



ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Organic is the fastest growing sector of U.S. Agriculture, and the U.S. leads the world in organic food sales at nearly \$70 billion (2023). Four out of five U.S. households regularly purchase organic products. (OTA) However, policies are needed to counteract our dependence on organic imports to meet this growing demand, and ensure that domestic producers can take advantage of the growing domestic demand for organic. The value of organic imports has nearly tripled since 2012, rising to nearly \$2 billion in 2023 (ERS, 2025). Meanwhile, U.S. organic production has decreased in both number of farms and acreage, while organic production has increased globally; moving the U.S. from third in global organic acreage in 2016, to ninth in 2022 (ERS, 2025).

U.S. growers are willing to transition to organic, and they need agriculture policies that allow them to take advantage of the domestic demand. **U.S. farmers deserve U.S. organic market share. Based on the input from OFA farmer members and allied organizations from around the country, here are the priorities OFA will focus on in 2025.**



ORGANIC INTEGRITY ENFORCEMENT

ENSURE STABLE MARKETS FOR DOMESTIC FARMERS

Organic farmers work hard to ensure the integrity of the crops they produce. Unfortunately, higher organic prices and growing market demand can lure fraudulent players into the marketplace. Fraud has caused significant price fluctuations in recent years, destabilized the organic grain market for U.S. producers and threatened consumers' faith in the organic label. Preventing organic fraud is consistently a top priority for organic farmers.

- There is a need for enhanced enforcement and the agency charged with overseeing the rapidly growing sector needs to keep pace with that growth.
- Include the Continuous Improvement and Accountability in Organic Act (CIAO) in the Farm Bill to implement a transparent and predictable process to prioritize and update organic standards.

KEY CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

- Include the Organic Imports Verification Act (OIVA) in the Farm Bill to require USDA to evaluate which organic feedstuff imports are at highest risk for fraud and require strategic testing of those imports to verify organic integrity.

Photo credit: Thorpe's Organic Family Farm (NY)





EXISTING USDA PROGRAMS SHOULD WORK FOR ORGANIC

Farmers who have invested in the transition to organic certification need the same USDA services and programs that conventional producers depend on. Yet details of those program requirements often make them difficult to access or useless to organic producers.

KEY CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

- Make improvements and adjustments to crop insurance so that it is fair to farmers and the community, functional for small, diversified, organic and regenerative farmers, and informed by data, experience, and technical expertise.
- Honor existing government contracts made to farmers.
- Fund and fully staff NRCS. Update NRCS programs so that they are effective for organic producers.
- Provide improved data collection to better understand and address the challenges organic dairies face so that USDA can ensure effective relief programs and develop a functioning safety net for domestic organic dairy producers similar to programs designed for conventional dairy.



AFFORDABLE ORGANIC CERTIFICATION TO MEET DEMAND

Certification costs are a high concern for small and midsize domestic organic farmers. The Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) is crucial for farmers to enter and remain competitive in the organic market. However, it was not funded under the most recent Farm Bill extension. With inflation and certification costs on the rise, the program was already falling short of providing farmers with crucial support. Now thousands of organic producers and processors will face crushing increases in their annual certification costs.

OCCPS is a small investment that will help ensure American farmers can compete in a global market and continue to meet the growing domestic demand for organic products while maintaining high certification standards that consumers trust.

KEY CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

- Fund OCCPS in the upcoming appropriations process or the next Farm Bill so that farmers and processors can be refunded 100% of their certification costs.



INFRASTRUCTURE SHOULD SUPPORT FARM VIABILITY

While certified organic sales are booming, policy changes are needed to ensure domestic farmers can take advantage of increased demand. Supply chain challenges, including processing infrastructure and transportation to prospective organic buyers and consumers, are the primary barriers to entry into the organic marketplace.

Policies are needed to bridge this barrier and enable more domestic producers to take advantage of the economic opportunity presented by the growth of the organic market through strategic marketplace investments.

KEY CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

- Lift Funding Freeze on Organic Market Development Grants
- Include the Organic Market Development Act ([S. 2936/H.R. 5763](#) - 118th Congress) in the next Farm Bill to codify the USDA Organic Market Development program.
- Include elements of The Organic Dairy Assistance, Investment, and Reporting Yields Act (ODAIRY) ([S. 3097](#) - 118th Congress) in the next Farm Bill to provide market access for farmers through investments in regional organic dairy infrastructure.



ORGANIC RESEARCH TO SERVE ALL FARMERS

Investing in organic research has significant benefits that serve more than just organic farmers. Organic research should prioritize helping organic farmers prepare for and recover from extreme weather events, quantify the multiple benefits of organic production 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.

KEY CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

- Fully fund and bolster the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative (ODI) - a crucial joint initiative of three USDA Agencies: NASS, Economic Research Service (ERS), and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).
- Direct ERS to conduct a full, systematic evaluation of the economic impact organic agriculture has on rural and urban communities, taking into account economic, ecological, and social factors.
- Rectify disruptions to the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), and fund and bolster the program going forward.
- Fund research on perennial crops that offer increased on-farm resilience.



INVESTMENT IN ORGANIC TO PROMOTE CONSERVATION, BUILD ON-FARM RESILIENCE & PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Organic farms are managed in ways that promote the health of the surrounding ecosystem, including improved soil, water, and air quality and increased resilience to extreme weather events.

KEY CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

- Incentivize on-farm conservation through EQIP and CSP.
- Build on-farm renewable energy by funding USDA's Rural Energy for America Program.
- Direct USDA to research agrivoltaic systems that integrate renewable energy production with crop or animal production.
- Create a state soil health assistance program to address soil health from a local perspective.
- Incentivize alternative manure management practices.



Photo: Twin Oaks Dairy LLC (NY)



WHAT IS ORGANIC?

USDA-certified organic foods are cultivated and processed following federal standards that consider factors such as soil health, animal husbandry, pest and weed management, and additive usage. Organic farmers prioritize natural substances and employ physical, mechanical, or biological farming techniques whenever possible.

For produce to be labeled organic, it must be certified as grown on land free from prohibited substances for at least three years before harvest. These prohibited substances typically include synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. If a grower needs to use a synthetic substance for a specific purpose, it must first be approved based on criteria assessing its impact on human health and the environment.

As for organic meat, regulations mandate that animals are raised in environments that support their natural behaviors, such as grazing on pasture. They must be fed 100% organic feed and forage and cannot be given antibiotics or hormones.

ABOUT THE ORGANIC FARMERS ASSOCIATION

The Organic Farmers Association (OFA) provides a strong and unified national voice for 19,500 domestic certified organic producers. Created for organic farmers, by organic farmers, OFA builds and supports a farmer-led national organic farmer movement and national policy platform by developing and advocating policies that benefit organic farmers and the general public; strengthening and supporting the capacity of organic farmers and farm organizations; and supporting collaboration and leadership among state, regional, and national organic farmers organizations. Only certified organic farmers have a vote, and each farm has an equal seat at the table. Supporters of organic farmers support our efforts so that organic farmers can thrive.

Learn more at OrganicFarmersAssociation.org.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED & MAKE REAL CHANGE FOR ORGANIC FARMERS?

You can join OFA as a Farmer or Supporter member to get more involved with policy and advocacy work or just as a way to support our mission and members.



JOIN TODAY!



WANT TO GET MORE INVOLVED IN OFA POLICY WORK?

Contact Lily Hawkins,
Policy Director, Organic
Farmers Association



Lily ensures that certified organic farmers' policy priorities are represented in Washington, D.C. She depends on organic farmers in key districts to help her advocate for what you need for your farm to succeed!

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