

The Organic Voice

Organic Farmers Association – Special Issue No. 1 • April 2025



Organic Farmer 2025 Fly-In: Progress, Actions & Results

*Catch up on organic news and the Fly-In with
with OFA's Policy Director and Policy Intern
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Advocating for Organic in Uncertain Times

*What the Fly-In was like for one new OFA farmer-
leader experiencing cancelled funding
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*Providing a strong and unified national voice
for domestic certified organic producers.*



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- Organic Integrity & NOP Enforcement
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Organic Farmers Association

From OFA's Policy Committee Chair

As I sit down to write this in late March, I find myself finishing up preparations for our farm's crops for another year. Planning started even before we were finished with harvest last fall. Soil tests were taken, seed purchased, manure prepared, equipment serviced, organic system plans submitted, and on and on.

Planning and preparation are an integral part of farming if we want to obtain the goal of a successful harvest at the end of the year. As much as we plan, many things are out of our control. Will it rain at the right time? Will it be dry at the right time? Too hot? Too cold? (My wife says I'm never happy when it comes to the weather!) The challenges of frost, bugs, diseases, and equipment breakdowns are a constant battle. With all those things out of our control, how do we keep going? We return to our plans at each hurdle we face, review them, adjust, and press on, knowing we are still on the right track to meet our goals at the end.

How does any of this relate to organic farm policy and OFA's recent farmer advocacy trip to Washington, D.C. to speak with members of Congress? It's no secret that the only consistent thing in our nation's capital right now is extreme, unpredictable change.

As we do during each annual Farmer Fly-In, we go in with well-intentioned plans to advocate for organic agriculture, but this year we also had to prepare for breaking news from the new administration that would impact farmers.

- We planned to advocate to expand the organic cost-share program, but instead we focused on trying to make sure organic cost-share continues to exist.
- We had to face how to advocate for fair crop insurance reform for organic farmers when we aren't even sure if there will be a Risk Management Agency around in a few years.
- And each day grant and program freezes abound, and tariffs are adding complexities to market plans.

Oddly enough, this suddenly sounds a little like farming. Plan and prepare, only to have to deal with all the unexpected things that are completely out of our control.

So how do we tackle this uncertainty? We go back to our original plans, review them, adjust for the situation, and press on, knowing we are still on the right track to meet our goals at the end.

The timeline might need to be adjusted a little, but we keep our eye on the goal.

I look forward to OFA's trip to Washington, D.C. each year. Being on Capitol Hill with a like-minded group of organic farmers is a fantastic experience. With all the division that is currently happening in our country, it's a relief to be advocating for organic farm policy: one of the few areas that still has bi-partisan support in Congress. It's great to be able to sit down with lawmakers from both sides and talk about something we can all agree on. The hard part comes in the details and figuring out how we can bring both sides together to reach a mutually beneficial goal—a goal that benefits all of America.

Many of you reading this are probably asking, "What can I do to help?" It is a proven fact that when advocating for something important there is strength in numbers. Start by becoming a member of the Organic Farmer's Association, and if you are already a member, consider increasing the amount you give to OFA each year. This will allow our fantastic staff and leadership to keep advocating for your farm, even while you are busy running that farm.

Next, get involved. Currently, OFA has multiple Farmer Workgroups that are focused on issues farmers care about. These are open to anyone who has an interest, and we welcome your input to help us shape the policies that we advocate for. And if you're an organic supporter or consumer, please lend your voice to our mission and tell your legislators to support organic programs.

OFA is an organization that is farmer led. This means that only certified organic farmers can propose and vote on the policies that we advocate for. We always need farmers from all areas of the country to fill positions on both the Governing Council and the Policy Committee. Lastly, if you do nothing else, please support the organic industry by purchasing certified organic products whenever possible.

Here's to a successful harvest and a strong organic program!

Sincerely,

Scott Myers
OFA Policy Committee Chair
Woodlyn Acres Farm, LLC
Dalton, Ohio





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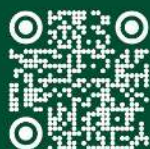
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Spring Policy Update

By Lily Hawkins

Each year, Organic Farmers Association brings together organic farmers and representatives of organic organizations for a week of in-person collaboration and meetings with decision-makers in Washington, D.C. This year, we shed light on the urgent problems facing organic farmers due to funding freezes and USDA staffing reductions.

Since that week, changes have continued to roll through the federal government. We have worked to keep members informed and continued to advocate for adequate funding and expertise to maintain the programs vital to organic producers. We have also been working on policies we hope to see included in the upcoming Farm Bill.

In this special issue, you can read a recap of OFA's Farmer Fly-In, learn about OFA's policy process, and see what we're advocating for on behalf of organic farmers this year in D.C.

