



The Organic Voice

Organic Farmers Association – Special Issue No. 2 • April 2026

2026 Farmer Fly-In Recap

Catch up on organic policy news and progress from the 2026 Farmer Fly-In

Page 7

One Georgia Farmer's Advocacy Journey to Their First Fly-In

What the Fly-In was like for one new OFA leader representing the Southeast U.S.

Page 16

For ORGANIC FARMERS. By ORGANIC FARMERS.



ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION

OFA Represents Your Voice in D.C.

GIVE YOUR FARM A VOICE

So you can do what you do best!

OFA represents certified organic farmers' priorities and policy positions in Washington, D.C. Your support ensures that OFA brings a strong organic farmer voice to D.C. policymaking.

Join as a certified organic farm member or supporter member today!

OFA MEMBER PRIORITIES

- Improving USDA Programs for Organic Farmers
- Organic Integrity & NOP Enforcement
- Keeping Organic Rooted in Soil
- Dismantling Corporate Consolidation
- Organic as a Solution to Climate Change



**ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION**

JOIN OFA TODAY!

OrganicFarmersAssociation.org

Your Dedication and Support Pays Off

OFA MEMBER BENEFITS

Enjoy Exclusive Perks From Our Partners



ROW 7

bluestone.



FARM TO FEET



ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION

**BUILDING A STRONG
ORGANIC FARMER VOICE!**
OrganicFarmersAssociation.org



**ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION**

GOVERNING COUNCIL

Farmers (Voting)

Sara Tashker, Green Gulch Farm, CA

Ken Kimes, New Natives Farm, CA

Dave Bishop, Lily Lake Farm, IL

Jenn Halpin, Dickinson College Farm, PA

Matthew Fitzgerald, Fitzgerald Organics, MN

Pryor Garnett, Garnetts Red Prairie Farm, OR

Steve Ela, Ela Family Farms, CO

Shawn Peebles, Peebles Organic, AR

Jesse Buie, Ole Brook Organics, Inc, MS

Joe Borgerding, Borgerding Farm, MN

Eve Kaplan-Walbrecht, Garden of Eve Farm, NY

Michael Glos, Kingbird Farm, NY

Organization Representatives (Advisory)

Rebekah Weber, California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)

Ben Howell, Oregon Tilth

Lori Stern, Marbleseed

Jacquelyn Evers, The Land Connection (TLC)

Brooke Gentile, Organic Association of Kentucky (OAK)

Samantha Kemnah, Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY)

Staff

Executive Director, Kate Mendenhall

Policy Director, Lily Hawkins

Project Manager, Ryann Monteiro

Membership & Outreach Coord., Amber Lippon

Communications Manager, Madison Letizia

Farmer Services Director, Julia Barton

Farmer Services Consultant, Harriet Behar

Contributors

De'Anthony Price, Harold Wilken, Lily Hawkins, Kendal Thomas, & Anay Shah

Editor: Madison Letizia

Editor-in-Chief: Kate Mendenhall

Cover Photo By: Madison Letizia, OFA

Copyright 2026 by Organic Farmers Association

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Send comments & inquiries to:

Organic Farmers Association

PO BOX 709, Spirit Lake, IA 51360 USA

202-643-5363 | info@OrganicFarmersAssociation.org

OFA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

Contents

QUARTERLY UPDATES

1 President's Letter

4 Fly-In Organic Policy News

SPECIAL ISSUE FEATURES

7 2026 OFA Farmer Fly-In Recap

12 OFA 2026 Legislative & Policy Priorities

16 One Georgia Farmer's Advocacy Journey to Their First Fly-In

20 An Organic Farmer's Report from Washington

22 A New Approach to Collaborative Relationships in D.C.

SUPPORT OUR MISSION

STAY UP TO DATE WITH ORGANIC ISSUES & NEWS

Subscribe to OFA's Email Updates

OrganicFarmersAssociation.org/subscribe



@OrganicFarmersAssociation



Organic Farmers Association



Organic Farmers Association



@OrganicFarmersAssociation

From OFA's Policy Committee Chair

Chaos and hope. While reflecting on our recent Farmer Fly-In to Washington, D.C., those are the two words I would use to describe my feelings. In early March, over 30 farmers, staff, and organizational representatives descended on D.C. to visit Capitol Hill and debate policy positions for our organization.

Personally, I went into the week with not a lot of hope for accomplishing much in my time there given how much chaos we regularly see coming from our nation's capital. We were just coming off of the glyphosate and phosphate executive order, that Farm Bill language had recently been introduced missing some key issues we have been advocating for, and on top of all that, I, along with many others from our organization, couldn't even get a response from our congressional representatives in the House to set up meetings. Hope seemed fleeting.

Fast forward to today, two weeks after our advocacy day. While the chaos is still there, and probably always will exist in politics, I see a much brighter, hopeful future for organic farmers and the entire organic industry. My first sense of this was when I stopped into my representative's office without an appointment to drop off some leave-behind materials and asked why I could not schedule an appointment. I have been in contact with the office many times over the past four years, sat on my congressman's Agriculture Advisory Committee, and even had the congressman out to my farm a few years ago where he still remembers holding a baby goat. Surely, they weren't just ignoring me. I was pleasantly surprised at the reception I received upon opening the door to the office. My congressman's chief of staff remembered me immediately from my family's visit recently and asked what the issue was. Upon hearing about my issues in setting up an appointment, he apologized, explained about some unexpected staff time off, and offered to meet immediately with me. We talked for over 30 minutes. He had a genuine interest in issues affecting organic farmers, given that he and his wife had just purchased their family's farm not far outside of D.C. and wanted to get the tenant farmer to move toward organic practices. Upon leaving the office, I was then tracked down in the hallway by my congressman's ag staffer and spent a very productive 20 minutes in the hall discussing important issues to us. A hopeless situation had turned into a very hopeful one.

Next, I, along with the rest of our group, headed to meet with the House Committee on Agriculture majority staff to talk about the Farm Bill. As luck would have it, we were literally going to speak with them hours before the committee would debate the bill, consider amendments, and hold a vote on it. Just as we sat down at the table, the staff person said she wanted to share something with us before we started. An amendment that our organization, along with other organic focused organizations, had been advocating for had just been added for a committee vote. This amendment was introduced by Congressman Weid and is called the [Risk Based Oversight for Integrity Act](#). That evening the amendment passed by unanimous vote and was added to the House Farm Bill language. While the Farm Bill is probably still a long way away from passing, I saw this as a sign of hope for organic farmers.

