

ORGANIC VOICE



ORGANIC FARMERS ASSOCIATION

NO. 7 • NOV 2022



FARM BILL ISSUE

OFA 2023 FARM BILL PRIORITIES

See what organic farmers want
OFA to fight for | 12

STEPPING UP TO THE ORGANIC RESEARCH CHALLENGE

What we need to support organic
research in the Farm Bill | 27

RECAP OF THE FALL NOSB MEETING

Summary of the recent Fall
NOSB Meeting | 31

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and policy positions in Washington, D.C.
The 2023 Farm Bill will be designed this year.

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President's Letter

Fall is winding down here in Maine; the leaves are mostly done with their colorful display. It's a time of year that makes us appreciate the beauty of the farm and how lucky we are to have this place. As my wife and I have gotten older and our kids have moved away to pursue their dreams we've spent quite a bit of time the last few years discussing what will happen to our farm.

We had the opportunity a couple of years ago to attend a series of classes on farm succession. The classes took us through thinking about the actual value of our land and other farm assets, and the costs to us of maintaining the land; buildings, and equipment that are needed to run the farm. We also examined our costs if we didn't have those expenses but lived in a smaller house with less property to maintain. It became clear that it would be much cheaper to sell the farm and move to that smaller place, particularly as we get older.

Then the lockdowns of 2020/2021 hit and we felt very fortunate to have our home and land to grow food and to be outside. Any plans of selling and moving were put on hold, especially with property prices going through the roof. We could probably get a good price for our place but then where would we go? For now, we've decided to stay where we are and enjoy being on the farm while we're still able to physically manage it.

One thing we did come to understand in the succession classes as well as our own thinking is that maintaining the property as best we can is important to us. As we age and find it more difficult to get to all the chores, work, and maintenance it would be easy to defer the various maintenance tasks. I (as the chief instigator of most of the farm projects over the years) have created lots of "piles".



Logs I've meant to cut and split for our firewood, older equipment, and vehicles that have been relegated to the back of the barn or the edge of the field, buildings that need repair and painting. A lot of this has seemed like too much to handle but I'm finding satisfaction in working on these projects and taking care of this property that's given so much to us. Plus, if we do decide to sell the farm, the next farmer won't have to deal with my messes.

And speaking of planning, Organic Farmers Association anticipates that the 2023 farm bill will be a priority with issues such as organic transition, beginning farmer support, land access, organic market competition, and consolidation along with organic farmer technical assistance. I appreciate all the work our collective organic farming community does in identifying the priorities for a healthy future that centers on healthy food, people, and the planet. Please join us as we work to advance these priorities for the next five years!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Colson".

David Colson, President

New Leaf Farm, Durham, Maine



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CONTENTS

NOV
2022

- 01 President's Letter
- 02 OFA Member Discounts
- 07 Fall Legislative Update

Features:

- 12 OFA 2023 Farm Bill Priorities
- 23 Farmer Feedback Informs Farm Bill Plan
- 27 Stepping Up to the Organic Research Challenge
- 31 NOSB Fall Meeting Highlights for Organic Farmers
- 33 Organic Winter Conferences & Workshops
- 34 Organic Certification Agencies that Support OFA
- 38 2023 Annual Policy Development Survey

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By, Lily Hawkins, Policy Director

ASK THE USDA FOR RAPID IMPLEMENTATION ON ORGANIC ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS.

This August, the USDA released a proposed rule to update the Organic Poultry and Livestock Standards. The public comment was originally set to close on October 11th, but has been extended through Thursday, November 10th.

These updated standards have been awaited for years, with many delays including lawsuits triggered by the USDA's decision not to finish an earlier proposal. OFA supports the proposed rule, which would not allow porches in layer houses to qualify as outdoor access.

However, the USDA has proposed possible 5-year or 15-year timelines for certified egg-producing operations to comply with the rule once it's been

finalized. OFA is urging USDA to set a faster 3 year timeline, to rapidly finalize the rule and level the playing field for farmers as soon as possible.

To weigh in, visit our [ACTION PAGE](#) and tell USDA you support the proposed rule, and ask for a more aggressive 3-year implementation timeline.

ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS BILLS DELAYED

Each year, the federal government marks a new fiscal year on the first of October. Congress is supposed to pass annual appropriations bills to set spending for federal agencies such as the USDA by September 30th. This year they did not reach an agreement on the final package of bills by the deadline. To avoid a government shutdown, they passed a resolution to allow the government to continue operating under the 2022 budget until December 16th.

In the Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations bills drafted for the USDA, organic programs are faring well. The House passed a bill that includes an increase in funding for the National Organic Program (NOP) and includes language directing the NOP to strengthen enforcement of organic soil health requirements. The Senate has a draft bill, which also includes an increase in funding for the NOP and good report language on enforcement. The Senate bill still needs to be passed, and any differences between the two bills must now be reconciled and passed before the extended December deadline.



JOIN THE USDA LISTENING SESSION ON ORGANIC PINPOINTED MARKET DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

On November 15th USDA will host a listening session to “invite input from stakeholders about innovative ways in which organic infrastructure investments could support increased access to processing, storage, distribution, and consumer markets.” The listening session will take place on Zoom from 3-4 pm ET, and written questions and comments can be submitted in advance. This is an opportunity for organic farmers to let the USDA know how Organic Transition Initiative funding can be most helpful in growing new and existing organic markets.