As you read this, over 30 OFA farmer and organization members from 16 states will be attending meetings with their senators, representatives, House and Senate Ag Committee staff, and USDA staff to discuss organic farm policies. As the news cycle changes (rapidly!), these meetings are even more critical so we can educate congress on why organic is important.

MARKER BILLS

In March, Congress passed a new continuing resolution (CR) to fund the government, averting a potential shutdown.

This CR extends funding through the end of the federal fiscal year on September 30, 2025. The resolution was achieved after intense negotiations, marked by significant partisan divides and disputes between House and Senate members, and notably within the Democratic party.

With the CR in place, legislators are starting to again work on Farm Bill marker bills. Marker bills are not intended to pass on their own but are a vehicle to introduce ideas and build support for policies in hopes that they will be included in the next Farm Bill. OFA supported a number of marker bills introduced in 2024, but those will have to be reintroduced for the current Congress since the makeup of both chambers changed after the 2024 elections. In addition to reintroduced bills, we expect to review some new marker bills as well.

Follow organic marker bill updates with OFA's Farm Bill Marker Bill Tracker for the 119th Congress, and review what was introduced by the 118th Congress.

CLICK HERE

POLICY PROCESSES

The Organic Farmers Association (OFA) champions the interests of certified organic farmers nationwide in Washington, D.C., through a distinctive farmer-driven approach. This grassroots method ensures a powerful and united voice for these farmers.

Policy Process cont.

Each winter, OFA conducts a broad survey open to all U.S. certified organic farmers and related organizations to gather their perspectives on key policy positions and priorities.

This process places farmers at the center of OFA's policy development right from the start. The OFA Policy Committee then analyzes the survey responses, and OFA members offer feedback on the proposed policies, refining them into practical and impactful priorities. Ultimately, OFA's organic farmer members vote to either approve or reject these policy positions.

At the March OFA Policy Committee meeting held before the annual Farmer Fly-In, seven ideas for new or revised policies were moved forward. These policies have been reviewed by all OFA members and will soon be sent to the Governing Council and then to all OFA farmer-members for a final vote.

For a policy proposal to be officially adopted by OFA, it requires a minimum of 60% support in a national vote of farmer members, as well as 60% support in at least four of the six OFA regions.

Approved or updated policies are then incorporated into the Organic Farmers Association Policy Positions. If you would like to have a say in OFA's policy priorities, join as a Farmer Member today! (And if you aren't a certified organic farmer, you can still join OFA as a Supporter Member and help move organic policy priorities forward!)

OFA TRACKS FEDERAL POLICY SO THAT YOU CAN MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

This year, we are continuing work to ensure a Farm Bill that serves organic farmers and provides adequate funding for the USDA programs organic farmers rely on.

For ways you can get involved and reach out to your legislators, please bookmark OFA's Take Action page on our website. Because policy is moving fast in 2025, we encourage you to also subscribe to our text alerts, which are only used when urgent action is needed

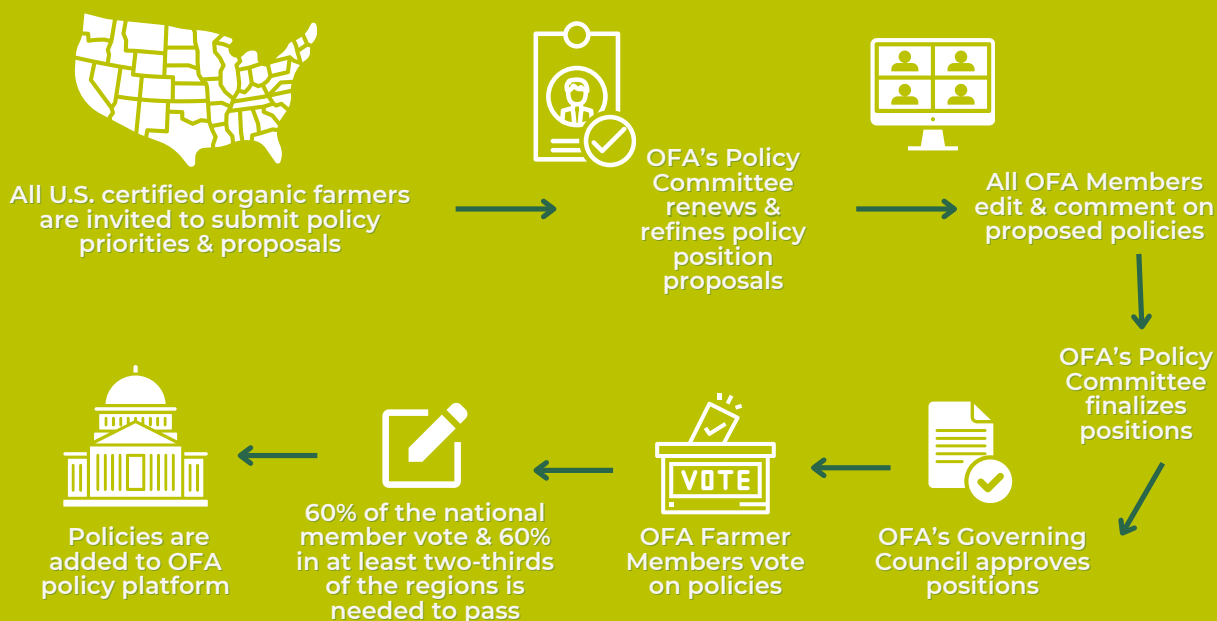
Right now we are prioritizing outreach on three important issues.



ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION

OFA Policy Process

A FARMER LED GRASSROOTS PROCESS



1 ORGANIC IMPORTS VERIFICATION ACT OF 2025 (OIVA)

In April, Senators Pete Ricketts, R-NE, and Tina Smith, D-MN, introduced new legislation to promote organic integrity and a level playing field for domestic organic producers by requiring the USDA to test high-risk bulk imports of organic feedstuffs for residues of substances that are prohibited in organic production. This legislation will increase oversight and the tools needed to stop organic import fraud and stabilize fair and equitable markets for U.S. organic grain growers.

While import fraud can appear across commodities in the organic sector, imported organic feedstuff commodities (like whole soybeans, soybean meal, corn, cracked corn, rape, rape meal, whole sunflowers, hulled sunflowers, sunflower oil, and sunflower meal) enter the U.S. market through high-risk (complex and opaque) supply chains. This bill would build off of the recently finalized Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule and provide the USDA with an additional tool to crack down on fraud.

Specifically, the bill would do the following:

1. Establish Risk-Based Protocol: The USDA Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Homeland Security and the “organic agricultural product imports interagency working group,” shall develop and regularly update risk-based protocols for determining the high-risk status of organic feedstuffs.

2. Establish an Annual List of High-Risk Organic Feedstuffs: Each year, the USDA Secretary, using the established risk-based protocol, shall create a confidential list of high-risk imported organic feedstuffs that will require additional residue testing that year.

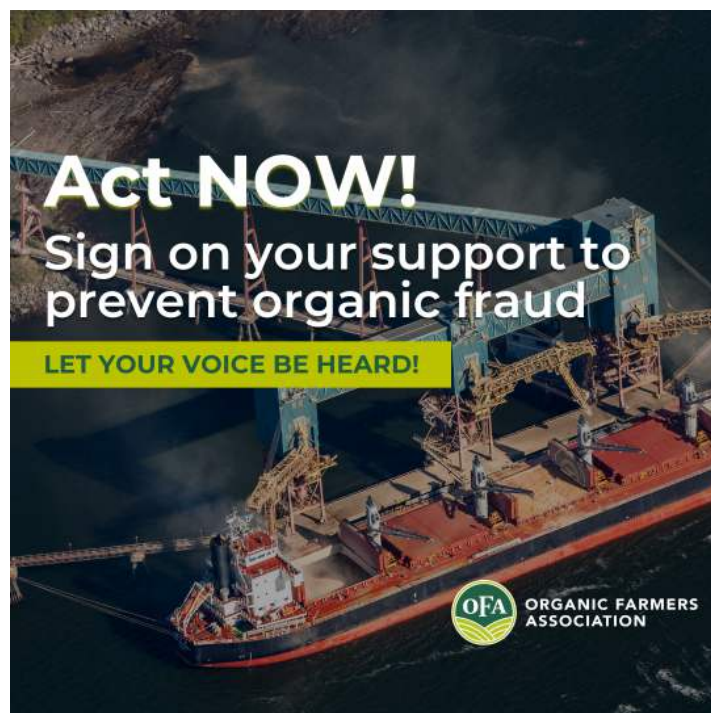
3. Establish Parameters for Residue Testing: The USDA Secretary will create residue testing parameters for the established list of high-risk imported organic feedstuffs. Parameters would outline necessary testing frequency, quantity to be tested, the type of testing, who is responsible for the testing, and other necessary parameters.

4. Require Annual Testing: Annually, the USDA Secretary will be required to conduct residue testing for each covered organic feedstuff.

5. Establish Corrective Action: If required residue testing indicates a prohibited substance over the permitted level for organic, the shipment of that organic feedstuff will be excluded from organic sale.