Finally, as our group gathered for dinner after our long, but productive day, I found hope sharing a fantastic meal and talking with fellow organic farmers about our farms, experiences, and our goals for the future. This is where I could block out the chaos that is D.C. and find true hope in the future with my fellow organic farmers. As you go about the upcoming year and the chaos of politics finds you feeling hopeless about the future, I challenge you to reach out and find a group of organic farmers to talk with. Even better, share a meal with them. It's hard to come away from those conversations and not have a hopeful outlook on the future of organic farming.

Sincerely,

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



**THANK YOU FOR
SEEDING A BETTER FUTURE WITH
ORGANIC**



**TOGETHER, WE MAKE A
DIFFERENCE**



Let's stay connected



www.naturespath.com



RFG LOGISTICS

Certified Organic Handler

6 years and counting!

About Us

With a combined 125+ years of experience and a nationwide network of carrier partners, our team is well-equipped and ready to develop tailored solutions for all your transportation needs.

What We Do

Nationwide Carrier Coverage

Custom Solutions

125+ years of experience

www.rfglogistics.com

402-933-5595

Farmer Fly-In Policy Update

By Lily Hawkins

Each March, OFA and leadership members travel to Washington, D.C. for a Farmer Fly-In. This event is a time for OFA to take the policy priorities of all our members to decision makers and to advocate for programs that organic farmers need to succeed.

This year, over 30 OFA farmer and organization members from 19 states attended meetings with their Senators, Representatives, House and Senate Ag Committee staff, USDA staff, and HHS staff to discuss organic farm policies. These meetings are a critical way we can educate congress on why organic is important.

RECENT FARM BILL NEWS

On February 13, House Agriculture Committee Chairman G.T. Thompson (R-PA-15) introduced the [Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026](#) (H.R.7567). This bill is intended to reauthorize the 2018 Farm Bill that originally expired in 2023, but has since been extended several times and now through September of this year. The Farm, Food, and National Security Act was discussed in committee the very day that OFA members visited Capital Hill, and we were able to communicate our stance on the bill to key decision makers.

While a new Farm Bill is essential for the functioning of our food system, the legislation, which has since been passed by the House Agriculture Committee contains several missed opportunities and harmful measures.

First, the bill represents a missed opportunity to fully invest in the domestic organic sector's growth. By maintaining funding at the same level for organic research, certification cost share, and technical assistance stagnant, **the bill fails to keep pace with both rising consumer demand and the challenges faced by organic producers.**

One major concern involves the provisions regarding pesticide preemption. As written, the bill shields chemical companies from liability and preempts the authority of state and local governments to regulate pesticide usage or limit pollution. This is a direct overreach that leaves communities vulnerable. **OFA advocated for the Pingree "Protect Our Health" Amendment, which would have restored the ability of local communities to protect themselves from chemical exposure and maintain their own public health standards. Unfortunately, this amendment did not pass.**

OFA also opposes measures designed to nullify state-level animal welfare standards, such as California's Proposition 12, by prohibiting states from setting production standards for livestock raised outside their borders. This move ignores the 2023 Supreme Court ruling and threatens the very market premiums that high-standard organic farmers rely on to remain profitable. It is the right of states to implement the animal welfare standards their consumers demand.

Lastly, **OFA is strongly opposed to proposed reductions in conservation funding.** According to CBO calculations, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) faces a budget authority cut of approximately \$1 billion over the next four fiscal years. At a time of increasing environmental volatility, reducing this funding restricts the ability of farmers to implement essential conservation practices. This makes it significantly harder for producers to transition to or maintain organic certification, and ultimately weakens the resilience of our entire food system.

The Farm Bill should be a vehicle for progress that empowers farmers and protects our natural resources. As the legislative process continues, we will advocate for a Farm Bill that supports a robust and healthy future for organic agriculture. While the Farm, Food, and National Security Act has been passed by the House Ag Committee, it has yet to come to the House Floor for a vote. Meanwhile the Senate must go through the same process, and then the two bills would need to be brought into agreement and passed again in each chamber, making a 2026 Farm Bill a long shot. 🌱

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.



WANT TO TELL CONGRESS TO SUPPORT ORGANIC?

Organic is a fast growing sector of the U.S. agriculture system, with enormous potential to address climate change, help family farms flourish, revive rural communities and protect public health. But for organic agriculture to meet its potential, **policies are needed to improve organic integrity, make USDA programs work for organic farmers, and increase market access for domestic producers.**

Take action today and send a message to your legislators and tell them to support American organic farmers.



LEARN MORE & SEND A LETTER

Farm Bill Marker Bill Tracker

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!

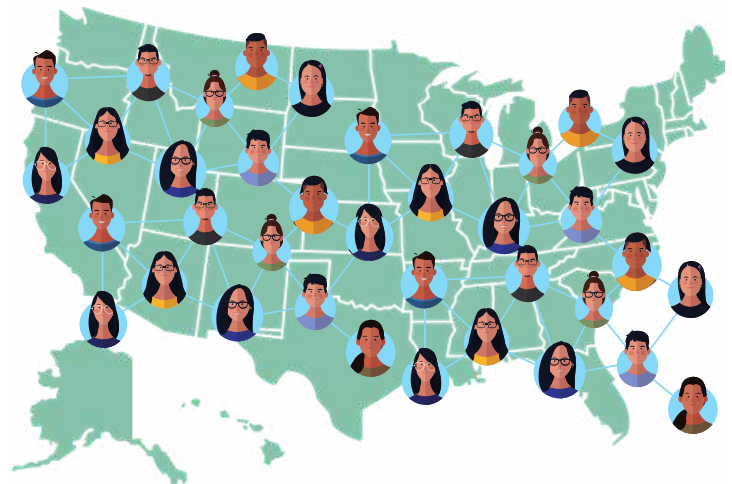


[View the Tracker >](#)

ORGANIC EDUCATION EVENTS ARE NOW EASIER TO FIND!

