



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

# USDA Organic Resource Guide 2015

*Your Guide to Organic and Organic  
Related USDA Programs*





## Overview

This Organic Resource Guide provides an overview of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and services available to the public that either directly or indirectly support organic agriculture. Some programs have the specific purpose of assisting organic farmers, ranchers, and handlers, while others may be of interest to a variety of individuals, including those in the organic industry. The spectrum of USDA's organic-related programs is illustrated on pages 4-5.

USDA programs and resources that target organic producers fall within the dark green innermost oval. In the next oval moving outward are programs and agencies that develop research, data, and technical information on organic agriculture. They provide organic education and knowledge to other USDA programs and the public. The third oval includes programs and services that assist with business development and marketing of organic operations. Lastly, the outermost oval includes USDA agencies and programs that provide services that are not exclusive to organic agriculture and industry but may be of interest to organic farmers, ranchers, and handlers.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is organized by organic relevancy (as indicated by an agency or program's position on the **organic spectrum** – see pages 4-5), and then alphabetically by the name of the agency that manages the program (except for the National Organic Program, which is listed first).

Each entry includes a description of the managing agency; an overview of their organic-related programs and services; how to contact people to learn more – those involved in program management, often located in Washington, DC, as well as those located in local or State offices; and a list of online resources.

At the end of the guide, there is an appendix that includes each agency mentioned in the guide and the associated USDA program management points of contact. There is also an index of common topics and phrases, with associated page numbers.

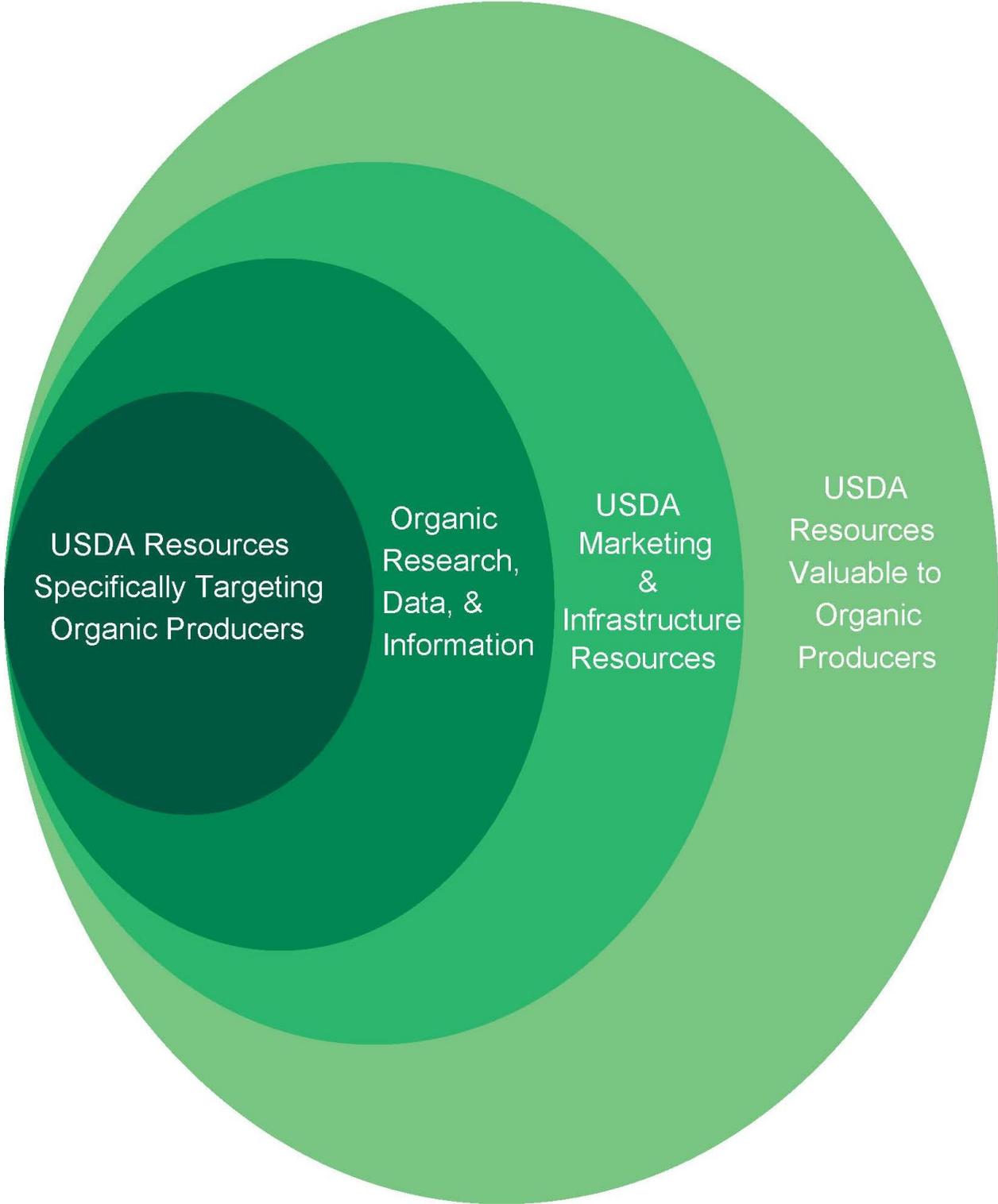
This guide will be updated as programs changes occur. This version and future updates can be found online at [www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo](http://www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo).