6. Require an Annual Report to Congress: The National Organic Program (NOP) would be required to present an annual report to Congress on the residue testing carried out during the year prior for each high-risk organic feedstuff and imported organic feedstuff shipped in bulk. The report would include information on the frequency of the applicable residue testing, residue testing methods used, testing results, standards used to analyze the test results, and any actions taken due to the residue testing.

During the Fly-In, many legislators expressed interest in supporting OIVA so that U.S. organic grain farmers are supported to thrive in an equitable market absent of fraud. Your voice is crucial right now. Sign the petition in support here and keep an eye on your inbox for more ways to take action



2 PROTECT THE ORGANIC CERTIFICATION COST SHARE

The 2018 Farm Bill was again extended until September 30, 2025. While major agricultural programs continue their operations, smaller critical initiatives like the Organic Cost Share Program were not extended.

The Organic Certification Cost Share Program is crucial for farmers to enter and remain competitive in the organic market. However, as an 'orphan program,' it required specific funding allocation to continue operating under the Farm Bill extension. This action was not taken, and now thousands of American organic farmers will face prohibitive certification costs that could force them out of the organic sector.

Additional orphan programs crucial to organic farming to lose funding under the Farm Bill extension include the Organic Data Initiative, which collects essential data to support organic, and the Organic Certification Trade and Tracking Program, which helps enforce regulations and prevent fraud.

Your voice is crucial right now. Please contact your representatives using our template letter and urge them to support American organic farmers by reinstating essential organic programs.



3 PROTECT FEDERAL FUNDING FOR FARM AND FOOD PROGRAMS

In late January, the Trump administration briefly paused all federal agency grants and loans. Legal challenges were immediately put forward, and for now, the freeze is halted. If reinstated, the freeze would threaten many organic organizations and numerous programs at the USDA, including organic programs.



More recently, OFA has been tracking cuts to USDA staffing and the closure of state and regional USDA offices. Local USDA staff are key in helping organic producers access and understand program applications, providing technical assistance, and delivering essential services to farmers. Office closures, particularly in rural areas, create significant barriers to access for those who depend on in-person support. The loss of experienced USDA personnel through staffing cuts and calls for the end of remote work is creating a knowledge gap that will impair the agency's ability to serve organic producers and function effectively for years to come.

During the Fly-In, many legislators requested detailed information on exactly which funds were frozen and which staff had been let go. If your business or organization has been impacted by these issues, we would love to hear from you. Please consider filling out and sharing our Executive Order Impact Survey. Your personal information will not be shared outside of OFA. Hearing from you about your on-the-ground experience helps us better advocate for you on the hill and inform Congress how farms are affected. To take additional action, please call your legislators and urge them to support the The Honor Farmer Contracts Act (H.R.2396, S.1172) to unfreeze funding for contracts of the Department of Agriculture, and prohibit Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service office closures. 🌱

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



Farmer Voices Make an Impact on National Policy

National Organic Standards Board Spring Virtual Meeting

Public Comments
Apr. 22 & 24, 2025

Public Meeting
Apr. 29 - May 1, 2025

The meeting is free, open to the public, no registration is required, and will also stream live via Zoom.

Deadline to submit comments is
Apr. 28, 2025

[Find Meeting Details](#)

Farm Bill Marker Bill Tracker

NEW!



Legislators of the 119th Congress are beginning work to introduce and reintroduce Farm Bill marker bills. (Bills that OFA supported last year need to be reintroduced in the new Congress.) These bills are not intended to pass on their own, but are a vehicle to introduce ideas and build support for policies in hopes that they'll be included in the next Farm Bill. Keep track of organic policies in our tracker!

[View the Tracker](#) ➔



FEATURE

2025 OFA Fly-In Recap: Organic Farmers Advance Policy Priorities

By Ella Lucabaugh

On March 3, 2025, over 35 OFA members convened in Washington, D.C. for the annual Organic Farmers Association's Farmer Fly-In. OFA leaders, comprising organic producers and organization members from across the agricultural spectrum, engaged in meaningful dialogue with legislators on issues ranging from organic import verification to improving organic certification processes. The 2025 Fly-In's timing proved particularly strategic, occurring amid heightened concerns regarding funding and budget cuts for essential organic programs within the USDA

BEHIND THE SCENES - GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

Long before farmer arrival in D.C., OFA conducts a grassroots policy development process to craft and refine policies ahead of their annual Farmer Fly-In. This process begins with an OFA member survey that identifies key policy concerns from organic farmers nationwide. In the most recent survey, organic import fraud emerged as the top priority, with 56% of farmers highlighting it as critical. Other major concerns included advocating for the Organic Certification Cost Share program and developing affordable certification solutions for small operations.