EVENTS FOR FARMERS ALL ALONG THE ORGANIC JOURNEY

- 1 Visit OFA's National Organic Farming Education Network
- 2 Browse events OR filter by keyword, region, or event type
- 3 Review events for full details and links to register with hosts
- 4 Subscribe to email alerts for events that match your interests



EXPLORE EVENTS HOSTED BY
ORGANIC ORGANIZATIONS
organicfarmersassociation.org/events



2026 OFA Farmer Fly-In Recap

By Anay Shah

On March 3, 2026, over 30 OFA members from across the country converged in Washington, D.C. for the Organic Farmers Association's Annual Farmer Fly-In. Despite the gloomy weather, spirits were high as leaders representing the full breadth of organic agriculture—from dairy to mixed vegetables to wheat—engaged legislators on the issues that matter most to their operations. Whether advocating for greater integrity in organic imports or emphasizing the importance of fully staffed regional USDA offices, members made a strong showing on Capitol Hill. At a moment when many programs central to organic farming face uncertainty even as demand for healthy food continues to grow, the fly-in was an important reminder of what the organic community can accomplish when it speaks with one voice.

FROM FARMS TO THE TABLE: ORGANIZING THE VOICE OF FARMERS

One of OFA's defining features is its commitment to advancing the interests of farmers in a space where they are often unheard. Perhaps the most powerful tool OFA employs is the Annual Policy Survey, a comprehensive gathering of the various issues facing organic farmers and translating those into policy priorities. Some of the issues brought up by members this year included organic certification costs, NOP enforcement, and corporate consolidation of the organic market.

The most pressing issue, however, was making USDA programs such as crop insurance, disaster assistance, NRCS, and FSA work for organic farmers with over 49.23% of farmers expressing concern. This is a shift from last year's highest priority issue which was managing organic import fraud. The 2026 focus on USDA programs could in part be explained by the numerous staffing losses, payment delays, and general expertise decline in regional USDA offices that farmers reported on multiple occasions throughout the survey.

With these concerns in mind, the farmers descended upon Washington, D.C. for OFA's final fly-in preparation meetings. A notable one was the Policy Committee Meeting on March 2, where Chair Scott Myers, an organic farmer from Ohio attending his fourth fly-in, led the members in debate, discourse, and fruitful discussion on the various proposed policy stances from the farmer survey for OFA. By the end, they had made significant progress, approving many key proposals while sending others back to workgroups for revamping. This meeting served as an important marker for the various priorities farmers would go on to advocate for in their Hill meetings the very next day.

THE USDA NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM & ADVOCACY ON THE HILL

The OFA advocacy day began at the USDA headquarters in a meeting with leaders from the National Organic Program. The majority of the meeting was spent in conversation with the Deputy Administrator of USDA's NOP, Dr. Jennifer Tucker, who listened and heard organic farmers speak about the various issues they faced on a day-to-day basis. Some particular areas where OFA recognized progress were in Tucker's inclusion of a definition for soil in the Strengthening Organic Enforcement Act as well as her mention of possibly introducing a two-tier risk-based certification system.

Following this meeting, farmers dispersed on the Hill for their individual meetings with their various congressional offices in both the House and the Senate. Pryor Garnett, a farmer from Oregon and Chair of the Governing Council, mentioned a productive meeting with Sen. Jeff Murkley's (D-OR) office in which they expressed their interest in the Organic Imports Verification Act (OIVA) as well requested input on appropriations requests for organic.

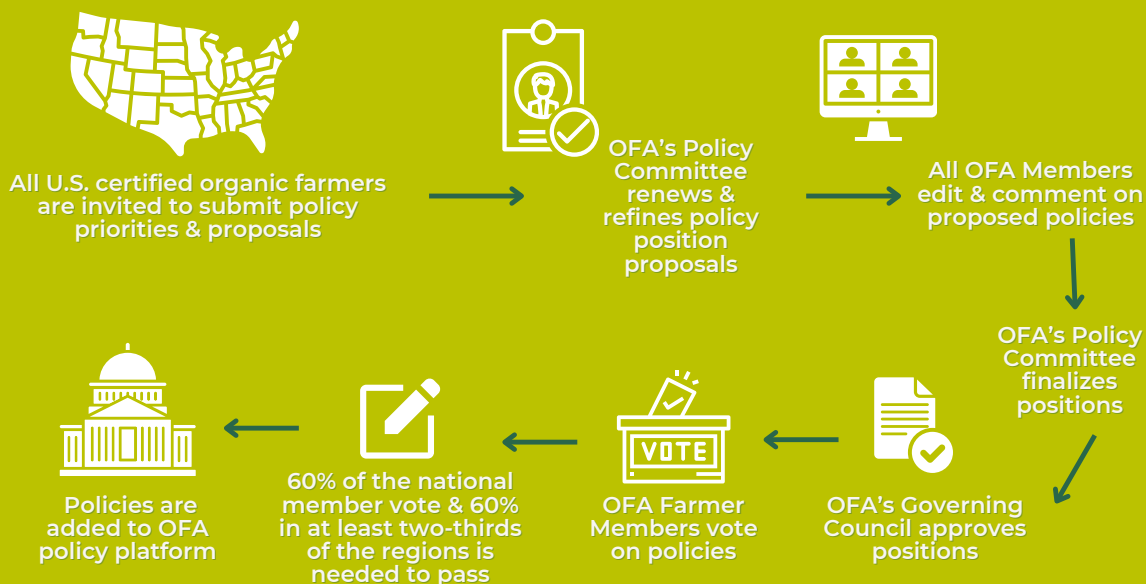
Brooke Gentile (Executive Director Organic Association of Kentucky (OAK) and OFA Governing Council Member) and Bryce Baumann, OFA farmer from Kentucky, also described positive meetings with Rep. Andy Barr (R-KY) and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY), as both offices expressed their support in making USDA programs work for farmers.