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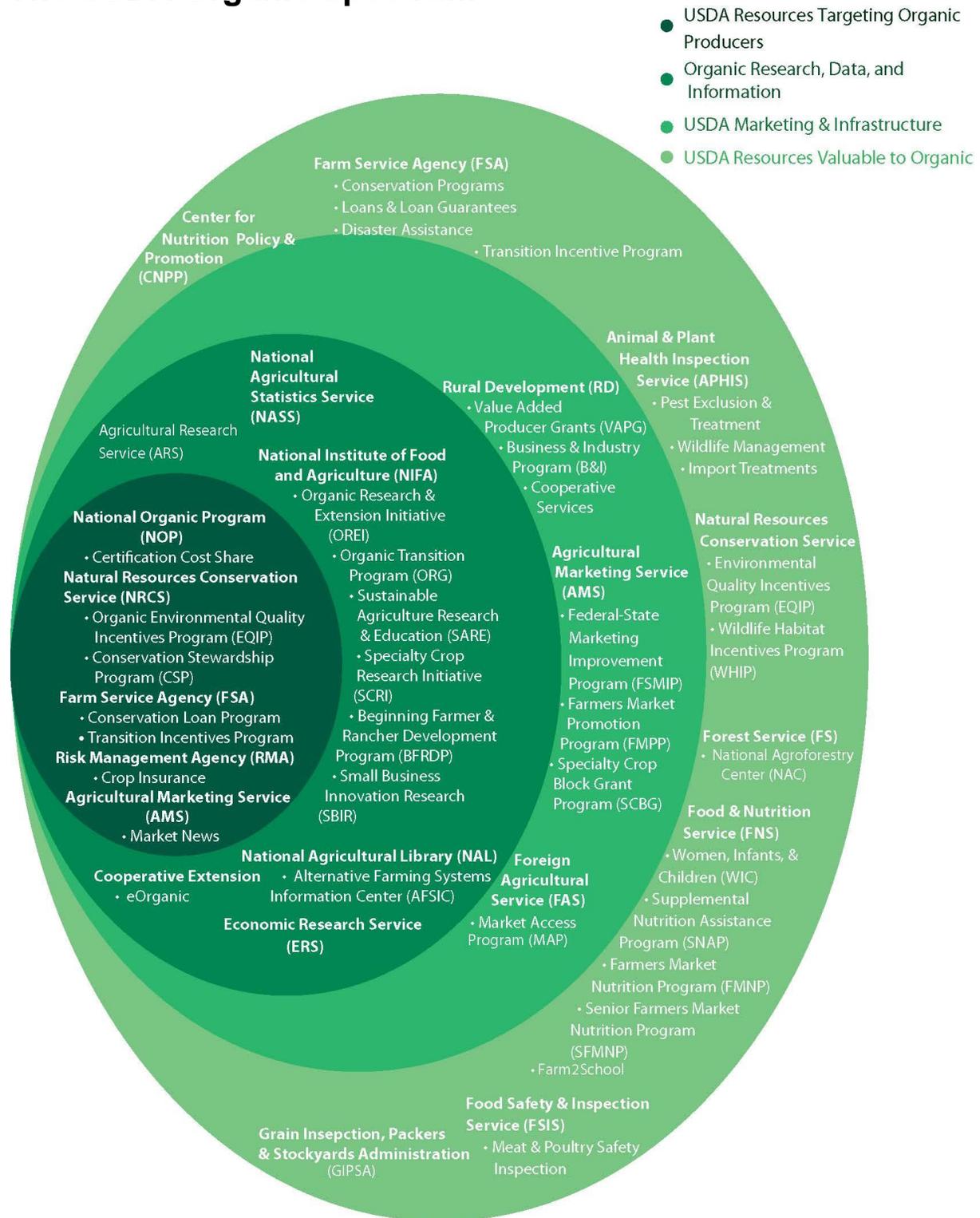
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# The USDA Organic Spectrum – Basic Organization



**Figure 1:** In this guide, USDA programs are divided into four categories as shown above. Figure 2 adds information regarding USDA resources in each category.

# The USDA Organic Spectrum



**Figure 2:** USDA has many programs that directly and indirectly support organic agriculture.

# Direct Organic Producer Support



# Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), National Organic Program

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), through its National Organic Program (NOP), develops national production and food handling standards for organically produced agricultural products. The vision of this program is to ensure organic integrity from farm to table, so that consumers trust the organic label.

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The AMS develops, implements, and administers national production, handling, and labeling standards for organic agricultural products. It accredits certifying agents in the U.S. and abroad, establishes organic trade arrangements with foreign governments, and monitors compliance and enforcement with organic standards. AMS also oversees the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and manages the Organic Certification Cost-Share Program.

- [The Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) reimburses eligible producers and handlers for up to 75% of the costs of organic certification. Reimbursement requires only a short application, and most State departments of agriculture process reimbursements for the USDA. Contact information is on the program's website.
- [The National Organic Standards Board](#) consists of citizens and members of the organic community who are appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to advise USDA on the organic standards. The NOSB receives public testimony on all aspects of the organic standards at its regular meetings.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Program Management

[Miles McEvoy](#), Deputy Administrator, 202-720-3252.

**Cost Share Funds:** Click [here](#) for a State-by-State list of contact information for organic certification cost share reimbursements.

**Organic certifiers:** Certifiers work directly with producers and handlers to review applications, inspect, and certify organic operations. The AMS provides a listing of accredited organic certifiers in all 50 States and several countries. To find a certifier, click [here](#).

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC

- [AMS Organic Program Website](#): Official website for USDA's Organic Program with links to information about all aspects of the program.
- The [Organic Foods Production Act of 1990](#): The law on which the USDA Organic Program is based.
- [USDA Organic Regulations](#): Contains all USDA organic standards, including prohibited practices, production requirements, and the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Materials. Also known as Part 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 205.

- [Organic Program Handbook](#): Compiles all guidance documents, policy memoranda, and instructions for complying with USDA organic regulations.
- [The USDA Organic Insider](#): An email update service that informs the organic community about a wide range of USDA programs and services, regulations, and policy updates.
- [The Organic Integrity Quarterly Newsletter](#): An online newsletter with information about the USDA's organic programs and the organic industry.
- The [Organic Fact Sheet Series](#): Plain-language explanations on numerous topics, such as exporting organic products or labeling organic wine.