To prepare for the March 4 Hill visits, OFA held their final group meeting at the University of D.C., the district's land grant university. The OFA Policy Committee, led by Scott Myers, an Ohio organic farmer attending his third Fly-In and first as Committee Chair, reviewed these priorities with the Policy Committee and vetted the policy proposals. The day is spent refining the 2025 policy positions that had been submitted by organic farmers from across the

country, preparing to present these concerns effectively to legislators during USDA and Capitol Hill visits the next day.

GROUP MEETING WITH THE USDA NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM AND ADVOCACY ON THE HILL

The following day, farmers and farm organization members assemble at USDA headquarters. In a 1-hour session, farmers engaged with the Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service, Bruce Summers, National Organic Program Director Chris Purdy, Andrew Malone, Associate Deputy Administrator, National Organic Program, and Lori Tortora, Director of Standards and Enforcement, National Organic Program.

Following OFA's group meeting with the USDA, farmers executed a flurry of congressional meetings across both House and Senate offices. California farmers reported positive engagement with Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA), whose office expressed particular interest in the Organic Integrity and Verification Act (OIVA). In addition, "Thompson's staffer wanted to know more about funding freeze impacts and USDA staff cuts," reported OFA Policy Committee member and California organic farmer Mark Schlesinger. "Economic development and domestic food security particularly resonated with them."

Sara Tashker, fellow California organic farmer, echoed this, with requests from Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA) looking for exact numbers of organic farms in his district and those possibly impacted by the funding freeze.

Group Meeting cont.

In Kentucky meetings, farmer Bryce Baumann found that Rep. Andy Barr's (R-KY) office similarly wanted to know more about the funding freeze, though they remained "pessimistic on cost share [funding this year]." Meanwhile, Senator Mitch McConnell's (R-KY) office showed specific interest in OIVA and requested information on the scope of federal funding impacts.

Several congressional offices proved particularly receptive to organic farmers' priorities and concerns. Minnesota organic grain farmer Matthew Fitzpatrick was joined by organic certifier Ben Bowell of Oregon Tilth, Montana organic grain farmer Nate Powell-Palm, and OFA Farmer Services Consultant Harriet Behar to explain the importance of additional oversight of organic grain imports to Senator Tina Smith (D-MN) and ask her to co-sponsor the OIVA bill.

This in-person meeting with farmers proved incredibly effective in communicating the wide-reaching organic stakeholder support for OIVA legislation and conveyed why Senator Smith's support was crucial. A victory of the 2025 Fly-In, Senator Smith co-sponsored this legislation with Senator Ricketts (R-NE) and demonstrated the power of bringing farmers to Congress.

TAKEAWAYS FOR ORGANIC FARMERS

The 2025 Fly-In exhibited significant progress in OFA's relationships between farmer constituents and their House and Senate legislators, as well as the USDA-NOP. Seth Kroeck, organic farmer from Maine reflected on the experience, "This year I felt comfortable going through my talking points and having a back and forth looking for points to connect on," noting that (R-ME) Senator Collins's staff mentioned they "like OFA because it is just organic farmers."

Perhaps most significantly, the initiative is part of a sustained effort to engage with their elected officials. Invitations were issued for numerous on-farm visits during the upcoming congressional recess. These follow-up engagements will allow legislators to directly observe implementation challenges for organic farmers across the U.S. and see the immense value that organic farmers add to rural and urban communities across the country.

***If you are interested in hosting your legislator on your farm this summer, email Lily Hawkins
lily@organicfarmersassociation.org,
OFA's Policy Director.***

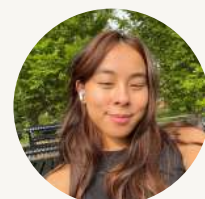
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As farmers debriefed about the Fly-In the following day, they identified key takeaways for continuing strategies and for in-district follow-up. The connections made during this year's Fly-In represent more than transactional advocacy meetings— they establish foundations for ongoing dialogue about how organic systems contribute to agricultural resilience and rural economic development. As OFA's leadership begins planning for 2026, the relationships and policy groundwork established during this year's Fly-In will continue shaping the organic sector's policy in meaningful ways.

AN INTERN'S EXPERIENCE

Serving as OFA's policy intern for both the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 terms has been an incredibly special experience for me. From virtually attending the Fall NOSB Meeting to preparing for the Fly-In, each experience has provided invaluable insights into the organics and agricultural industry. During the Fly-In I was incredibly impressed by the farmers' passion and tenacity in group policy meetings. Witnessing them advocate for their livelihoods and communities has reinforced the importance of this work, and I hope to carry on the lessons I have learned from OFA as I continue my early career journey in food systems and environmental sustainability. 🌱

Ella Lucabaugh is a senior at American University in Washington, DC, and serves as the Organic Farmers Association spring Organic Agriculture Policy Intern. She is passionate about advancing healthy food systems and driven by the belief that organic agriculture not only promotes human health but also nurtures soil vitality and biodiversity.



HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

OFA's purpose is to build and support a farmer-led national organic movement and we cannot do that without you! Explore OFA's Farmer Circles and Workgroups and join an upcoming session.

JOIN A FARMER WORKGROUP

Farmer Workgroups are a space for farmers to work together to identify problems, brainstorm solutions, and amplify the voices of organic farmers in the policy space.

Sign up to join a workgroup today!

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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.





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!

Lily@OrganicFarmersAssociation.org
O: 202-643-5363 x2
C: 267-231-2216

The Time is Now to Stand with Organic

OFA MEMBERSHIP



Policy
Influence



Organic Education
Resources



Peer-to-Peer
Collaborations

Join OFA

OFA was built for organic farmers by organic farmers, and right now organic farmers are having to navigate daily policy changes that are impacting day-to-day farm operations while trying to plan for the year ahead. Today, more than ever, **your involvement is essential as we embark on new policy and advocacy work that will shape the future of organic farming.**

With a \$25 membership fee, you can help power D.C. outreach to educate new members of Congress about why organic is important, how it's different from other farming methods, why consumer demand is growing, and why farmers need support.

Membership isn't just a donation. It's about farmers coming together to have their voices heard and put their own farming experiences in a national context to work for change for all farmers.

Will you join us?

Already a member? Share this magazine with a farmer and ask them to join.

Advocating for Organic in Uncertain Times

By Matthew Fitzgerald

I am a second-generation farmer whose family's operation has been 100% organic for over 25 years. Our farm, Fitzgerald Organics, produces organic grains including corn, soybeans, and wheat, as well as food-grade edible crops such as black beans, kidney beans, peas, and canning crops in central Minnesota. My decision to commit to organic farming is rooted in both environmental and ethical considerations, but also, as a farmer operating on non-family farmland, I see organic farming as a means to sustain a family-sized operation in an increasingly challenging agricultural landscape.

FACING CHALLENGES IN 2025

This year has presented significant challenges for my farm, largely due to changes in USDA policies and funding freezes. One major setback has been the freeze on the Farm Labor Stabilization Pilot (FLSP) Program, a grant designed to help farmers secure and improve their workforce. Organic farming is especially labor-intensive, requiring greater management and manual labor compared to conventional farming. We had planned to utilize the H-2A visa program for seasonal workers to assist with weed control during peak farming months.

However, despite securing the grant in 2024 and preparing for its implementation in April 2025 (we had already invested in workers' rights training and onboarding procedures as a part of our grant's first milestones), the funds were suddenly frozen early this year leaving me and approximately 140 other farmers in limbo.

So instead of preparing for workers to arrive on our farm, we've turned our efforts to trying to sort out what can be done to try to salvage our grant. And the timing of this funding freeze could not have been worse. Spring is a crucial period for organic farmers, as we prepare fields, manage weeds, and ensure that our crops get the best possible start. Without the promised funds, my farm, like many others, is forced to scramble for alternative labor solutions, which often come at a higher cost. I found myself questioning whether policymakers truly understand the impact of their decisions on the ground.

This uncertainty loomed over me as I traveled to Washington, D.C., for the Organic Farmers Association (OFA) Farmer Fly-In.

THE FLY-IN EXPERIENCE

We joined OFA as members a few years ago because we really believe in farmer membership organizations. We participate in a few others, including the National Young Farmers Coalition and Farmers Union, because there's something special about farmer-led organizations that most authentically prioritize farmers' needs.

I raised my hand to join OFA's Governing Council because I have experience with policymaking at the state level here in Minnesota. I enjoy thinking about policy and politics and want to be able to participate and contribute to the organic farm movement.

Fly-In cont.

As a part of this leadership position in the organization, I had the opportunity to participate in OFA's annual Farmer Fly-In to advocate for organic agriculture policies. Last fall, when we started preparing for the Fly-In, we had prepared to talk about the long overdue Farm Bill, marker bills OFA's members support, and other priorities we need our members of Congress to support. But we all know how the New Year began, and each news cycle derailed our priorities a little more.

On the day of the Fly-In we all put on our city clothes and nicest baseball caps and we took the D.C. metro to the belly of the beast. We met with key lawmakers and officials, including representatives from the USDA, National Organic Program (NOP), and members of Congress.