Another point of progress in these visits for OFA was in expressing discontent for Rep. Dan Newhouse's (R-WA) bill to remove the mandatory three-year organic transition period as well as promoting Sen. Chellie Pingree's (D-ME) amendment to remove pesticide preemption language from the 2026 Farm Bill. The offices of both Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) and Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA) expressed their support for the removal of the pesticide preemption language, demonstrating OFA's ability to garner bipartisan support. At the same time, OFA farmers were able to take advantage of these meetings as not only moments of advocacy, but as a means of organic education. Melissa Spear (Executive Director, Tilth Alliance and Policy Committee Member) from Washington explained that although Rep. Emily Randall (D-WA) and her staffer were relatively new, the meeting was an amazing way of "getting OFA in as a resource."



OFA Policy Process

A FARMER LED GRASSROOTS PROCESS



FLY-IN TAKEAWAYS

The 2026 Farmer Fly-In demonstrated meaningful progress in OFA's ongoing relationships with congressional offices and the USDA-NOP. Farmers reported productive, substantive conversations not just on policy priorities, but on the day-to-day realities of running an organic operation.

Perhaps most significantly, this year's meetings generated plans for follow-up farm visits during upcoming congressional recesses. When legislators and their staff see firsthand the operational realities organic farmers navigate from certification costs to USDA service gaps, policy priorities become personal. Mike Appel from Oklahoma recounted his experience with Sen. Markwayne Mullin's (R-OK) Chief of Staff: "he was super engaging and told me that he feeds his whole family organic food. He also wanted to make a site visit to my farm." Jesse Buie, a long-time organic farmer from Mississippi also noted that his representatives were eager to make site visits as well.

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

These connections reflect OFA's broader approach: sustained, relationship-driven engagement that builds trust over time rather than stopping at a single meeting. The bipartisan interest and support OFA secured this year is a testament to that strategy. As OFA's leadership begins planning for 2027, the relationships and policy groundwork established during this year's fly-in will continue shaping the organic sector's priorities. The work doesn't end when farmers leave Washington—in many ways, that's when it begins.



MY INTERN EXPERIENCE

Serving as OFA's Policy Intern for Spring 2026 has been an incredibly rewarding experience. From diving into workgroup discussions to preparing materials for the fly-in, each step offered a new window into how organic policy is shaped from the ground up. Witnessing farmers advocate so passionately for their livelihoods in committee meetings and on the Hill alike deepened my appreciation for the work OFA does and the community it represents.

This internship also opened my eyes to the organic world in ways I didn't anticipate. Learning about the challenges farmers face, from certification costs to USDA program gaps, gave me a much richer understanding of our food system and the people who sustain it. Seeing how advocacy, research, and relationship-building come together to move real policy has also reinforced my interest in agricultural policy and how it shapes the lives of producers, communities, and markets in tangible ways. I am grateful to OFA for the opportunity and look forward to carrying these lessons forward as I continue building my career. 🌱



Anay is a freshman at Georgetown University pursuing a B.S. in International Economics with a certificate in Global Development Studies. He is deeply interested in the intersection of economics and agriculture and sees organic farming as a powerful space for more equitable policy and resilient rural economies.

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO CONGRESS


I'm Annabelle. I'm 14, and my family grows organic produce in Western North Carolina. My dad, Steven Belatram, is on the OFA Policy Committee and he brought me to Washington, D.C. for the annual fly-in. We met with the head of the National Organic Program Jennifer Tucker, who was really honest and direct with us. We talked about how there used to be 85 people working at NOP and now there are 50, this affects what work can get done. We also talked about how to make sure that imports are actually organic and controlling fraud.



Next, we met with the House Ag committee majority Thompson's staffer, Senate Ag committee majority Boozman's, staffer and Senate Ag committee minority, Klobuchar's staffer. During all three of these meetings we mostly talked about the OIVA bill and destaffing of Farm Service Agency offices. After our group meetings we had our individual meetings with Congressman Edwards and Senator Budd's staffer Benjie. In both of these meetings we discussed destaffing of our Farm Service Agency offices and how that means we are not getting our disaster relief money. We talked about crop insurance and how in our district we think it should be expanded to specialty crops and we also talked a little about the H2A visa program and how we need to make it effective and affordable. We discussed how we think the change in AEWV Adverse Effect Wage Rate, which is a minimum hourly wage that employers must pay people with H2A guest worker visas, needs to be made permanent.

It was really fun to get to see all the pretty architecture and talk to other farmers from around the country about their farms. Through this experience I learned a lot about how our government works and about how lobbying is one way that we can make a change in our government and our communities. It was really meaningful for me to get to meet with my elected representatives and share my concerns with them.

We know the way you grow food is
challenging *and* critically important



Thank you for protecting
and nourishing our
families & communities

Life insurance for people who believe in organic food

Learn more at bluestonelifelife.com or call us at 802-428-4411

bluestone®





ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION

LEGISLATIVE & POLICY PRIORITIES

Organic is the fastest growing sector of U.S. Agriculture, and the U.S. leads the world in organic food sales at over \$71.6 billion, and four out of five U.S. households regularly purchase organic products (OTA, 2025). 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, these are the 2026 legislative priorities for OFA.**

1 MAKING USDA PROGRAMS WORK FOR ORGANIC FARMERS

KEY CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

- Make improvements and adjustments to crop insurance so it is fair to all farmers, functional for small, diversified, organic and regenerative farmers, and informed by data, experience, and technical expertise.
- Include these crop insurance bills in the Farm Bill: Save Our Small Farms Act (H.R. 2435/S. 1271), Crop Insurance for Future Farmers Act (H.R. 2117/S. 1073), The WEATHER Act (S. 231)
- Honor existing government contracts made to farmers. Honor Farmer Contracts Act ([H.R.2396](#))
- Fund and fully staff NRCS. Update NRCS programs so they are work for organic farms.
- 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.

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. Recent disruptions have made this considerably worse.

Photo credit: [PrairiErth Farm \(IL\)](#)



2

PRACTICAL AND AFFORDABLE ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

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.
- Support the **Opportunities in Organic Act of 2026 (H.R. 7318/S. 3717)**.

3

NOP ENFORCEMENT TO ENSURE ORGANIC INTEGRITY

Organic farmers work hard to protect the integrity of the crops they produce and the label that consumers trust. Unfortunately, higher organic prices and growing market demand can lure fraudulent actors into the marketplace. In recent years, fraud has caused significant price fluctuations, destabilized the organic grain market for U.S. producers, and threatened consumers' confidence in the label. Preventing organic fraud remains a consistent top priority for organic farmers. Stronger enforcement and clearer standards are essential to protect the organic market and ensure that honest farmers can compete on a level playing field.

