

2023 FARM BILL PRIORITIES

ORGANIC FARMERS ASSOCIATION



The Organic Farmers Association (OFA) provides a strong and unified national voice for domestic certified organic producers. OFA builds and supports a farmer-led national organic farmer movement and national policy platform by developing and advocating policies that benefit organic farmers; strengthening and supporting the capacity of organic farmers and farm organizations; and supporting collaboration and leadership among state, regional and national organic farmer organizations. Learn more at OrganicFarmersAssociation.org.

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



ORGANIC INTEGRITY

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN ORGANIC

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

NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD

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

OVERSIGHT AND ENFORCEMENT

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

Photo credit: Thorpe's Organic Family Farm





ASSISTANCE FOR ORGANIC DAIRY FARMERS

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

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



CLIMATE & CONSERVATION

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



ORGANIC RESEARCH

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

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



MAKE USDA PROGRAMS WORK FOR ORGANIC FARMERS

COST SHARE & SUPPORT FOR NEW ORGANIC FARMERS

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

CREDIT

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

CROP INSURANCE

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



INCREASING ORGANIC INFRASTRUCTURE

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



Photo: Harmony Fields (WA)



WORKING WITH ALLIES TO BUILD A BETTER FOOD SYSTEM

FOOD SECURITY: SNAP

- Protect critical investments in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) at a time of rising food prices and food insecurity.

LAND ACCESS

- Support land transition to young, beginning, and underserved/underrepresented farmers, including programs that support farmland preservation and easements to reduce development of productive agricultural land and facilitate land access.
- Create pathways to support land transition, apprenticeships, mentorships, and legacy planning work.
- Provide additional and culturally-appropriate technical assistance services (in multiple languages) so that beginning farmers can access USDA programs.

COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN LABELING (COOL)

- Require Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) on beef, pork, and dairy products. (It is already a requirement for poultry, fruits, and vegetables.)
- Prohibiting meat products derived from imported animals from being labeled as "Product of U.S.A."

COMPETITION IN LIVESTOCK MARKET

- Restore competition to livestock markets by ensuring that the USDA updates its rules for enforcing the Packers and Stockyards Act, creating a special investigator for competition issues at the USDA, and requiring large meatpackers to procure more livestock on open markets.

ABOUT THE ORGANIC FARMERS ASSOCIATION

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

Join OFA today to keep in the loop on what organic farmers need to be successful. If you are an organic farmer, your voice is needed! We are stronger together! All OFA policies are created by and voted in by certified organic farmer members of OFA.



JOIN TODAY!
MEMBERSHIP
STARTS AS
LOW AS \$25

WANT TO GET MORE INVOLVED IN OFA POLICY WORK?

Contact Lily Hawkins, Policy Director of the Organic Farmers Association. Lily ensures that certified organic farmers' policy priorities are represented in Washington, D.C. She depends on organic farmers in key districts to help her advocate for what you need for your farm to succeed!

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