I focused on two primary issues: the Organic Import Verification Act (OIVA) and the funding freeze on organic programs. OIVA is crucial to ensuring fair competition for organic farmers by preventing fraudulent imports from undermining domestic organic production.

We first discussed OIVA with Minnesota Senator Tina Smith's office. Prior to our D.C. meeting, I, along with two other OFA members, had several phone and Zoom calls with Smith's office regarding the bill, but it wasn't until we had the in-person meeting that we really got to the core of the topic and earned support for OIVA. The bill was well received in the meetings of other OFA members too since it is a straightforward and bipartisan issue that any leader can see the benefits of supporting.

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RIGHT: Harriet Behar (OFA Farmer Services Consultant), Angie Craig (Rep. D-MN), and Matthew Fitzgerald (Fitzgerald Organics)

One of the most impactful moments of the trip was my meeting with Minnesota Congresswoman Angie Craig. During our discussion, I highlighted the real-world effects of the FLSP grant freeze on my farm and others like mine. Congresswoman Craig was deeply engaged and expressed her commitment to working toward a resolution, recognizing that organic farming plays a crucial role in both rural economies and consumer health. Prior to getting to D.C., there was a frustrating lack of communication from the USDA regarding our frozen funding. The weekly office hours set up to provide updates on the FLSP program were even canceled, leaving us without clarity on the situation and no one to turn to.

Later, as a group, we met with the Senate Minority and Majority Ag Committee staff Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry including Chairman John Boozman of Arkansas to discuss our priorities, the urgent need for a farm bill, and the impact of the Canadian tariffs that were the main news item for the day.

Throughout the meetings, I observed the necessity for farmers to actively educate and advocate, especially during times of administrative transition. I emphasized the importance of reminding policymakers why organic farmers matter, how the industry continues to grow, and what partnerships and support are needed. I realized that unless we, as farmers, actively engage in these conversations, our needs may go unheard. It reinforced my belief that advocacy is not just an occasional duty—it must be an ongoing effort.



MOVING FORWARD IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

With the Fly-In behind me, I remain deeply engaged in advocacy work. I am coordinating with other farmers affected by the funding freeze and maintaining ongoing discussions with policymakers about the OIVA and broader organic policy issues.

Like all farmers, I am no stranger to uncertainty—weather, markets, and consumer demands constantly shift. I urge fellow organic farmers to stay involved in advocacy efforts at both the state and federal levels. In the coming years, we cannot assume that organics will automatically be included in agricultural policy. Instead, we must actively defend and promote the policies that sustain organic agriculture. Becoming active in Organic Farmers Association helps elevate our voice on these key issues.

Beyond policy advocacy, I also believe in strengthening community ties among organic farmers. Sharing knowledge, supporting one another, and collaborating on solutions can help us navigate these uncertain times. Organic farming is not just a business—it's a movement, a commitment to sustainability, and a way of life that prioritizes the health of our land and communities.

As I get the planter ready, I remain hopeful and determined. My fellow organic farmers and I will continue to press for action, ensuring that organic agriculture remains a viable and thriving industry for future generations. The fight for organic farming is far from over, but I am ready to stand firm and advocate for the future we believe in. 🌱

Matthew grew up on his family's organic grain farm, Fitzgerald Farms in Central MN, and has been a partner in the farm over the last several years. Matthew also runs a farmer consulting business with his father, where they advise and train on: planning, storage, seed selection, equipment, pest and weed management, best practices, risk management, technology, USDA organic certification and marketing.



FARMER ADVOCACY IN ACTION

OFA member and Policy Committee leader Seth Kroeck has been an organic blueberry and mixed veg farmer in Brunswick, Maine for over two decades. Seth was one of many farmers whose USDA/NRCS contracts were frozen this year



leaving his farm projects in the lurch. OFA member and Policy Committee leader Seth Kroeck has been an organic blueberry and mixed veg farmer in Brunswick, Maine for over two decades. Seth was one of many farmers whose USDA/NRCS contracts were frozen this year leaving his farm projects in the lurch.