KEY CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

- Include the **Organic Imports Verification Act (OIVA) (S.1398)** 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.
- There is a need for enhanced enforcement and for the agency charged that oversees the rapidly growing sector to keep pace with that growth.
- Include the Continuous Improvement and Accountability in Organic Act (CIAO) in the Farm Bill to implement a clear and predictable process to prioritize and update organic standards.

4

PROHIBITING CERTIFIED ORGANIC HYDROPONIC AND CONTAINER GROWING

Healthy, living soil is the foundation of organic agriculture. The National Organic Program's core principle requires certified organic crop production to build and maintain soil health. The National Organic Standards Board has repeatedly recommended that USDA prohibit hydroponic operations from organic certification. Yet hydroponic and container-grown operations continue to carry the USDA organic seal. This undermines the integrity of the label, misleads consumers who pay a premium expecting soil-based production, and puts farmers who invest in building healthy land at a serious competitive disadvantage.

KEY CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

- Pass legislation in the Farm Bill to explicitly prohibit hydroponic, aeroponic, and container-grown operations from receiving USDA organic certification.
- Direct USDA's National Organic Program to clarify that certified organic crop production must occur in and through a living, managed soil system—consistent with the original intent of the Organic Foods Production Act.
- Ensure any phase-out for currently certified hydroponic operations is time-limited and does not permit expansion under the organic label.

5 CONTROLLING CORPORATE POWER IN THE ORGANIC MARKET

While certified organic sales are booming, policy changes are needed to ensure the benefits of growth are not captured by a small number of large corporate actors. Supply chain bottlenecks, processing shortages, and transportation barriers can give powerful companies outsized control over access to organic markets and limit opportunities for independent domestic farmers. Strategic investments in processing, market development, and regional infrastructure can strengthen local capacity and create a more competitive organic marketplace.

KEY CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

- Include the **Domestic Organic Investment Act (H.R. 6593 / S. 3427)** in the next Farm Bill to expand organic market development grants and strengthen domestic supply-chain capacity.
- Include the **Organic Dairy Assistance, Investment, and Reporting Yields Act (O DAIRY, S. 2442)** to support organic dairy farmers and improve market transparency.
- Include the **Strengthening Local Processing Act (H.R. 3076 / S. 1509)** to increase local processing options and reduce dependence on concentrated corporate infrastructure.



REFLECTING THE VOICE OF ORGANIC FARMERS

These policy priorities are grounded directly in the 2026 OFA Policy Survey. Across regions and farm types, a consistent message emerged: organic standards are strong and worth protecting—but the systems meant to support farmers are not keeping pace. Farmers described operating under growing financial strain, with rising input costs, unstable markets, and limited access to reliable labor. Many emphasized that certification remains essential, but increasingly difficult to maintain due to high costs and administrative complexity. Others pointed to gaps in enforcement, particularly around imports, that undermine trust in the organic label and disadvantage domestic producers.

- **Economic pressure is widespread** – Farmers reported that costs are outpacing revenue, shaping priorities around market development, fair pricing, and supply chain investment
- **Certification barriers are pushing farmers out** – Feedback about high fees and administrative burden directly informed priorities to expand cost-share programs and streamline certification
- **Organic integrity is under threat** – Concerns about fraudulent imports and weak enforcement led to a strong focus on oversight, accountability, and protecting the organic label
- **Federal support is inconsistent** – Reports of understaffed agencies and delayed payments shaped priorities to fully fund and strengthen NRCS, FSA, and other support programs
- **Labor and climate challenges are intensifying** – Farmers' experiences with workforce shortages and extreme weather informed policies on labor stability and climate resilience
- **Farm succession is uncertain** – Concerns about aging farmers and lack of transition pathways drove priorities supporting the next generation of organic producers

At its core, this platform reflects a simple idea: policy should follow the lived experiences of organic farmers.



Photo credit: Twin Oaks Dairy LLC (NY)



WHAT IS ORGANIC?

Organic is a production-based system based on four principles: health, ecology, fairness and care. 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.

Regulations mandate that organic livestock 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 18,000 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 JOIN OUR MAILING LIST TO STAY IN THE LOOP ON ORGANIC FARM ISSUES?

You can join OFA as a Farmer or Supporter member to get our monthly e-newsletter and action alerts on issues that affect organic farmers.



JOIN TODAY!



HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW POLICIES AFFECT ORGANIC FARMERS?

Contact Lily Hawkins, Policy Director
Organic Farmers Association

Lily ensures that certified organic farmers' policy priorities are represented in Washington, D.C. OFA's policies are farmer driven through our grassroots process, ensuring that organic farmer voices are behind our positions.

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



One Georgia Farmer's Advocacy Journey to Their First Fly-In

By De'Anthony Price

It was an incredible experience attending the OFA Farmer Fly-In for the first time. I enjoyed the trip on so many levels. It was my first visit to Washington, D.C., where I got to experience the city, visit Capitol Hill, and truly witness where powerful decisions are made. I went on this trip to represent the Rodale Institute as a Governing Council Member. I am also a farmer in Atlanta, Georgia, so I was able to connect and share experiences at the farmer level as well. I proudly represented farmers in Georgia and the Southeast.

I approached this trip with the mindset of an educator. Education has always been a passion of mine. As a technical support provider, I educate adults in non-formal settings. With this experience and passion, my goal was to educate elected officials on my personal experience farming organically, as well as the shared experiences of the organic farmers I have the privilege to serve. My goal was to provide knowledge so others can make the best decisions for all farmers.

I took pride in representing Georgia and highlighting the unique challenges of farming organically in the Southeast. The diversity of Georgia agriculture says it all: apples and poultry in North Georgia, peaches in the middle, and cotton and peanuts in the South, with so much more in between. I am proud to be Georgia Grown!

During the trip, I met with three elected officials—two of my local members of Congress and one of my U.S. Senators. I spoke with the chief of staff for Congressman David Scott (D, GA-13), who serves on the House Agriculture Committee, and a staff member for Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA), who serves on the Senate Agriculture Committee.