Participate in the USDA Listening Session Nov. 15
For more details and the RSVP link, [click here](#).

ELECTIONS WILL DETERMINE CHANGES TO KEY CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES

The midterm election results will determine the leadership and makeup of key committees. Once the votes have been counted and election results finalized, each party will convene conferences in both the Senate and the House to determine their nominees. Whichever party assumes the majority appoints the committee chair, and the percentage of a party's representation in each chamber will determine how many seats they get on each committee. Then in January when the newly elected Senators and Representatives take office, they will vote to confirm the committee nominees. Stay tuned for an analysis of what committee changes will mean for policies that affect organic farmers.

COMING UP: OFA'S ANNUAL POLICY PLATFORM PROCESS

Starting now and continuing over the winter, OFA will conduct its annual policy platform and priority-setting process. This begins with a survey of all U.S. certified organic farmers and OFA organizational members asking them to submit policy position proposals and prioritize policy issues. Once the results are in, OFA's Policy Committee will review the results, and draft policy statements for review and comment by the membership. The final proposals will be voted on by OFA farmer members, and those that get 60% of the popular vote *and* 60% popular support in at least two-thirds of the regions will become part of the OFA policy platform. Click below to participate!



[CLICK HERE](#) to submit your 2023 POLICY PRIORITIES & to suggest policy positions for OFA to consider.

COMING UP: MARCH FARMER FLY-IN AND LOBBY DAY

The week of March 6th OFA will hold our annual farmer fly-in in Washington D.C. Over the course of the week, our members will get to meet in person, attend a training session on how to effectively lobby their elected officials, and meet with their elected representatives on the Hill.



Lillian Hawkins is Policy Director of Organic Farmers Association. She makes sure that the policy priorities of certified organic farmers are represented in Washington, D.C.



COMMENT ON ANIMAL WELFARE RULE: BY NOV 10

The proposed Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) is very similar to the January 2017 OLPP version, which was finalized but never implemented. Since then, organic livestock farmers have suffered in an inequitable marketplace due to a regulatory loophole that doesn't require laying hens to go outside & express their natural instincts on vegetative cover. The OLPS corrects that and strengthens other animal welfare regulations for organic. We need your support! Please use our template (or edit based on your own feedback) to submit a comment to USDA asking for them to finalize OLPS and implement it quickly. Giving

examples of how you currently meet the standards, or inconsistencies between you and other operations that you believe are damaging to the integrity of the organic label and your specific operation can be useful in convincing the NOP to finalize this rule, implement it quickly, and clarify the regulations so that they can be enforced!



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March 6-8
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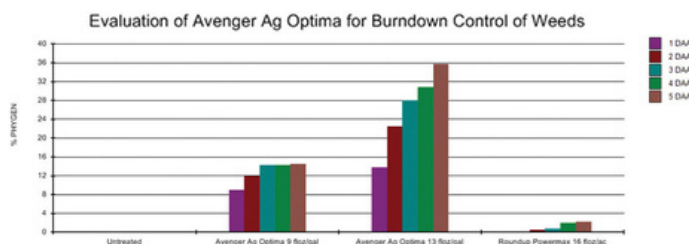


Figure 1. Evaluation of percent total weed damage in plots from 1 to 5 days after application.



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OFA 2023 Farm Bill Priorities

By, Patty Lovera

The Farm Bill is a huge package of federal legislation that influences most aspects of the food system. The bill determines what kinds of programs exist to support farmers, what kind of agriculture research gets government funding, how forests are managed, and what types of support are provided for regional food system infrastructure, to name just a few. The biggest program in the bill focuses on nutrition called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which determines how much assistance low-income families get to buy food. The programs created and modified by the Farm Bill affect not only existing organic farmers but could also encourage more farmers to transition to organic or use organic methods. The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition does a great job of outlining the different sections of a typical Farm Bill – [click here](#) to read more about the bill's structure.



Every five years, the farm bill expires and needs to be updated and passed again. Congress goes through an extensive process of drafting, debating, and passing a new bill that is then signed into law by the President. Each version of the farm bill has a unique title. The current bill is called the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. It was enacted into law in December 2018 and expires in September 2023.

Organic Farmers Association will focus our advocacy efforts during the Farm Bill process on programs that support organic farmers and improve organic integrity. The Farm Bill is a massive package covering many issues and is the subject of huge amounts of lobbying. To best channel our resources, OFA will partner with many other allied organizations to help fight for broader improvements we want to see, like support for local food system infrastructure, land access, addressing longstanding problems of discrimination in USDA

