domestic farmland is certified organic today. The three-year land transition after the last application of a prohibited substance is an important prerequisite to becoming eligible for organic certification, many farmers face steep challenges and barriers when seeking to transition to organic production.

This section will explore the opportunities for supporting farmers to transition and stay in organic production. We will explore various incentives, support programs, and transitional certifications that can help farmers through the transition process. We'll also examine concerns that you may have about new farms transitioning to organic and how to manage market impacts to support a healthy organic market for all.

### Barriers & Challenges

24. What are the TOP THREE (3) barriers you see preventing farmers from transitioning to organic or current organic farms expanding organic acres? (Select 3)

☐ Technical Assistance ☐ Access to Land Capital ☐ Markets  
☐ Risk Management ☐ Infrastructure ☐ Other (please specify)

### Incentives & Support

25. How can we incentivize expansion of existing organic farms in addition to transitioning of new farms?

26. Indicate the degree with whether you agree or disagree with this statement (circle):

USDA should provide financial support for farms going through organic transition?

*Strongly agree      Agree      Neither agree nor disagree      Disagree      Strongly disagree*

27. What are some useful ways organic certifiers and USDA programs (Crop Insurance, Research, Technical Assistance, Loans, etc.) can better support farmers going through the organic transition period?

### Transitional Certification

28. Indicate the degree with whether you agree or disagree with this statement (circle):

USDA should establish a transitional organic certification program.

*Strongly agree      Agree      Neither agree nor disagree      Disagree      Strongly disagree*

29. What would be the benefits and risks of a USDA Transitional Certification Program?

30. Indicate the degree with whether you agree or disagree with this statement (circle):

There should be a public-facing organic transitional label.

*Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neither agree nor disagree                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree*

#### Market Impact

31. Do you have any concerns about USDA encouraging more farmers to transition to organic?

☐ Yes                  ☐ No                  Comment:

32. How can we welcome newcomers into organic without straining current markets?

33. Indicate the degree with whether you agree or disagree with this statement (circle):

We have the processing and infrastructure capacity to encourage and support a transition program.

*Strongly agree                  Agree                  Neither agree nor disagree                  Disagree                  Strongly disagree*

34. Are there sectors that should be prioritized for supporting transition to organic?

☐ Yes                  ☐ No

If yes, please specify:

35. What USDA data would help farmers and buyers assess transition and market volume for future industry growth and planning? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ USDA track organic milk data similar to what is done in the conventional market
- ☐ USDA require registration of land going through organic transition and make summaries by crop publicly available
- ☐ USDA do more frequent census of organic agriculture and ask conventional operations if they plan to transition to organic
- ☐ USDA work with trading partners about trends in their organic industry in acres transitioning to organic
- ☐ Other (please specify)

### **Section #3: USDA & NOP**

#### **Standards development, certification, fees, and other federal services**

The structure of the U.S. organic regulatory framework has a truly unique, participatory structure that comes with high expectations from stakeholders. This section will explore the responsibilities that government and stakeholders have in developing and implementing the organic standards and areas for improvement. We will explore how to improve the certification and inspections process, certification fees, and cost-share. Also, we will explore how to improve access and effectiveness of the various programs and services offered across USDA agencies for organic producers.

#### Standards Development Process

36. Select what you believe are the TOP TWO (2) most important roles of the National Organic Program:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organic standards (rules) development | <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate for organic within other USDA programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enforcement                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oversight of Certification Agencies   |  |

37. Select what you believe are the TOP THREE (3) most important roles for the National Organic Standards Board?

- ☐ Keep the National Organic Program rooted in grassroots democracy
- ☐ Organic standards (rules) development
- ☐ Review Materials for Organic Approval or Prohibition
- ☐ Provide direction for the future of organic
- ☐ Provide a venue for organic stakeholders to debate and discuss current and future organic issues.