I also met with staff from Congresswoman Nikema Williams' (GA-5) office. My focus was on issues related to access to USDA programs for all farmers.

I emphasized ways USDA programs can better serve farmers, including organic and diversified producers. First, crop insurance. Most federal crop insurance programs are designed for large-scale commodity row crops like cotton, peanuts, wheat, and corn. While these programs work well for that production model, many small and mid-sized farmers in the South grow diversified specialty crops. As a small vegetable farmer in Georgia, I grow a variety of crops, not thousands of acres of a single commodity. Many farmers struggle to access meaningful coverage because crop lists and policy structures do not reflect diversified operations. This also includes application structures that do not adapt well to diversified systems. Because diversified farms are more complex, the application process can become overly detailed and difficult to navigate. USDA programs must work for all farmers, and crop insurance needs to better support specialty crop farms, not just commodity systems.

I also addressed the growing conversation around regenerative agriculture. Organic farmers have been building soil health, increasing biodiversity, reducing synthetic inputs, and strengthening ecosystems for decades. Organic is not a new idea. It is a federally defined, science-based standard with accountability and transparency. Regenerative agriculture is an evolving concept, but organic already has established standards, certification systems, and infrastructure in place. Investing in organic programs is investing in a healthier food system.

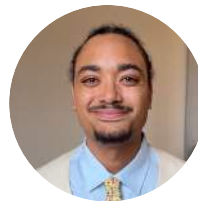


I strongly encourage all farmers to reach out to their elected officials. This trip reminded me that even though elected leaders wear suits and walk the halls of power, they are human—and they deserve to hear your story. Share your experience, educate them on why you farm organically, and explain what it means to you as a steward of the land. You don't have to start in D.C.—reach out to your local, regional, and state leaders. Every state has an agriculture commissioner; contact them and explain how they can best support your work. The most powerful change comes from local change. Elected officials serve the communities that elect them!

Overall, the OFA Farmer Fly-In was eye-opening and motivating for me. I am inspired to get more involved locally and to think about what that looks like for me moving forward. I also want to encourage farmers around me to advocate and get involved in their local communities. Events like this remind me that it takes a community showing up, raising their voices, and advocating for the land and the people who depend on it. I'm proud to represent the Southeast, especially Georgia, and to bring that conversation all the way to Capitol Hill and across the nation. 🌱

Supporting organic farmers means investing in a proven system that delivers healthier soils, resilient farms, and stronger rural economies.

One key takeaway from this experience is the power of advocacy. Advocacy builds community and unites people to fight for meaningful change. On this trip, I witnessed this firsthand. Some of the 33 OFA members attending knew each other, while others were meeting for the first time. We all came from different parts of the country, with diverse perspectives, but we shared one goal: advocating for American farmers. Organic farmers are building a healthier America and a healthier world. We are creating a resilient food system for yesterday, today, and tomorrow. That is the power of advocacy.



De'Anthony Price is a crop scientist specializing in regenerative and organic crop production, farmer education, and science communication. Based in Atlanta, Georgia, he serves as the Southeastern Organic Consultant for the Rodale Institute, where he provides technical support to organic farmers with a focus on agronomic guidance and certification assistance. He also farms at a local community farm, Urban Farm in Ormewood, with his wife, where they organically grow produce for local community members.

OFA MEMBERSHIP



**Policy
Influence**



**Organic Education
Resources**



**Peer-to-Peer
Collaborations**

Whether you farm organically or support those who do, your voice is critical right now as we shape policies that will define the future of organic farming.

What your membership delivers:

Influence in Washington D.C. – We're educating Congress on the issues that matter: why organic farming deserves recognition and support, how it differs from other methods, and why growing consumer demand requires policy that keeps pace.

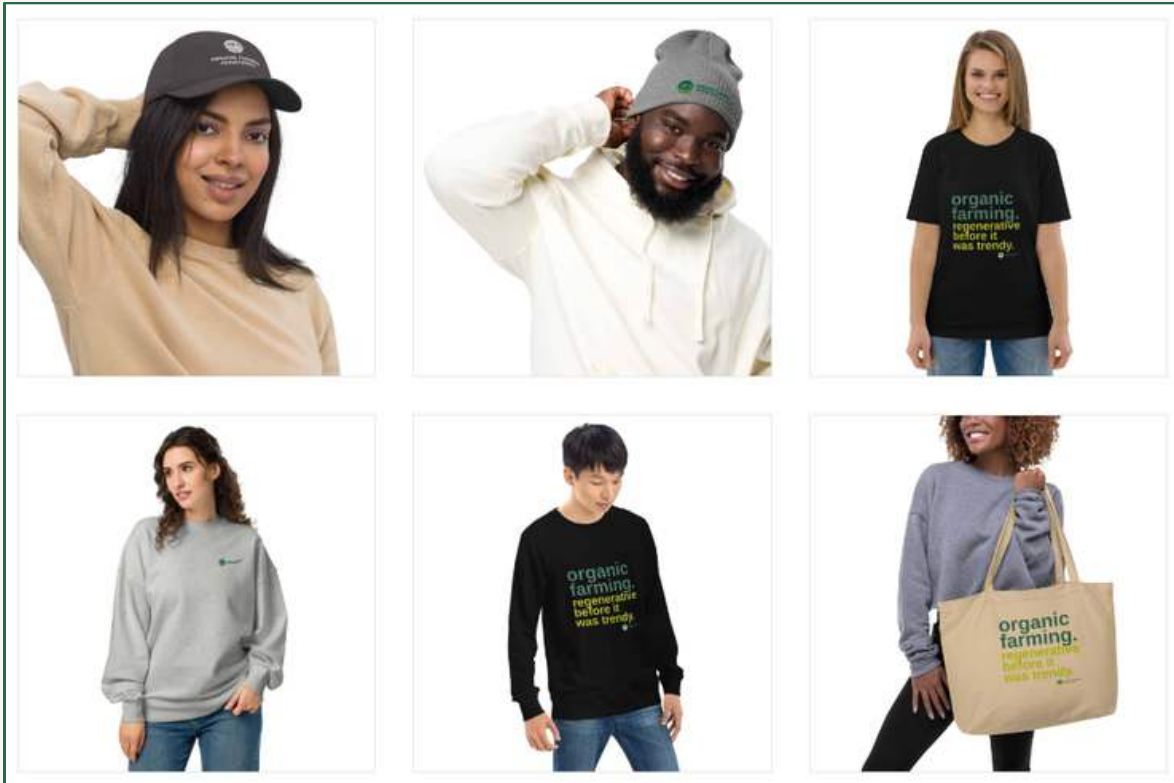
Collective power – Your membership isn't a donation, it's your seat at the table. Together, we're building a grassroots movement to create real change for organic farmers and the food system.