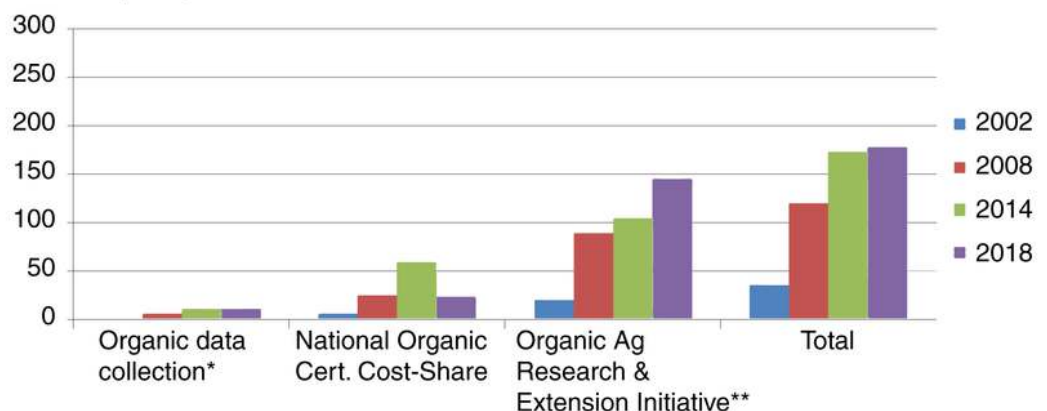
programs, and improving competition in agriculture markets.

The midterm elections will inform our strategies and specific proposals in preparation for the new Congress when the Farm Bill debate will begin in earnest. Election results will not change our priority issues, but may inform the choices and strategy we use based on how the new composition of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, where the bulk of the bill will be drafted. Organic Farmers Association will always advocate for USDA to improve how the National Organic Program operates, much of which they can already do without changing the law. (Many of the priorities identified by organic farmers are actually changes that USDA could make now, without using the Farm Bill process to alter the text of the Organic Foods Production Act that created the USDA Organic program.)

USDA ERS data shows spending for organic over the last four farm bills. The organic market is growing at a much faster rate than the USDA spending commitment to the organic industry. OFA hopes to diversify and expand organic funding in the 2023 Farm Bill.

Total inflation-adjusted mandatory spending on organic agriculture, 2002-2018 Farm Acts

\$ million (2017)



* Includes \$5 million in 2018 to improve organic import tracking and verification.

** Does not include intramural organic research funds in USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

Source: USDA budget summary data (2002); Congressional Budget Office (2008); 2014, 2018 Farm Acts.

UNDERSTANDING THE FARM BILL TITLES



TITLE 1: COMMODITIES

Price and income support for farmers who raise commodity non-perishable crops (corn, cotton, rice, soy, etc.) & dairy. And agricultural disaster assistance



TITLE 7: RESEARCH, EXTENSION, AND RELATED MATTERS

Farm & food research, education, and extension programs research that supports innovation & training for farmers & ranchers.



TITLE 2: CONSERVATION

Programs that help farmers implement natural resource conservation efforts on working lands, land retirement, and easement programs.



TITLE 8: FORESTRY

Forest-specific conservation programs that help farmers and rural communities steward forest resources.



TITLE 3: TRADE

Food export subsidy programs and international food aid programs



TITLE 9: ENERGY

Programs that support growing and processing crops for biofuel, installation of renewable energy systems farms, and research related to energy.



TITLE 4: NUTRITION

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) & other nutrition programs to help low-income families afford food.



TITLE 10: HORTICULTURE

Farmers market & local food programs, research and infrastructure for fruits, vegetables and other specialty crops, and organic farming and certification programs.



TITLE 5: CREDIT

Federal loan programs to help farmers access financial credit (direct loans, loan guarantees, etc.) to grow and sustain their farm businesses.



TITLE 11: CROP INSURANCE

Subsidies to farmers & private companies who sell federal crop insurance for losses in yield, crop revenue, or whole farm revenue. Also Risk Management Agency.



TITLE 6: RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Programs that support rural economic growth through rural business and community development, rural housing, and infrastructure.



TITLE 12: MISCELLANEOUS

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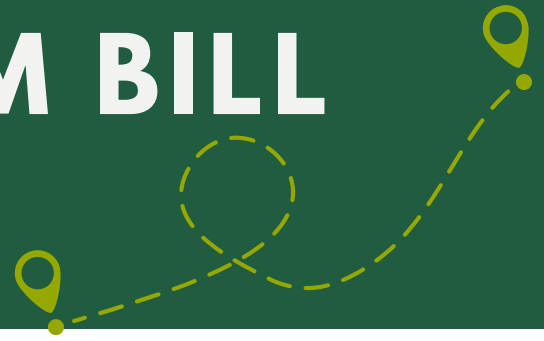
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2023 FARM BILL ROADMAP



Based on the input from OFA members and allied organizations from around the country, here are the priorities OFA will focus on as the next Farm Bill is written.



ORGANIC INTEGRITY

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN ORGANIC

- Require USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) to periodically review and update organic practice standards (beyond the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Materials) to ensure continuous improvement in organic standards.
- Set a timeframe for the NOP to do rulemaking after receiving a National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) recommendation when the recommendation is supported by 2/3 of the board. Require the NOP to clearly state how their rulemaking relates to NOSB recommendations.
- Authorize funding for the NOP to keep pace with organic industry growth and direct specific resources towards standards development.

OVERSIGHT AND ENFORCEMENT

- Require the NOP to accredit third-party material review organizations that review agricultural inputs for compliance with the organic standards.
- Grant the NOP the authority to take enforcement actions against false organic claims on agricultural non-food products.

NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD

- Allow USDA to expand the definition of reimbursable expenses for farmer members of the NOSB to cover substitute labor on their operations during their Board service.
- Restore the NOSB procedure for sunset review of National List materials, to require a 2/3 vote to **re-list** a material (as opposed to the current standard of 2/3 vote needed to de-list.)

Photo credit: Thorpe's Organic Family Farm





ASSISTANCE FOR ORGANIC DAIRY FARMERS

Organic dairy farmers across the country are facing severe economic challenges. The NOP can increase enforcement of the organic standards (including access to pasture and the updated Origin of Livestock rule) with no changes to the Farm Bill. In addition, the next Farm Bill could provide long-needed support for the organic dairy market, similar to what conventional dairy has received for many years:

- Investment in regional organic milk processing infrastructure around the country to spur the entrance of new buyers for organic milk.
- Immediate support to address dramatically increased organic input costs for organic dairy farms.
- Support for regional programs to collect and publish cost of production data for organic milk (including all costs, not just organic feed).
- Require USDA to regularly publish regional reports on:
 - Receipts of Organic Fluid Milk Products and Cream
 - Utilization of Organic Fluid Milk products and Cream by pool plants
 - Receipts of Organic Milk produced, by state.
- Creation of a safety net program for organic dairy farms, such as organic-specific margin coverage.



CLIMATE & CONSERVATION

- Organic must be prioritized in all climate programs developed for agriculture in the Farm Bill.
- Target Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds for livestock practices to advanced grazing management.
- Eliminate the separate, lower organic payment limit in EQIP.
- Expand Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) practices specific to organic production or transitioning to organic production (based on new programs announced by the USDA in the fall of 2022).
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service should quantify the multiple benefits of organic practices (not limited to carbon sequestration).



ORGANIC RESEARCH

Investing in organic research has significant benefits that serve all farmers. Organic research should prioritize helping organic farmers adapt to climate disruption, quantify the multiple benefits organic production provides for the environment and public health, develop regionally-appropriate publicly available seeds and breeds, and address organic production challenges with methods that reduce the need for inputs.

- Direct ARS to create a new Organic National Program and dedicate \$100 million to organic research to bring to parity with the growth of organic market share.
- Authorize and fund a Long-term Agroecological Research network at \$50 million per year.
- Increase funding for the Organic Agriculture and Extension Initiative (OREI) at the National Institute for Food & Agriculture to \$100 million by year 5.
- Reauthorize the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) with higher funding levels.
- Add climate resilience and regionally-appropriate cultivar development to the overall purposes of SARE.
- Reauthorize the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative to further understand the extent of the organic production. Add questions about impact of chemical and genetic drift on organic operations to data collection efforts from organic farms.
- Authorize and direct the Economic Research Service to do an updated economic impact analysis of the growth of organic agriculture, including assessing consolidation in organic markets.



MAKE USDA PROGRAMS WORK FOR ORGANIC FARMERS

COST SHARE & SUPPORT FOR NEW ORGANIC FARMERS

- Expand the Organic Certification Cost Share Program to better support small and underserved producers:
 - Increase reimbursement levels to \$1,500
 - Streamline the program to reduce the up-front cost of certification (instead of the current model of reimbursement later in the year.)
 - Provide such sums as are necessary to meet growing program needs.
 - Cover farms going through the organic transition process for expenses for certification services, education, and soil testing.
- Support transition to organic through grants to organizations (outside of USDA or the land grant university system) for technical assistance including farmer-to-farmer mentoring, financial planning assistance, outreach to under-represented groups and support for translation of training materials and organic certification paperwork.

CREDIT

- Increase the loan limit for USDA Micro Loan program to \$100,000 so that more farms can use the simplified application process.

CROP INSURANCE

- Streamline the application for Whole Farm Revenue insurance policies to address difficulties faced by new farms (or farms new to organic certification) in providing the historic production records required. Align requirements for farms transitioning to organic with records they can easily access (do not require farms in transition to produce documentation that is not available until after certification is complete.)
- Instruct USDA to increase education of Risk Management Agency staff and crop insurance agents on organic production methods.



INCREASING ORGANIC INFRASTRUCTURE

- Create new regional program to provide grants (administered by organizations) to farms for increasing organic production, addressing challenges for climate and supply chain resilience, and strengthening local food systems.
- Increase funding for the Local Agriculture Market Program (including Farmers Market Promotion Program, Local Food Promotion Program, Regional Food Systems Partnership Program, and Value-Added Producer Grants.)
- Provide additional incentives for processing plants that receive federal investment (new or expanding) to achieve organic certification.
- Require that USDA establish purchasing targets or set-asides for purchases of foods from independent regional producers, foods from socially disadvantaged producers, and foods from organic farms.



WORKING WITH ALLIES TO BUILD A BETTER FOOD SYSTEM

FOOD SECURITY: SNAP

- Protect critical investments in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) at a time of rising food prices and food insecurity.
- Create pathways to support land transition, apprenticeships, mentorships, and legacy planning work.
- Provide additional and culturally-appropriate technical assistance services (in multiple languages) so that beginning farmers can access USDA programs.

LAND ACCESS

- Support land transition to young, beginning, and underserved/underrepresented farmers, including programs that support farmland preservation and easements to reduce development of productive agricultural land and facilitate land access.

COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN LABELING (COOL)

- Require Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) on beef, pork, and dairy products. (It is already a requirement for poultry, fruits, and vegetables.)

COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN LABELING - CONTINUED

- Prohibiting meat products derived from imported animals from being labeled as “Product of U.S.A.”

COMPETITION IN LIVESTOCK MARKET

- Restore competition to livestock markets by ensuring that the USDA updates its rules for enforcing the Packers and Stockyards Act, creating a special



investigator for competition issues at the USDA, and requiring large meatpackers to procure more livestock on open markets. 



Photo: Harmony Fields (WA)



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Photo credit: Big River Farms (MN)

Farmer Feedback Informs Farm Bill Plan

A year ago, the Organic Farmers Association began outreach to organic farmers to identify their farm bill priorities for the 2023 Farm Bill.

As the largest piece of legislation to fund our nation's food and agricultural system, the 2023 Farm Bill will directly influence farmer production and practices. It is essential to OFA that organic farmers have a strong voice in the policies presented. We aim to implement farmer voices in educating policymakers on how organic farmer priorities are essential to developing the upcoming farm bill.

Organic Farmers Association conducted outreach to farmers using a three-prong approach. They created a farm bill survey that invited farmers to submit their farm bill ideas when they had time. 149 farmers participated in this process. They collaborated with organic organizations to hold regional meetings with their organic farmer stakeholders and share that information back with OFA. OFA also collaborated with Organic Trade

Association and Swette Center at Arizona State University to hold a national organic farmer meeting on March 2, 2022, to ask farmers about four areas of interest. Eighty farmers participated in that meeting.

Four areas of discussion were covered in the different modes of farmer farm bill outreach: Farm & Market Viability, Organic Transition, USDA & NOP, and Continuous Improvement. Participation in the farmer meeting, local listening sessions, and farm bill survey yielded major takeaways detailed below.

FARM & MARKET VIABILITY

Questions and discussions in the topic of farm & market viability covered issues surrounding market development, label claims, and fraud prevention. Farm and market viability was of keen interest to organic farmers and inquired about areas where the organic market was hindered, thriving, and needing growth.

Takeaways from farmer feedback on this theme:

- 49% of participating farmers believe that the inconsistent enforcement of strong standards is one aspect that holds back growth in organic markets.
- Organic market viability is impacted by a lack of government support and misunderstanding by the USDA.
- Farm bill programs must better align with organic production to incentivize the market.
- Organic farming issues need more research into topics such as production practices, emerging pests, regional differences, and health and environmental benefits.



Photo credit: Big River Farms, MN

ORGANIC TRANSITION

The topic of organic transition asked farmers how barriers can be overcome while also managing market impacts. The discussion and survey results revealed that for farmers transitioning to organic to be successful, they need support.

Takeaways from farmer feedback on this theme:

- 49% of participating farmers indicate a level of difficulty in navigating and identifying the various organic resources at USDA agencies.
- Cost-share programs must expand to reimburse transition expenses and minimize organic certification barriers.
- It is crucial to foster a support network of farmers and accessible technical assistance to achieve a high retention rate of organic farmers.

USDA & NOP

Discussions and questions in this theme explored organic standards development, certification, fees, and other federal services. In addition to developing and implementing organic standards, the U.S. government is responsible for increasing the effectiveness of USDA services offered to organic producers.

Farmer feedback summaries on this theme showed:

- 78% of participating farmers believe that farmers' voices are not adequately represented in the standards development process.
- Representation in positions of influence, like the NOSB, must include the voices of real organic farmers.
- Collaboration is needed between the NOP and NOSB for more oversight of certification agencies and standard consistency.
- The certification process must be streamlined and amended to be financially accessible.

Farmer feedback takeaways included:

- Organic standards must be strengthened to achieve continuous improvement that is consistent with consumer expectations.
- Compensation should be given to organic farmers for their positive conservation contributions.
- The reaches of organic farming can be amplified by promoting a comprehensive understanding of the industry and improving product access to a variety of consumers.

The farmer feedback from the meeting and farmer survey informed Organic Farmers Association's farm bill priorities (see page 17). As the farm bill evolves, OFA will return to the farmers' feedback to direct decisions on what we will advocate for. The feedback from the national organic farmer meeting and the survey will be included in a report finalized in cooperation with the Organic Trade Association and Swette Center at Arizona State University. When it is finalized, you will be able to read the report on the OFA website. 

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The topic of continuous improvement promotes advancing environmental, human health, and social justice outcomes. Farmer sentiment reflected that continuous improvement should be defined in organic standards and the USDA should enhance its programs to advance outcomes related to the environment and food access.

Mary Nguyen is the Policy Intern of Organic Farmers Association. She is a sophomore majoring in Environmental Biology at Georgetown University. Mary is currently participating in the Capitol Applied Learning Labs program in Downtown D.C.





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NODPA provides education, resources, advocacy and discussion for organic dairy family farmers throughout the Northeast.

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A photograph of two farmers in a field. One farmer, wearing a pink plaid shirt and a white hat, is handing a head of broccoli to another farmer wearing a blue plaid shirt and a straw hat. They are standing in a field of green leafy plants. A semi-transparent white box with the title text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Stepping Up to the Organic Research Challenge

The 2023 Farm Bill Must Grow Investments to Meet Growing Demand

Written By,
Gordon Merrick

Organic Farmers Association partners with a number of allies for Farm Bill work. Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) leads our coalition work on organic research priorities and strategy.

