



Organic

Issue Summary: *In recent years, organic agriculture has been one of the fastest growing sectors of American agriculture. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has oversight over various organic programs that seek to make organic products readily available to meet this growing consumer demand.*

- Organic agricultural products represent over 4% of total U.S. food sales. In 2012, U.S. sales of organic products totaled approximately \$28.4 billion and are estimated to reach \$35 billion in 2014. Consumer demand for organically produced goods has shown double-digit growth since the 1990s. (USDA-ERS)
- The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) administers the National Organic Program. Through this program, AMS establishes organic standards that describe the specific requirements that agricultural products must satisfy in order to be labeled as USDA-certified organic. (USDA-AMS)
- USDA-certified organic crops are produced without irradiation, sewage sludge, synthetic fertilizers, certain prohibited pesticides, and genetically modified organisms. USDA-certified organic livestock meat and dairy products verifies that producers met animal health and welfare standards, did not use growth hormones or antibiotics, used 100% organic feed, and provided animals with access to the outdoors. (USDA-AMS)
- The USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) manages the Organic Agricultural Research and Extension Initiative (OREI). This program funds education, research, and extension activities that seek to enhance the ability of organic producers and processors to grow and market organic agricultural products. (USDA-NIFA)
- NIFA also manages the Organic Transitions Program. This program supports the development and implementation of research, education, and extension projects to improve the competitiveness of organic producers. (USDA-NIFA)
- The Organic Certification Cost Share Programs reduce the cost producers incur to gain organic certification. These programs reimburse organic producers and handlers a portion of their organic certification costs. (USDA-AMS)
- The Agricultural Act of 2014 authorized a research and promotion program, more commonly known as Organic Check-off, which aims to increase education about organic agricultural products and promote the consumption and use of organic agricultural products. (2014 Farm Bill)