Advocacy rooted in real experience – OFA was built by organic farmers, so our policy work reflects the realities of the field. Your membership ensures decisions are informed by those who actually do the work.

[Join OFA Today](#)

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

Order OFA Merch



Order your OFA Member merch to show your support for organic food, farms, and farmers!

Browse the Store 



And OFA Farmer Members, be sure to order your member farm sign here!

An Organic Farmer's Report from Washington

By Harold Wilken

I am a fourth generation farmer from Danforth, Illinois, and I am a member of OFA's Policy Committee. My son Ross, nephew Tim, and I farm 4,000 acres of organic and transitional land in East Central Illinois. We also operate an organic stone ground flour mill that ships flour nationwide. [Janie's Farm and Mill](#) are named after our daughter who passed away in a car accident 25 years ago.

I just returned from OFA's Farmer Fly-In to Washington, D.C. where we held our annual meeting and lobbied senators and representatives on policy priorities for organic farmers.

All the members of the legislative staff we met with were aware of some of our concerns, and they were open to supporting the positions we addressed. This is a difference from 12 years ago when I was in D.C. to lobby with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). At that time organic was considered a fringe of the ag sector and not vital to the food supply chain. My, how times have changed!

During our time on Capitol Hill, we also met with staff from the National Organic Program (NOP) at the USDA, had a meeting with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and House and Senate Agriculture Committees.

At NOP we discussed ways they were combatting grain import fraud:

- Implementation of SOE
- Increased funding for certification cost share
- Staffing cuts at USDA affecting CSP and EQUIP contract approvals
- Compliance standards across all certifiers and implementation of livestock rules

HHS asked us for our opinions on the new dietary guidelines and we asked them for support for local farm to school and farm to food bank programs.

The ag subcommittees were focused on Farm Bill markups that were happening that evening, but there were discussions about ag processor bankruptcies that were clawing back producer payments as far as 90 days and how to protect farmers from having to shoulder the burden from processor bankruptcies. Meetings with senators and representatives offices focused on all the aforementioned issues along with the [recent executive order](#) that gave chemical companies absolute immunity for health and drift issues.

One final takeaway is that farmers are respected and D.C. wants to get their opinion on the programs they are voting on and implementing. I highly encourage organic farmers to get involved and develop relationships with your local legislators and their office staff. It does make a difference. 🌱



Harold Wilken is a lifelong farmer. He owns and operates a multi-generation family farm that raises hybrid and heritage corn, soybeans, wheat, and rye to supply large and small food companies, brewers, and distillers, and transitioned to organic methods in 2003.

TAKE ACTION!



**Farmer Voices
Make an Impact
on National Policy**

National Organic Standards Board Spring Meetings

Public Comments
May 5, 2026 & May 7, 2026

Public Meetings
May 12-14, 2026

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

Deadline to submit comments is
May 4, 2026

Find Meeting Details

OFA NOSB Workgroup

Sign up for our spring workgroup to form comments for the board and prepare to share comments!

Sign Up

Organic Farmer voices matter in D.C.

Did you know you can download OFA's current advocacy factsheets to get the most relevant information on an organic farming policy? Plus, you can use these factsheets to communicate key points with your legislators when you advocate for organic farming!

**Download a
Factsheet**

Browse OFA's current Action Alerts to find where your voice is needed most to protect organic food and farms!

Send a letter to your legislators to:

- Urge Congress to Support Organic Farmers in the Farm Bill
- Protect Federal Funding for Farm and Food Programs
- Ask your Senators to Fight Fraudulent Organic Imports

Write a Letter

A New Approach to Collaborative Relationships in D.C.

By Kendal Thomas

OFA's value lies in centering the lived experiences of organic farmers. In addition to being farmers and OFA Governing Council members, Sara Tashker and Jenn Halpin have identities that give them a unique perspective when speaking with policy makers in D.C.

Sara is the Farm Manager at Green Gulch Farm, which is a part of the San Francisco Zen Center, a Buddhist Faith Organization. Jenn is the Director of the Dickinson College Farm and a professor in Dickinson College's food studies department in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Sara, a practicing Buddhist, and Jenn, a professor, each have lived experiences that beg them to focus on understanding and engaging policy makers rather than convincing them. This is crucial to one of the main purposes of OFA's Farmer Fly-In: building relationships with policy makers.

For Sara, OFA is where she can "geek out" on organic ag policy, having studied Political Science in college. She was drawn to OFA leadership by another respected woman farmer, Judith Redmond from Full Belly Farm, whose term on the Policy Committee was ending. Sara was overwhelmed by a draw to public service and intrigued by the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. She decided to follow in Redmond's footsteps and join.

The network of organic woman farmers proves strong, as Jenn was recommended to join OFA by her previous student, Julia Barton, OFA's Farmer Services Director. Jenn feels a great obligation to guarantee the future of organic farming. She is clearly committed to this duty as both a professor and Governing Council member for OFA. "I agree with Sara, our farm has benefited greatly from orgs like OFA. Ensuring the standards behind the seal, so having the opportunity to be a part of its hopeful and continued success is an honor," Jenn said.

SETTING THE SCENE

This day of the Fly-In is dedicated to policy maker meetings. This year, OFA had four group meetings: USDA National Organic Program with Jenny Tucker, the Senate Agriculture Committee Majority with Sen. GT Thompson, Senate Agriculture Committee Minority with Sen. Amy Klobuchar, and Health and Human Services. In addition to these group meetings, farmers were responsible for holding meetings with their individual members of Congress. However, they aren't meeting with the actual members themselves, but staffers who work in the offices of the representatives and senators.