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# Farm Service Agency (FSA)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Through an extensive network of field offices, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) manages farm commodity programs; farm ownership, operating and emergency loans and loan guarantees; conservation and environmental programs; emergency and disaster assistance; energy programs; and domestic and international food assistance.

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Below are three programs that are especially relevant to organic producers. Organic producers are eligible for all USDA programs. See page 34 for more information on other FSA programs.

- The [Transition Incentives Program](#) provides incentives for retired or retiring owners or operators to transition land enrolled in the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#) to a beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher for production using sustainable methods.
- The [Conservation Loan Program](#) provides loans to cover the costs of qualified conservation projects. Loans can be used to convert to organic production systems.
- [Microloans](#) are direct farm operating loans with a shortened application process and reduced paperwork designed to meet the needs of smaller, non-traditional, and niche type operations. Apprentice and mentorship programs, non-farm business experience, and farm labor experience are acceptable alternative solutions for helping to meet farm experience and managerial requirements.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Program Management

[Rich Iovanna](#), 202-720-5291 or main line: 202-720-7163

### Field Offices

Find your nearest [USDA Service Center](#) with FSA presence

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [FSA State Offices](#): Find out how each program is implemented in your State
- [FSA Website](#): Official website for USDA's Farm Service Agency
  - [Farm Loan Programs](#)
  - [Disaster Assistance and Emergency Programs](#)
  - [Conservation Programs](#)
  - [Energy Programs](#)

# Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps people help the land through scientifically based, locally led voluntary conservation of natural resources on privately owned lands. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to make land more productive and the environment healthier through reduced soil erosion; improved soil, water, and air quality; energy conservation; restored woodlands and wetlands; enhanced fish and wildlife habitat; and reduced upstream flooding.

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

NRCS can partner with certified and transitioning organic producers in many capacities and helps plan and design conservation practices on eligible operations. NRCS employees can provide the technical assistance themselves or help provide financial assistance to hire certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs) through certain programs. While NRCS administers a number of resource conservation programs for which all producers may be eligible (see page 41 for more information), two programs have specific provisions supporting conservation in organic production systems.

- The [Environmental Quality Incentives Program Organic Initiative \(EQIP OI\)](#) assists eligible participants install or implement conservation practices on eligible agricultural land and can support USDA organic practices. Eligible program participants receive financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices, or activities like conservation planning, that address natural resource concerns on their land. Payments are made to participants after conservation practices and activities identified in an EQIP plan of operations are implemented. Eligible producers include those who are certified organic, transitioning to organic, or exempt from certification under the USDA organic regulations.
- The [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#) encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities. Producers may initiate organic certification while participating in a CSP contract.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### NRCS National Organic Technical Contacts:

- [Ben Bowell](#), Organic Specialist, West National Technology Support Center
- [Sarah Brown](#), Organic Specialist, West National Technology Support Center
- [Lindsay Haines](#), EQIP Organic Program Specialist, National Headquarters
- [David Lamm](#), Natural Resources Specialist, East National Technology Support Center

Note: For program-related assistance, contact your local NRCS Field Office.

### Field Offices

The NRCS Service Center Locator is [here](#).

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## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [NRCS Website](#): Official website for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- [EQIP Organic Initiative official web page](#).
- [NRCS resources for organic farming](#), including webinars and Technical Service Providers.
- [The Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#): Includes information about the CSP program and typical enhancement activities that may be supported. A crosswalk between organic standards and enhancement activities is available [here](#).

# AMS Market News: Organic Price Information

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Market News provides current, unbiased information to assist in the orderly marketing and distribution of farm commodities. The AMS online databases offer information on prices, volume, quality, condition, and other market data related to farm products in specific markets and marketing areas.

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Market News Service provides up-to-date market information for a wide range of organic commodities. Users may access market information through a number of compiled reports or by running custom reports and downloading data. Users may also create an email subscription to automatically receive reports. Organic data and reports are available for over 200 individual items in the following categories:

- [Fruits and Vegetables](#) (See [tips for first time users](#)): A dynamic custom reporting tool specific to organic market data as well as organic summary reports are available.
- [Livestock, Poultry, and Grain](#): Includes a biweekly summary for organic grains and feedstuffs and a weekly feed and seed summary. In addition, weekly reports on price, sales, and production data for organic eggs and poultry.
- [Dairy](#): Includes biweekly Organic Dairy Report, and biweekly overviews of the organic dairy market, retail sales, and fluid milk.
- [Cotton](#): Annual organic cotton market summary.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Program Management

- [Barbara Meredith](#), Director, [Cotton Market News](#) 901-384-3016
- [Joe Gaynor](#), Director, [Dairy Market News](#) 202-720-9351
- [Terry Long](#), Director, [Fruit and Vegetable Market News](#) 202-720-2175
- [Michael Lynch](#), Director, [Livestock, Poultry, and Grain Market News](#) 202-720-6231

### Field Offices

Field offices are found on the portal page for each commodity area. Portals are found under the Resources section on the [Market News Home Page](#).

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [Market News Home Page](#)
- [Fruit and Vegetable Market News Users Guide](#)

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# Risk Management Agency (RMA)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) helps producers manage their business risks through effective, market-based risk management solutions. RMA promotes, supports, and regulates sound risk management solutions to preserve and strengthen the economic stability of America's agricultural producers. As a part of its mission, RMA administers the programs of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC).