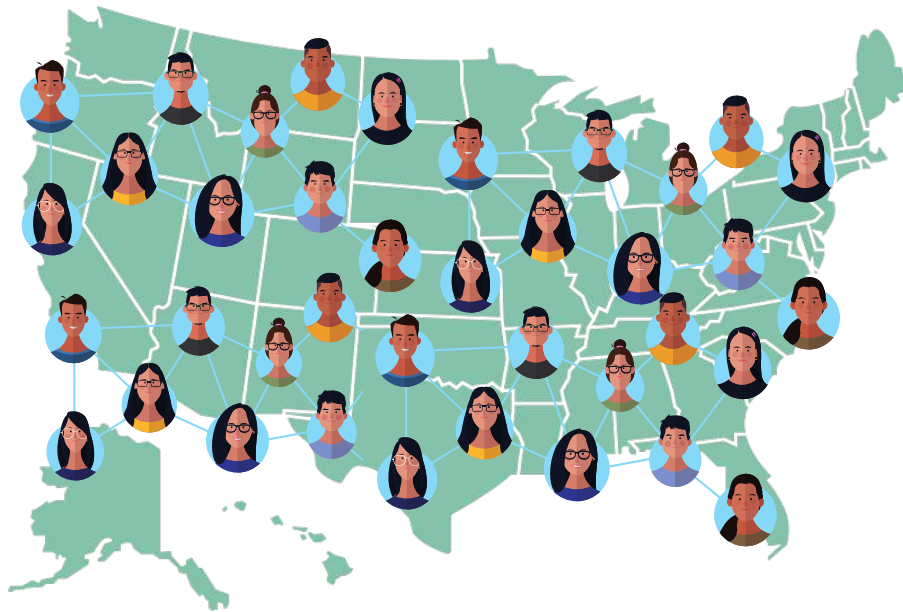
Seth joined other farmers in Washington, D.C. during OFA's Farmer Fly-In to speak to his members of Congress about the funding freeze and the impacts on his farm. Seth, who after years of advocating for organic, has built a strong relationship with his representative, Chellie Pingree who herself is a longtime organic farmer and member of the House Agriculture Committee and House Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee. Congresswoman Pingree has become a dedicated champion for organic agricultural policy, listening to the challenges organic farmers face in Maine and throughout the country and working with organizations like OFA to find solutions to these challenges so that organic farmers can be successful.

Because Seth has worked with Rep. Pingree's office for years on organic policy priorities, it was no surprise that her office reached out to Seth to invite him to join her for President Trump's joint address to Congress. So, after a long day of meetings for the Farmer Fly-In, Seth attended the speech with Rep. Pingree and participated in press outreach to bring attention to farmers' funding freeze stories.

As organic farmers continue to navigate policy challenges, stories like Seth's remind us that sustained advocacy can lead to meaningful relationships and support to impact change.

National Organic Farmer Education Network

Organic farmers and those interested in transitioning to organic can use OFA's new National Organic Farming Education Network resource to access educational events that best fit their learning journey regardless of location.



These educational events are offered by a range of organizations with a focus on organic agriculture education and network building. Most importantly, farmers can find events offered on national, regional, and local levels, as well as in-person and online. Just use the search and filter options to narrow results by topic, location, and keyword. And never miss an event by signing up to receive customizable notifications.

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Choose topics, regions, keywords, and a frequency



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Create your subscription. You'll have to verify your subscription to activate it (check your inbox!)



Powered by the Organic Farmers Association

A person wearing a bright yellow raincoat is holding a large bunch of green onions with their roots still attached. They are standing in a field of similar green onions. The background is a soft-focus field of green plants under a light sky.

NEW 2025 OFA SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE NOW

Find more details about corporate partnership opportunities by downloading a sponsorship brochure or contacting Amber Lippon at Amber@OrganicFarmersAssociation.org



**ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION**

A warm, golden-hour photograph of a woman and a young boy. The woman, on the right, has dark hair tied back and is smiling broadly while holding two small, fluffy yellow chicks in her hands. The boy, on the left, wears a white baseball cap and a dark vest over a light shirt, looking down at the chicks with a gentle smile. The background is a soft-focus farm scene with a wooden fence and a large red barn under a bright, hazy sky.

Have Your Voice Heard. Become a Member Today!

OrganicFarmersAssociation.org/member-benefits

Join the Organic Movement

Building a Stronger Organic Farmer Voice

PRIMARY CONTACT INFORMATION

Name (Primary Contact):

Farm Name:

Website:

Address:

City:

State:

ZIP:

Phone (Mobile):

Phone (Other):

Email (Primary):

Email (Other):

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

This Annual Membership is: ☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal

Membership Type: ☐ Certified Organic Farmer ☐ Supporter ☐ Organization (\$250)

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One Time Gift: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ Other

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Or Join Online Right Now: organicfarmersassociation.org/#join

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FARMERS TAKE D.C.

This year, during OFA's annual Farmer Fly-In we moved around the district a little differently...via D.C.'s metro! Decked out with our "Proud Organic Farmer" pins and OFA hats, over 30 members and staff joined the hustle and bustle of D.C. to get to the day's meetings on the Hill.

Locals and visitors alike couldn't resist telling us about the organic products they use in their lives and shared words of encouragement once they spotted the pins.

For ORGANIC FARMERS. By ORGANIC FARMERS.



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