These staffers are young professionals providing support with legislation, research, communications, and constituent services. With such a long list of responsibilities, staffers are overwhelmed with a myriad of issues to attend to. One can imagine that with the 15-30 minutes allotted to meet with a farmer, they are preoccupied with other concerns. On this particular day, the U.S. had recently begun its war on Iran, and the Farm Bill markup was scheduled for that evening.

APPROACH AND UNDERSTANDING

While being a Buddhist and being a professor are different in nature—one a religion and the other a career, Jenn and Sara’s approaches to their Fly-In meetings shared many similarities. Both farmers were very in tune to understanding the staffers who they met with and engaging in dialogue rather than lecturing. Imagine trying to convey the most important needs of your life’s work in a fraction of an hour to an overwhelmed staffer. Needless to say, the pressure was on!

How do you regulate yourself while being meticulous about communicating your priorities in such a bizarre environment? Sara and Jenn both expressed that because this was their second or third year at the Fly-In, they had gotten past the initial shock of the environment and were able to focus on the content of their meetings.

Sara spoke about her experience in D.C. being an extension of her ongoing practice of equanimity, or remaining composed and calm in a high-pressure situation. As a part of her Buddhist practice, Sara focuses on observing reality. She emphasized how her priority is understanding folks in D.C. rather than getting something out of them.

Jenn was similarly attentive to the youthful staffers, and she adjusted her communication to keep them engaged. “My experience in the classroom and working through different ways to engage the student population lent itself to those conversations. Because otherwise they zone out.” She compared the meetings to a discussion-based class rather than a lecture-based class.

“My experience in the classroom and working through different ways to engage the student population lent itself to those conversations. Because otherwise they zone out.”

It’s easy to forget this when faced with the formal and tense environment of Capitol Hill. Members of Congress are supposed to *represent* constituents, and their staffers take meetings to learn more about what those constituents need.

Both farmers intentionally took time to ask the staffers about themselves and find similarities so that their meeting would be memorable. This sets farmers apart because staffers are used to lobbyists who oftentimes don’t have operational experience in what they’re advocating for. “We’re talking about something real, important, and vital. That’s why farmers take time to fly to Washington. Not because it isn’t nerve wracking, but because we understand the importance of doing something, the impact of having something real crossing representative’s doorsteps,” Sara said.



Jenn Halpin - Farmer (PA)

Sara and Jenn are keenly aware of how their work in D.C. ties back into their work on the farm and beyond. Sara's belief in interconnectedness shows in everything she does. Just like how she invests in soil health to provide a healthy foundation for crops, consistently meeting with policy makers ensures that organic agriculture becomes central to policy making in the future. Sara explained, "We are not investing in just this Farm Bill, but a whole knowledge base in Washington."

Jenn put it beautifully, "How do you change the system? I think it's through cultivating relationships that aren't adversary but are collaborative. How do we work with Jenny Tucker and USDA, and how do we work with MAHA to serve in an advisory and collaborative role?" Jenn and Sara's approach to their meetings hold the key to making progress within this political system—viewing policy makers as collaborators rather than opponents, and working with them to create our organic farming future. 🌱



Kendal is a recent graduate of American University, with a degree in Communications Studies and a Minor in American Studies. Having grown up in rural Pennsylvania and now living in Washington D.C., Kendal has a deep passion for regenerative agriculture, food access, and community building. She is curious about the relationship between farmers and consumers, exploring how to better connect us all to our food system and the earth.



ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION

BE A PART OF FARMER-LED POLICY SOLUTIONS

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.

- **Crop Insurance Workgroup:** Make crop insurance work better for organic and transitioning farmers during this monthly one-hour session by working to ensure crop insurance is fair and functional.
- **Grain Grower Workgroup:** This workgroup meets monthly for one hour to address ongoing organic farmer concerns regarding issues of concern to grain farmers, such as fraudulent organic imports, and generate strategies and solutions.
- **Mixed Vegetable Grower Workgroup:** This workgroup meets monthly for one hour to address concerns raised by mixed veg farmers such as market consolidation to generate strategies and solutions.
- **Public Procurement Workgroup:** Join OFA Organization Members and farmers working together to get more organic food in institutions like schools and hospitals. This workgroup will meet monthly for one hour.
- **NOSB Workgroup:** A short-term, targeted workgroup that will meet ahead of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting to form comments for the board and prepare members to also to share comments.

Complete a Workgroup Interest Form Now

Ready to connect with organic farmers and sustainability-focused consumers?

When you sponsor OFA, you're doing more than advertising, you're investing in the future of organic agriculture while connecting directly with the farmers and consumers who need your products and services.

Your Support Powers Real Impact

- Supports farmers advocating for organic at the federal level
- Educates farmers on critical policy issues affecting their livelihoods
- Builds a stronger, more profitable organic marketplace for everyone

Your Business Gains Meaningful Visibility

- Reach thousands of certified organic farmers through the Organic Voice magazine advertising
- Logo placement on the OFA website, emails, and monthly member communications
- Exclusive opportunities to offer member promotions and incentives

[> LEARN MORE](#)



**ORGANIC FARMERS
ASSOCIATION**





*Federal policies
impact your farm*

**Become a Member &
Have Your Voice Heard**

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)

Monthly Pledge: \$10 \$15 \$20 \$25 \$30 Other _____

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

Auto-renew annually to keep my membership valid

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

PAYMENT

Membership: _____

Donation: _____

Total: _____

Payment Type: Credit Card: Check Enclosed

Credit Card#: _____

Expiration Date: _____

CVV#: _____

Please make all check payable to:

Organic Farmers Association

Please mail check to:

Organic Farmers Association

PO Box 709

Spirit Lake, IA 51360

Organic Farmers Association is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your gift is tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.

Federal Tax ID Number: 85-1249281



Rain or Shine, Organic Farmers' Will Be Heard

OFA's Annual Farmer Fly-In is a long day on Capitol Hill. Thousands of steps are logged, over 80 combined meetings are scheduled, and lunch and coffee breaks are not guaranteed. Even after all that, farmers make time for media interviews to explain why they traveled to D.C., what they're advocating for, and why organic is so important. And this year, they did interviews in 35 degree temperatures as the rain moved in!

Thank you OFA Policy Committee Members Scott Myers, Seth Kroeck, and Bill Pluecker

For ORGANIC FARMERS. By ORGANIC FARMERS.

