



**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.



## 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](https://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  
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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.

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