Organically managed lands help build our nation's resilience in adapting to climate change through increasing ecological vitality, but also provide safe, high-quality food. Expanding public investments into solving organic agricultural management challenges will help to continue growing domestic organic production to match the growing demand for organic goods, while also moving us closer to climate goals. As demand continues to outpace domestic production, we are increasingly relying on organic imports resulting in missed opportunities for our producers to build resiliency, both ecological and economic. What is needed now is continued commitment to meet the persistent production-related challenges that face organic and transitioning producers. The USDA itself

has made historic investments into financially supporting and providing technical assistance to transitioning growers with the \$300 million committed to the Organic Transition Initiative. Ensuring that assistance is backed by high-quality scientific, economic, and cultural research is imperative and a goal OFRF will be bringing to the Capitol this Farm Bill season.

To do that, OFRF, in collaboration with our allies, will work to make sure that the 2023 Farm Bill:

1 INCREASES THE ORGANIC RESEARCH FUNDING AT ARS TO ORGANIC'S MARKET SHARE

ARS has an annual budget of nearly \$1.7 billion. Though it is hard to find exact numbers, organic agriculture gets approximately \$12 million a year of that \$1.7 billion. Organic agriculture now makes up over 6% of the total market share of food sales in the United States, with an increasing proportion of sales being imported products. The Farm Bill is an important opportunity to send a clear message to ARS that they must increase the amount of funding going to organic agriculture to at least its market share to help producers meet the opportunity of increasing demand for organic products.

2 INCREASES INVESTMENT INTO NIFA'S RESEARCH INTO ORGANIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) and Organic Transitions Program (ORG) are incredibly effective at producing high-quality organic agricultural research that answers the questions of organic producers. But, these

programs cannot be a silo in that all organic research is placed. OFRF is calling for widespread investment across all NIFA research programs to meet the increasing need as more producers transition into organic production, especially given that there is no research component supported by the USDA's historic Organic Transition Initiative. Increasing NIFA funding for organic research across all competitive grant programs, from OREI to the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), would provide continued support for developing the technical service and institutional knowledge necessary to meet the needs of producers nationwide.

3 FULLY FUNDS AND EXPANDS THE ORGANIC DATA INITIATIVE

The Organic Data Initiative (ODI) is a multi-agency initiative that collects information vital to maintaining stable markets, creating risk management tools, and negotiating equivalency agreements with foreign governments. There has not been a full, systematic USDA review of the organic market since 2014, funding the ODI would allow the USDA to provide that service. In addition, the initiative should also charge the Economic Research Service to conduct an economic impact analysis of organic certification and management on rural communities.

OFRF is excited to work with our partners on Capital Hill and across the United States to make sure that the 2023 Farm Bill provides the research policies, funds, and programs necessary to answer producers' questions that don't just affect their crops or their livestock, but also their livelihoods and the communities they support.



Gordon Merrick is the Policy & Programs Manager at Organic Farming Research Foundation





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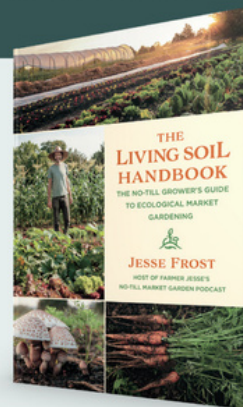
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NOSB Fall Meeting Highlights for Organic Farmers

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held its 2022 fall meeting in Sacramento, California in late October. Public testimony occurred in a virtual format over two days prior to the Board meeting. Board deliberations on crops, livestock, handling, and other topics proceeded over three days under the leadership of organic farmer and NOSB chair, Nate Powell-Palm. This meeting covered a variety of proposals for deterring fraud, a few newly petitioned materials, and many materials reviewed every 5 years under the sunset clause.

SUNSET MATERIALS FOR USE IN ORGANIC

The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances identifies substances that may and may not be used in organic crop and livestock production, as well as products allowed in or on processed organic products. Typically, synthetic substances are prohibited unless specifically allowed and non-synthetic substances are allowed unless specifically prohibited. National List materials must be reviewed and voted on by the NOSB every five years.

A number of materials were up for their 5-year review before their sunset dates in 2024. **While in the past these materials used to require a 2/3 majority to keep a substance on the National List, they now require a 2/3 majority to take it off the list.** No material received enough votes to remove it from the National List. Materials remaining on the National List for another 5 years include:

LIVESTOCK:

Chlorhexidine
Tolazoline
Copper sulfate

Elemental sulfur
Lidocaine
Glucose

CROPS:

Herbicides, soap-based
Biodegradable biobased mulch film (BBMF) *(Received 9 of 10 votes needed to remove it)*
Boric acid Sticky traps/barriers
Elemental sulfur
Coppers, fixed
Copper sulfate
Polyoxin D zinc salt
Humic acids
Micronutrients: Soluble boron products

Micronutrients: Sulfates, carbonates, oxides, or silicates of zinc, copper, iron, manganese, molybdenum, selenium, and cobalt
Vitamins C and E
Squid byproducts
Lead salts
Tobacco dust (nicotine sulfate)