38. Are farmers' voices adequately represented in the standards development process?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comment:

#### Certification & Inspections

39. Select the various innovations, tools, and technologies you would find helpful to improve certification and inspections:

☐ Virtual inspections Online applications

☐ Satellite imagery

☐ GPS animal tracking to prove pasture access  
& grazing days

☐ National online certification forms so all  
certifiers collect information in the same way

☐ GMO testing

☐ More spot (unannounced) inspections

☐ Pesticide residue testing

☐ Other (please specify)

40. Do you find the process of the Organic System Plan valuable to the certification process?

☐ Yes

☐ No

41. Indicate the degree with which you agree or disagree with this statement (circle):

Risk assessment should be used in the organic certification and inspection process so that operations that present higher risk should receive annual or twice-annual inspections but those who have a proven track record of low-risk should receive an inspection every 3-5 years.

*Strongly agree*

*Agree*

*Neither agree nor disagree*

*Disagree*

*Strongly disagree*

Comment:

#### Certification Fees & Cost Share

42. Why do you certify organic? (Pick the one that carries the most weight in your decision making)

☐ I need it for my market

☐ It is required by the land owner

☐ I believe in the program & want to be  
certified to demonstrate my farm practices

☐ Other:

43. Are certification fees affordable for your operation?

☐ Yes

☐ No

44. Do you use the Organic Cost Share Program?

☐ Yes

☐ No

45. If YES, where do you file your annual certification cost share information?

☐ FSA

☐ Certification agency

☐ State Dept. of Ag

46. If NO, why not? (Check all that apply.)

☐ The payment is too small to make it worth  
the effort to apply.

☐ I never get it submitted in time to qualify.

☐ The process is too cumbersome.

☐ I have experienced discrimination when  
trying to apply.

☐ The entity that administers the program is  
too difficult to work with.

☐ Other (please specify)

47. Is there a reimbursement percent of certification fees that seems appropriate?

☐ 75% fees/scope (max \$750/scope) = Historic amount

☐ 50% fees/scope (max \$500/scope) = 2020 & 2021 amount

☐ 80% fees/scope (max \$750/scope)

☐ 80% fees/scope (max \$750/scope)

☐ 100% fees for small farms

☐ Other (please specify)

48. Should organic producers continue to be offered the cost share subsidy for organic certification?

☐ Yes ☐ No Comment:

49. Would you prefer to have the organic certification cost share subsidy subtracted from your initial certification payment rather than paying for certification and getting reimbursed later?

☐ Yes ☐ No

#### USDA Programs & Services

50. Please select the USDA programs that you are currently using or have used in the past.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> FSA Farm Loans and Microloans                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Crop Insurance  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NRCS EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Food, Farmers Market, and/or Market Access Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Development Business Loans and Grants               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noninsured Crop Disaster Program                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                                    |

51. On the below scale, indicate how easy or difficult is it for you to navigate and identify the various organic resources at USDA agencies:

*Very easy*      *Easy*      *Neither easy nor difficult*      *Difficult*      *Very difficult*

52. Are there conflicts between NOP standards and the requirements of other USDA programs or services?

☐ Yes ☐ No Comment:

#### **Section #4. Continuous Improvement**

##### **Advancing environmental, human health and social justice outcomes**

Organic certification is based on a commitment to continuous improvement. Unfortunately, the original aims of the Organic Foods Production Act have not been fully realized, the organic standards do not include labor, social and emerging environmental and animal welfare issues. This section will explore how continuous improvement should be defined in organic standards. We will examine how USDA programs and services can better support organic farms and to advance outcomes related to the environment and conservation, labor and social justice, and accessibility to more nutritious organic foods.

#### Defining and Measuring Continuous Improvement

53. How important is continuous improvement for meeting the overall goals of organic agriculture?

*Extremely important*      *Very important*      *Somewhat important*      *Not so important*      *Not at all important*

54. Can the Organic System Plan serve as an effective vehicle for holding organic businesses accountable to continuous improvement requirements?

☐ Yes ☐ No Comment:

#### Environment & Conservation

55. Should the organic regulations incorporate and adapt to emerging environmental challenges (examples: water use, fuel use, carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions)?

☐ Yes ☐ No Comment:

#### Nutrition & Accessibility

56. Should labor and other social justice standards be included in the organic regulations?

☐ Yes ☐ No Comment:

57. Should organic standards address issues related to the nutritional content of foods?

☐ Yes ☐ No

58. What are some things USDA could do to help organic products be more accessible to a wider range of consumers?