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

RMA offers Federal crop insurance products through a network of private insurance company partners, oversees the creation of new products, seeks enhancements in existing products, ensures the integrity of crop insurance programs, and provides risk management education and information. All of the Federal crop insurance programs available to farmers using conventional and sustainable agriculture practices are also available to certified organic producers and producers transitioning to organic farming practices provided they meet standard terms and conditions. Depending on the crop and type of insurance, specific features related to organic production may apply. RMA's crop insurance plans provide different types of insurance coverage to specific commodities and include:

- **Yield Products** include Actual Production History (APH), Area Yield Protection (AYP), Yield Protection (YP), and Catastrophic Risk protection (CAT).
- **Revenue Products** include Revenue Protection (RP), Revenue Protection with Harvest Price Exclusion (RP HPE), Area Revenue Protection (ARP), Area Revenue Protection with Harvest Price Exclusion (ARP HPE), Actual Revenue History (ARH), Rainfall Index (RI), and Vegetative Index (VI) Programs.
- **Whole-Farm Revenue Protection** (WFRP) provides a risk management safety net for all commodities on the farm under one insurance policy. This insurance plan is tailored for any farm with up to \$8.5 million in insured revenue, including farms with specialty or organic commodities (both crops and livestock), or those marketing to local, regional, farm-identity preserved, specialty, or direct markets. It also allows certified organic producers to utilize organic prices.
- **Livestock Policies** such as Livestock Gross Margin (LGM) and Livestock Risk Protection (LRP). LGM provides protection against loss of gross margin (market value of livestock minus feed costs) while LRP provides protection against price declines.

RMA also supports partnerships and cooperative agreements that educate producers of organic production in managing risks specific to their organic operation. See more in the "Online Resources and Publications" section below.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Management

[Sharon Hestvik](#), Insurance Management Specialist, 202-720-6685

## Field Offices

Find the nearest [Regional Office](#)

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [Organic Crop Insurance Coverage Fact Sheet](#)
- [RMA Organic Crops Web Page](#): Policies and publications specifically related to organic crop insurance
- [Risk Management Education Partnerships and Cooperative Agreements](#)

## SELECTED PROJECT RESULTS FROM RMA COLLABORATIONS

- [On-Farm Food Safety Tool](#): This website includes numerous food safety resources for producers, including a free online tool, based on a comprehensive risk-based framework, which generates customized on-farm food safety plans based on user input. The tool is designed for use by small to mid-scale fruit and vegetable growers and provides a full set of record-keeping tools to document their food safety program and to provide training to their employees.
- [Agricultural Marketing Service \(AMS\) Organic Price Data](#): RMA and AMS worked to develop a customizable averaging tool to allow data users to synthesize daily price quotes.
- [Organic Price Project](#): Created by the Rodale Institute, this project presents price data for organic and conventional commercial crops, specialty crops, and underserved crops and helps producers in considering market and production risks.
- [Organic Transition Simulation Model \(OTSM\) and Online Training Course](#): This tool helps farmers consider the economic benefits of organic versus conventional systems via an online self-paced training course.
- [Organic Farm Business Management–Investigating Risk Management Implications for Organic Agriculture](#): A program created by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture that teaches organic farmers to develop the solid business management skills required to make wise and informed decisions about their farms.
- [Transitioning to Organic Dairy: A Comprehensive Risk Reduction Tool](#): A handbook created by the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York, Inc. (NOFA-NY) that helps farmers interested in transitioning to organic dairy and shows how to follow organic dairy guidelines set by the USDA.
- [Income Risk Assessment of Organic Apple Production in the Pacific Northwest](#): A study developed by Washington State University that can be used by producers to judge the economic impact of alternative production strategies (conventional versus organic) for apple producers in the Pacific Northwest region.

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## **Organic Research, Data, & Technical Information**

# Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is USDA's principal in-house scientific research agency, responsible for developing solutions to a wide range of agricultural problems that affect Americans every day, from field to table. ARS houses 800 research projects that are led by 2,200 scientists and post-doctorals at over 90 research locations. Each research project falls within 1 of the approximately 18 [National Programs](#).

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Currently, the [Agricultural System Competitiveness and Sustainability National Program \(NP-216\)](#) coordinates ARS's organic agriculture portfolio. Since research applicable to organic agriculture cuts across many national programs, over the years existing research projects have taken on organic objectives as a part of their existing portfolios.

To ensure that the research is relevant, ARS holds stakeholder workshops to come up with a list of nationally important challenges, which they use to [develop](#) 5-year national research action plans. The last organic-specific stakeholder workshops were held in Austin, Texas, in 2005, and Atlanta, Georgia, in 2006, resulting in an [action plan for Organic Agriculture](#). The Agricultural System Competitiveness and Sustainability National Program held listening sessions in the spring of 2012, and released its [new 5-year action plan](#) in November 2012.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Program Management

- [Michel Cavigelli](#), Soil Scientist, (301) 504-8327
- [Steven Mirsky](#), Research Ecologist, (301) 504-5324
- [Gene Lester](#), Nutrition, Food Safety/Quality National Program Leader, (301) 504-4616

**ARS Laboratories with Direct Organic Research include:** Booneville, AR; Fayetteville, AR; Parlier, CA; Salinas, CA; Dawson, GA; Tifton, GA; Ames, IA; Beltsville, MD; Orono, ME; Morris, MN; Columbia, MO; Stoneville, MS; Geneva, NY; Ithaca, NY; Corvallis, OR; Wyndmoor, PA; Brookings, SD; Prosser, WA; Wenatchee, WA; and Kearneysville, VA.

To find active organic research projects, you can also search the [Current Research Information System](#).

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [Research results](#) from selected ARS organic research projects.
- The [Agricultural System Competitiveness and Sustainability](#) National Program website includes its [action plan](#) as well as [accomplishments](#) and [annual reports](#).
- The [Germplasm Resources Information Network](#) has information about plant, animal, microbial, and invertebrate genetic resources that USDA manages.

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## Economic Research Service (ERS)

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Economic Research Service (ERS) is USDA's principal social science research agency. It addresses issues that cover the food sector, nutrition and food safety, the farm sector, agricultural trade, rural development, and the environment.

### ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Organic produce, dairy, and other sectors are researched by the three divisions of ERS. Food Economics examines organic price premiums and consumer demand for organic food. Market and Trade Economics and Resource and Rural Economics examine organic markets, the adoption of organic farming systems, and the economic characteristics of organic production. ERS produces:

- [Organic Agriculture](#): This page provides an industry overview and links to ERS organic data and reports. Recent ERS articles and reports examine trends in consumer demand, U.S. organic imports and exports, and implications of organic provisions in the 2014 Farm Act.
- [Organic Price Data](#): Historical wholesale and retail organic prices and price premiums for selected fruits, vegetables, poultry, eggs, dairy, and grains.
- [Organic Production Data](#): ERS has been tracking the adoption of certified organic farming systems in the United States since the mid-1990s. ERS collaborates with over 50 State and private certification organizations and other USDA agencies to estimate certified organic farmland acreage and livestock, by commodity and by State.
- [Organic Commodity Costs and Returns](#): Annual cost and return estimates are reported for the United States and major production regions for corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton, grain sorghum, rice, peanuts, oats, barley, milk, hogs, and cow-calf based on historical prices. These data estimates are based on results from the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS). Since 2005, the organic dairy, soybean, apple, wheat, and corn sectors have been included with their conventional counterparts in the ARMS survey (see National Agricultural Statistics Service section, page 20), which enables comparisons of production costs, revenues, yields, energy intensiveness, structure, marketing, and other economic and environmental aspects.
- [Organic Trade](#): In January 2011, the U.S. Department of Commerce added codes for selected organic products to the U.S. trade code system. USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) reports monthly trade statistics on these products in the [Global Agricultural Trade System \(GATS\)](#). This page contains quarterly statistics on the tracked imports and exports and examines trends in organic trade over time.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Program Management

[Catherine Greene](#), Agricultural Economist, 202-694-5541

**ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE**

- [Organic Agriculture Overview.](#)
  - [Organic Price Data](#)
  - [Organic Production Data](#)
  - [Organic Commodity Costs and Returns](#)
  - [Organic Product Distribution Data](#)

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# National Agricultural Library (NAL), ARS

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The [National Agricultural Library](#) (NAL) houses one of the world's largest and most accessible agricultural information collections and serves as the nexus for a national network of State [land-grant](#) and [U.S. Department of Agriculture field libraries](#). It is a part of USDA's [Agricultural Research Service](#) (ARS).

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The [Alternative Farming Systems Information Center \(AFSIC\)](#) is the section of NAL with [specific projects and programs on organic agriculture](#) in addition to alternative cropping and livestock systems, sustainable, low-input, biodynamic, and regenerative agriculture. AFSIC provides reference services, digitizes key USDA publications pertaining to organic production, and ensures the NAL collection includes the latest and most pertinent publications on organic agriculture.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Management

[Stephanie Ritchie](#), Librarian, 301-504-6153

You can also ask a question of Alternative Farming Systems Information Specialists:

**In person:** Monday- Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST at the [National Agricultural Library](#)

**By e-mail:** [afsic@ars.usda.gov](mailto:afsic@ars.usda.gov)

**By phone:** 301-504-6559

**By fax:** 301-504-5181

**By mail:** Alternative Farming Systems Information Center / National Agricultural Library / 10301 Baltimore Avenue, Room 123 / Beltsville, MD 20705

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Explore NAL's [Information Centers](#), which focus on alternative farming systems (such as AFSIC, which is mentioned above) as well as invasive species, rural issues, water quality, food safety, and animal welfare. Particular publications of note include:

- AFSIC's [Organic Production Publications](#) include a comprehensive tutorial: [Organic Production and Organic Food: Information Access Tools](#).
- AFSIC also has a collection of over 800 searchable, full-text [digitized historical USDA publications related to organic agriculture](#). AFSIC will also be digitizing critical information on organic seed preservation and organic farm energy options.

# National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The [National Agricultural Statistics Service](#) (NASS) conducts hundreds of surveys each year and prepares reports that cover virtually every facet of U.S. agriculture. NASS's 12 regional field offices publish data about many of the same topics for local audiences.

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- [Census of Agriculture](#): The census is the only source of uniform data on agricultural production and operator characteristics for each county, State, and the United States. Congress requires NASS to conduct a Census of Agriculture every 5 years.

The 2012 Census of Agriculture asked questions regarding the type of organic production (USDA certified or exempt) and if the farm had acres transitioning to USDA organic production. USDA certified organic or exempt operations also reported the value of sales from certified or exempt organically produced commodities. The 2012 Census of Agriculture publication provided value of sales, type of production, and principal operator characteristics data.

The 2007 Census of Agriculture asked questions about land acreage and organic product sales. Farms with organic production reported total production acres, acres of harvested cropland, acres used for pasture, and sales of organic crops, livestock, and livestock products (which include eggs and milk). Farms also reported acres being converted to future organic production.

- The [2012 Census of Agriculture Organic Special Tabulation](#) provides national and state level data on farms, land in farms and tenure; production expenses, equipment and machinery; farm income and government payments; land use and practices; operator characteristics; and more.
- [Organic Survey](#): The 2014 Organic Survey<sup>1</sup> is the third iteration of an organic production and practices survey conducted by NASS at the national and state levels. The primary purpose of the survey is to collect price information at the commodity level along with acreage, production, and sales data for a variety of organic crop and livestock commodities. Other information gathered includes marketing and agricultural practices, insurance, and production expenses. These data will be provided for certified organic farms and organic farms except from certification. Results from the 2014 Organic Survey will be published in August 2015.

*2011 Certified Organic Production Survey Results:* The survey, with an overall response rate of 76 percent, found that in 2011 there were 9,140 certified organic farms with 3.6 million acres of certified organic land, and total certified organic sales of \$3.5 billion.

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<sup>1</sup> Done in collaboration with USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA)

*2008 Organic Production Survey Results:* The survey, with an overall response rate of 87 percent, found that in 2008 there were 14,540 certified and exempt organic farms with 4.1 million acres of organic land and total organic sales of \$3.2 billion.

- **Mushrooms**: NASS collects and publishes national-level data on certified organic mushroom producers. The mushroom program is a census of all commercial mushroom growers in all States, and the publication is released annually in July.

#### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Program Management  
**Chris Messer**, 202-690-8747

#### **ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE**

- Data highlights from the **2008 Organic Production Survey** and the **2011 Certified Organic Production Survey**
- **Census of Agriculture** data
- NASS's **report schedule**

# National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The [National Institute of Food and Agriculture \(NIFA\)](#) supports exemplary external research, education, and extension. Over the past decade, the agency has partnered to develop and support an increasingly diverse set of projects related to organic agriculture, but new and evolving partnerships and grants programs have increased the level and coordination of organic activity in recent years. NIFA addresses the needs of organic agriculture through both the provision of formula grants to universities and colleges and through competitive funding.

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Organic Competitive Grants Programs:

- The [Organic Transitions Program \(ORG\)](#) aims to improve the competitiveness of organic livestock and crop producers, as well as those who are adopting organic practices.
- The [Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative \(OREI\)](#) aims to solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems. OREI is quite competitive. In 2011, only 24 percent of the applications submitted were funded. OREI has eight legislated priorities for organic agriculture, but in any given year, specific priorities may be emphasized:
  - Facilitate the development of organic agriculture production, breeding, and processing methods
  - Evaluate the potential economic benefits to producers and processors who use organic methods
  - Explore international trade opportunities for organically grown and processed agricultural commodities
  - Determine desirable traits for organic commodities
  - Identify marketing and policy constraints on the expansion of organic agriculture
  - Conduct advanced on-farm research and development that emphasizes observation of, experimentation with, and innovation for working organic farms, including research relating to production and marketing and to socioeconomic conditions
  - Examine optimal conservation and environmental outcomes relating to organically produced agricultural products
  - Develop new and improved seed varieties that are particularly suited for organic agriculture
- The [Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education \(SARE\)](#) program provides a variety of competitive grants for research, education, and outreach activities that support sustainable agricultural systems. The program operates under four regional administrative councils to encourage site-specific experimentation that pushes the boundaries of current thinking. Many have focused primarily on organic production or marketing in the past. Unlike other grants, producers are among those eligible.

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#### Other NIFA Programs:

- The [Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program \(BFRDP\)](#) funds organizations that train, educate, and provide technical assistance to beginning farmers.
- [Small Business Innovation Grants \(SBIR\)](#) support research and development activities in organic agriculture carried out by small businesses with a goal of producing a commercial outcome.
- [NIFA Educational programs](#) (1890 institutions, tribal colleges, Higher Education Challenge grants, International Science and Education projects, Graduate Education National Needs fellowships, and Hispanic Serving Institutions) have funded projects in organic and alternative agriculture.
- The [Agriculture and Food Research Initiative \(AFRI\)](#) is NIFA's largest competitive grants program includes opportunities for organic systems studies.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

##### Program Management

[Mathieu Ngouajio](#), National Program Leader, Division of Plant Systems-Production, 202-401-4895

#### ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- Find out more about NIFA's programs in [organic agriculture](#).
- [Search](#) for reports from agricultural, food science, human nutrition, and forestry research, education and extension projects that NIFA has funded.
- Search [SARE's database](#) of funded projects.
- The [eOrganic](#) online community of scientists and practitioners offers a wealth of information on organic agriculture, including articles, webinars, videos, and "Ask the Expert."
- Learn about USDA's relationship with the [Cooperative Extension System](#). Contact your [local extension office](#) to learn more.
- Learn about the [Land-Grant Universities](#) and see a [map](#) of their locations.

# Marketing & Infrastructure



# Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) administers programs that facilitate efficient, fair marketing of U.S. agricultural products, including food, fiber, and specialty crops.

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

AMS developed and oversees the National Organic Program (NOP) so that the public can be assured that when a product displays the USDA Certified Organic seal, the food conforms to consistent, national standards. AMS also administers the Certification Cost-Share Program, which helps offset the costs of organic certification. AMS' Market News Service provides regular reports of prices and sales volumes for a wide range of organic commodities. For more information on these two programs, see *National Organic Program* (page 7) and *Market News – Organic Market Information* (page 12) in the Direct Organic Producer Support section of this guide.

To facilitate the competitive and efficient marketing of agricultural products, AMS also provides resources and offers a variety of programs including, among others, the following:

- **[Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program \(FSMIP\)](#)**: Provides matching funds to State departments of agriculture, State agricultural experiment stations, and other appropriate State agencies to assist in exploring new market opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products, and to encourage research and innovation aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the marketing system.
- **[Specialty Crop Block Grant Program \(SCBG\)](#)**: Enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops which are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). The agency, commission, or department responsible for agriculture within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are eligible to apply for grant funds directly to the USDA. Past awards include projects that focus on organic agriculture.
- **[The Farmers Market and Local Foods Promotion Program \(FMLFPP\)](#)**: Farmers Market grants are targeted to help improve and expand domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agri-tourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. The Local Foods program offers grant funds with a 25% match to support the development and expansion of local and regional food business enterprises to increase domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products, and to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets. Entities eligible to apply include agricultural cooperatives, producer networks, producer associations, local governments, nonprofit corporations, public benefit corporations, economic development corporations, regional farmers' market authorities, and Tribal governments.

- **[Local Food Directories](#)**: To better connect farmers and buyers, and enhance awareness of available local food sources, USDA has created three Local Food Directories for community-supported agriculture operations (CSAs), food hubs and on-farm markets by building on the popular and comprehensive National Farmers Market Directory. Each directory provides vital information about listed enterprises, including a mapped location, operating hours, months of operation, the types of products available, number of farmers at each market and the accepted forms of payment. USDA continues to request that managers and owners of local food entities enter/update their business information in the directories.