HANDLING:

Attapulgite	Acidified sodium chlorite
Bentonite	Carbon dioxide
Diatomaceous earth	Sodium phosphates
Magnesium chloride	Casings
Nitrogen	Pectin
Sodium carbonate	Potassium acid tartrate

PETITIONED MATERIALS FOR USE IN ORGANIC

Five substances were petitioned for addition to the National List. **Potassium Hydroxide** was NOT added as a production aid in the production of liquid fish products. The NOSB voted to ADD **synthetic Carbon Dioxide (CO2)** at § 205.601 Synthetic substances allowed for use in organic crop production as "(a) algicide, disinfectants, and sanitizer, including irrigation system cleaning systems." The NOSB will discuss whether to add "(j) As plant or soil amendments," at the Spring 2023 meeting.

For Handling, three substances were petitioned. The Board voted to classify **Peroxylic Acid (PoLA)** as non-agricultural, synthetic, but did NOT vote to add peroxylic acid (PoLA) for use as an antimicrobial agent in process water, ice, or brine used in the production, processing, and preparation of meat and poultry products, at § 205.605(b) of the National List. The Board voted AGAINST the petitioned annotation change of **Phosphoric Acid**. The NOSB voted in FAVOR of the petition that **Recharge Materials used in the Ion Exchange Filtration Process** must be listed on the National List.

OTHER NOSB DISCUSSION

The Board discussed a variety of topics regarding Compliance, Accreditation, and Certification. The NOSB has made recommendations to the NOP to improve its Risk Mitigation Table. The Board discussed how hiring research assistants could support the work of the Board, what these assistants should be allowed to do for members, and how they should be hired and managed. Serving on the NOSB requires Board members to contribute many hours a week and to become experts in topics they may not be familiar with, so research support could be helpful to Board members, especially farmers juggling NOSB service with running their own farms. The proposal for increasing acreage reporting requirements to deter fraud was further discussed and received many public comments raising concern about the impact of acreage/crop reporting for highly diversified vegetable farms. Finally, Board input on Organic as Climate Smart agriculture was discussed, acknowledging this was an important but massive agenda item for the Board to tackle.

2023 NOSB MEETINGS

While at the time of publication, the USDA had not yet published the 2023 meeting dates and locations, we expect the spring meeting will be held in April 2023 in **Atlanta, GA** and the fall meeting in October 2023 in **Providence, RI**. We hope to see you there!

Kate Mendenhall is the Executive Director of Organic Farmers Association and runs Okoboji Organics diversified organic livestock farm in Northwest Iowa.



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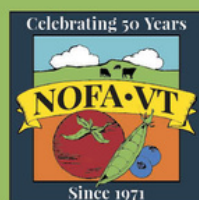


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OFA Policy Process

How OFA annual policies are made.



ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION



Survey of all U.S. certified organic farmers and OFA organizational members



OFA's Policy Committee reviews results & drafts policy statements



Review and comment by OFA membership



Policies are finalized and approved by OFA Policy and Governance Committees



OFA farmer members vote

Policies that get 60% of the popular vote and 60% popular support in at least two-thirds of the six regions will become part of the OFA policy platform.

OFA GRASSROOTS POLICY SURVEY

Until February 12, 2023 Organic Farmers Association will be soliciting input on policy priorities and policy positions from all U.S. certified organic farmers and organic farm organizations. Please either print and mail in the survey on the next two pages or fill out the survey online. The results from your input determine our working agenda for the year!



Click to
Participate



2023 ANNUAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

For Organic Farmers, By Organic Farmers

Make Your
Voice
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This survey is available online, or you may print these 2 pages & mail to OFA by February 12, 2023.

PLEASE SELECT THE OPTION THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOU:

- ☐ I am a **certified organic farmer**.
- ☐ I work for or serve in a leadership role with an **organic farm organization**.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE ORGANIC FARMERS ASSOCIATION?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

PLEASE SELECT THE REGION IN WHICH YOUR FARM/ORGANIZATION RESIDES:

- ☐ **CALIFORNIA**
- ☐ **WEST** (AK, HI, WA, OR, NV, AZ, ID, UT, NM, MT, WY, CO, KS)
- ☐ **NORTH CENTRAL** (ND, SD, NE, MN, IA, WI)
- ☐ **MIDWEST** (MO, IL, IN, MI, OH, PA)
- ☐ **SOUTH** (TX, OK, AR, LA, MS, AL, GA, FL, SC, NC, TN, KY, VA, WV, MD, Territories)
- ☐ **NORTHEAST** (NY, VT, NH, ME, MA, RI, CT, NJ, DE)



YOUR POLICY PRIORITIES

Please **SELECT THE TOP THREE** policy positions you think should be the **HIGHEST PRIORITIES** for Organic Farmers Association:

- ☐ Access to Affordable Land
- ☐ Animal Welfare Rule: Finalizing the Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards Rule (OLPS)
- ☐ Beginning Farmer Support
- ☐ Climate Change - Organic is Climate Smart
- ☐ Crop Insurance Improvements for Organic Producers
- ☐ Dismantling Organic Corporate Consolidation
- ☐ Demanding that if the USDA insists on certifying hydroponic production, they write standards.
- ☐ Expanded Organic Research
- ☐ Food Safety (FSMA)
- ☐ Increasing Organic Farmer Diversity (Supporting more diverse farmers)
- ☐ Labor & Immigration
- ☐ National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) issues and agenda
- ☐ NOP Enforcement to Ensure Organic Integrity
- ☐ NRCS: EQIP, CSP, CRP Programs for extended organic support
- ☐ Organic Certification Cost Share (more \$ & faster reimbursement)
- ☐ Organic Dairy Standards & Enforcement
- ☐ Organic Import Fraud
- ☐ Organic Production Market and Data Initiatives
- ☐ Pesticide & GMO Contamination
- ☐ Prohibiting Containers in Organic Production (with the exceptions of transplants and plants sold in their containers).
- ☐ Prohibiting Hydroponics in Organic Production
- ☐ Prohibiting Soluble Nitrogen in Organic Production
- ☐ Public Seeds & Breeds Research
- ☐ Water: Clean Water, Access, Etc.
- ☐ Other (please specify):

SUBMIT YOUR POLICY POSITIONS FOR THE POLICY COMMITTEE TO REVIEW

If you have identified a policy priority or change to an existing OFA policy you would like the OFA Policy Committee to consider, please submit your policy concern(s) below. Please be **specific**.

POLICY PROPOSAL #1

Policy Topic/Title:

Recommended OFA Policy Position (Example: OFA Support [policy description]):

More information about why this policy is important:

Could OFA contact you for more information? ☐ Yes ☐ No

POLICY PROPOSAL #2

Policy Topic/Title:

Recommended OFA Policy Position (Example: OFA Support [policy description]):

More information about why this policy is important:

Could OFA contact you for more information? ☐ Yes ☐ No

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Your policy positions and priorities will be kept confidential and only shared as a group. If you have expert knowledge for a policy position, OFA may reach out to you for more info.

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MEET THE OLSONS

Jonathan and Carolyn Olson live on the same farm Jonathan's great-grandfather moved to in **1913**. Their farm consists of **1100 acres** on a three-crop rotation, **raising corn, soybeans, small grains**, and occasionally some alfalfa near Cottonwood, Minnesota.

ORGANIC TRANSITION

Jonathan and Carolyn started transitioning their farm into organic production in **1998** after soybean buyers inquired whether the food-grade soybeans they were raising were organic. They spent two years researching before transitioning a **40-acre** field on a trial basis. By **2008**, they were farming all of their acres organically.

GRATIFICATION

They enjoy working with Cargill and were excited to have another Minnesota company working with organic farmers. Cargill recognizes the need for quality grains and traceability for end users like Bell & Evans. The Olsons appreciate knowing where their organic grains are used and share those stories with consumers.

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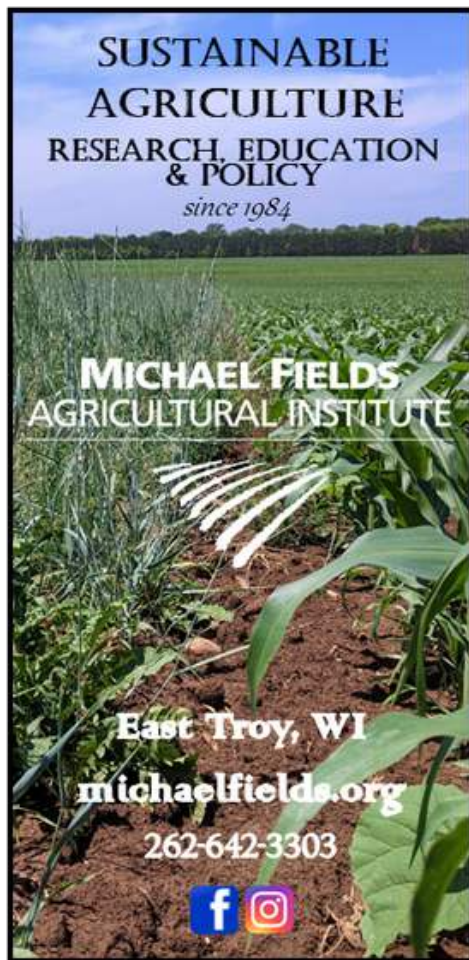


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PRIMARY CONTACT INFORMATION

Name (Primary Contact)

Farm Name:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Mobile #:

Other Phone:

Email:

Email 2:

Website:

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

This Annual Membership is a:

☐

New Membership

☐

Renewal

MEMBERSHIP TYPE

☐

Certified Organic Farmer

☐

Supporter

☐

Organization (\$250)

ONE TIME GIFT

This Annual Membership Option will expire in one year.

☐

\$25

☐

\$50

☐

\$75

☒

\$100

☐

\$250

☐

\$500

☐

Other\$

☐

Check here to Auto-renew so that your membership is always valid

MONTHLY PLEDGE

This membership will ensure your membership is always current.

☐

\$10

☒

\$15

☐

\$20

☐

\$25

☐

\$30

☐

Other\$

click to
JOIN
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PAYMENT

MEMBERSHIP

DONATION

TOTAL

MAIL TO: Organic Farmers Association
PO BOX 709
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CC#:

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