AMS programs can also play an important role regarding food safety. The **[Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Audit Programs](#)** provide voluntary, independent audit services for produce suppliers throughout the production and supply chain. USDA Audit Programs focus on best agricultural practices to verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored in the safest manner possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards. AMS offers a variety of types of audits (including the Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices, or GAPS) designed to meet the verification needs of a range of buyers.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

#### Program Management

- FSMIP: **[Janise Zygmunt](#)**, 202-720-5024
- SCBG: **[John Miklozek](#)**, 202-720-1403
- FMPP: **[Carmen Humphrey](#)**, Branch Chief, 202-720-0933
- LFPP: **[Nicole Nelson Miller](#)**, Program Manager, 202-720-2731
- Audit Programs: **[Audit Programs Staff](#)**, 202-720-5870

### ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- **[AMS Website](#)**: Official website for USDA's AMS

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# Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) has the primary responsibility for USDA's international activities—market development, trade agreements and negotiations, and the collection and analysis of statistics and market information. It also administers USDA's export credit guarantee and food aid programs and helps increase income and food availability in developing nations by mobilizing expertise for agriculturally led economic growth.

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

FAS works to improve foreign market access for U.S. products (including organics), build new markets, improve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace, and provide food aid and technical assistance to foreign countries. FAS provides several important informational tools for organic trade.

- [Organic Trade Data](#) consisting of monthly import and export volume of [selected organic commodities](#) is available through the Global Agricultural Trade Database. Starting with the GATS Standard Query page, look for the section labeled 'product groups'. Click on the dropdown menu and choose 'Organics-Selected'.
- [The Global Agricultural Information Network \(GAIN\)](#) provides a searchable database of reports on the agricultural situation in over 130 countries, and many reports contain information on organic production and demand.
- [The Market Access Program](#) provides funding to encourage the development, maintenance, and expansion of commercial export markets for agricultural commodities.
- [The Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program \(TASC\)](#) provides funding to support projects that address technical barriers to the export of U.S. specialty crops.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Program Management

- Trade Access Issues: [Kelly Strzelecki](#), Senior Trade Advisor, 202-690-0522
- International Production and Trade Analysis: [Andrew Sowell](#), Commodity Expert, 202-720-0262
- International Marketing Programs: [Nancy Hubbell](#), Southern Cone Desk Officer, 202-401-0150

### Field Offices

Contact information for FAS overseas offices is [here](#).

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [FAS Website](#): Official website for USDA's FAS
- [FAS Organic Information](#): Overview of FAS resources for trade of organic products

# Rural Development (RD)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Rural Development (RD) increases rural residents' economic opportunities and improves their quality of life by partnering with rural communities to fund projects that bring housing, community facilities, utilities, and other services. RD also provides technical assistance and financial backing for rural businesses and cooperatives to create quality jobs in rural areas.

## ORGANIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

RD provides a wide range of loans, grants, and technical assistance for businesses, community infrastructure, strategic planning, cooperative formation, renewable energy, housing, and utilities. Below are a few highlights that may be particularly relevant for organic operations:

- [Value-Added Producer Grants](#) are provided for both planning activities and as working capital to assist with marketing value-added agricultural products.
- [Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans](#) aim to improve, develop, or finance business, industry, and employment and improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities. This is achieved by bolstering the existing private credit structure through the guarantee of quality loans.
- [Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas \(ATTRA\)](#), also called the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, provides sustainable agriculture information to those engaged in or serving commercial agriculture, such as farmers, ranchers, extension agents, farm organizations, and farm-based businesses.
- [Rural Business Development Grants](#) support revolving loan funds and development of physical infrastructure and facilities. They can also support training and technical assistance for business development (including support for food processing, marketing, and distribution business development). State agencies, tribes, cooperatives, and rural private nonprofits may apply.
- [Rural Energy for America Program](#) provides loan guarantees and grants for renewable energy systems, energy efficiency improvements, feasibility studies, and more.
- [Small Socially Disadvantaged Producer Grants](#) fund technical assistance through cooperatives and cooperative development centers.
- [Rural Cooperative Development Grants](#) fund the establishment and operation of cooperative development centers.

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Management

Rural Business and Cooperative Service: [Andy Jermolowicz](#), Assistant Deputy Administrator, 202-690-0361

Rural Utilities Service: [Gary Boies](#), Senior Program Advisor, 202-720-1265

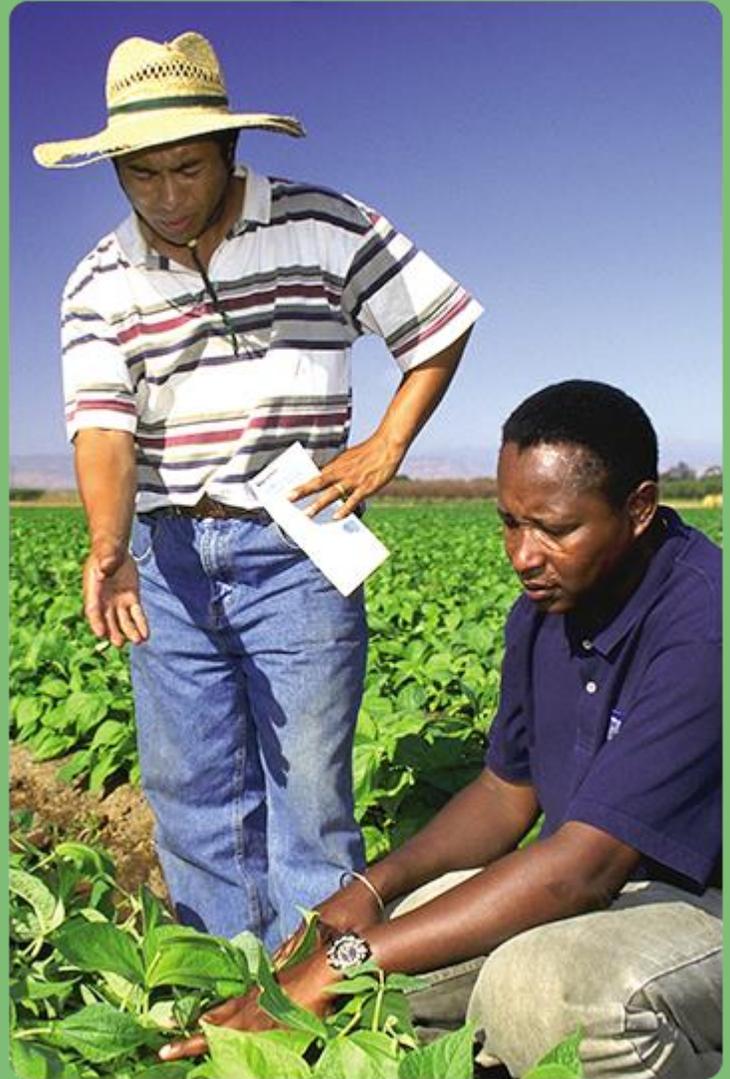
Field Offices

Find a [USDA service center](#) near you

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [Loans](#) for business and cooperatives, housing and community facilities, and utilities.
- [Grants](#) for business and cooperatives, housing and community facilities, and utilities.
- [Technical assistance programs](#) help to ensure that rural areas are able to leverage funding opportunities provided by USDA Rural Development.
- The [Agricultural Marketing Resource Center \(AgMRC\)](#) provides independent producers and processors with critical information to build successful value-added agricultural enterprises.
- [Forms and Publications](#).
- [Regulations and Guidance](#).

# USDA General Services



# Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) protects U.S. agricultural health by promoting animal and plant health, regulating imports of agricultural products, regulating certain genetically engineered organisms, administering the Animal Welfare Act, and managing wildlife damage and disease. APHIS employs a variety of treatments to protect U.S. agriculture including non-chemical treatments and biocontrols that can be used without impacting the status of organic products.

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

APHIS services support U.S. producers of organic, traditional, and genetically modified agricultural products. The following programs and services might be of interest to organic farmers, ranchers, and producers:

- **Animal Health**
  - **monitors animal health** throughout the Nation
  - provides information about raising **backyard birds**
  - provides information about **animal diseases** (including animal diseases that can affect humans)
  - provides **laboratory services** to diagnose animal diseases
  - **regulates veterinary biologics** such as vaccines and other products of biological origin
  - **accredits veterinarians**
  - determines standards for and provides information on humane **animal care and animal welfare**
- **Plant Health**: APHIS prevents the introduction and spread of agricultural pests in international trade of plants, fruits, vegetables, and other plant products.
- **Biotechnology**: APHIS regulates certain genetically modified organisms and veterinary biologics.
- **Emergency Response**: APHIS responds to animal and plant health emergencies such as disease outbreaks.
- APHIS regulates the **Import and Export** of plants, animals, and biologics (such as vaccines). **Permits** are sometimes required for international and interstate shipment of plants, animals, biologics, and genetically engineered organisms.
- **Wildlife Damage Management**: APHIS manages wildlife diseases, hazards, and conflicts with humans and agriculture with the purpose of allowing people and wildlife to coexist. Programs include the **National Rabies Management Program**, a **National Wildlife Disease Program**, and management assistance for **feral swine**. The **National Wildlife Research Center** helps resolve problems caused by the interaction of wild animals and society.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Program Management

[Shannon Hamm](#), Associate Deputy Administrator, Policy and Program Development, 301-851-3096

[Anastasia Bodnar](#), Policy Analyst, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, 301-851-3873

### Field Offices

- [Veterinary Services](#)
- [Wildlife Damage Management](#)
- [Plant and Animal Health](#) (where you would report a pest or disease)
- [Animal Care](#)

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [Reporting Pests and Diseases](#)
  - [Plant Pest Information](#)
  - [Animal Disease information](#) (listed by disease and by animal species)
  - [National Animal Health Surveillance System](#)
- [Biosecurity for Birds](#)
- [The Center for Plant Health Science and Technology](#) conducts research on [treatment technologies](#), some of which are valuable to organic producers in that they do not rely on chemicals. For example, the unit is currently evaluating:
  - Cold treatment for the export of U.S. grapes and other fruits to control the spotted winged drosophila, European grapevine moth, and light brown apple moth
  - Cold treatment of imported produce affected by the fruit fly *Bactrocera invadens*
  - Vacuum steam treatment for the export of logs
  - Washing curry and lime leaves (for export from Hawaii to the U.S. mainland) in water using a surfactant in order to control the Asian citrus psyllid
- [Permits](#)
- [Laws and Regulations](#)

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## Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP)

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) works to improve the health and well-being of Americans by developing and promoting dietary guidance that links current scientific research to the nutrition needs of consumers. CNPP is the lead agency within USDA for establishing the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and translating the nutrition policy through nutrition promotion and education programs and resources aimed at all consumers.

### PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

At [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) CNPP provides practical information to individuals, health professionals, nutrition educators, and the food industry to help consumers build healthier diets with resources and tools for dietary assessment, nutrition education, and other user-friendly nutrition information. The [SuperTracker.usda.gov](http://SuperTracker.usda.gov) is an interactive Web-based tool that can help plan, analyze, and track diet and physical activity. Look up individual foods to see or compare their nutritional value, find recommendations for what and how much individuals should eat, and compare food choices to these recommendations and to individual nutrient needs.

CNPP, along with the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at HHS, jointly lead the development of the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGA). The [Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010](#) were the 7th edition released since 1980 and will remain the current edition until the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2015](#) are released. The DGA provides insight and advice for Americans 2 years and older regarding what to eat and how food professionals, educators and policy makers can better design and target programs and messages to improve consumer choices. The DGA includes food patterns for all foods, including organic foods.

The [Nutrition Evidence Library](#) conducts systematic reviews of food and nutrition-related scientific research in order to inform Federal nutrition policies and programs. In 2010, and also for the 2015 DGA, the [Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee](#) conducted such reviews to inform the development of the dietary guidelines.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

#### Program Management

- [Elaine McLaughlin](#), Nutritionist, 703-305-2950

### ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [CNPP Website](#): Official website for USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
- [Nutrition evidence informing the dietary guidelines of 2010](#)
- Research comparing [Conventional and Organically Produced Foods](#) was addressed in the Supplemental Information to *The Report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*, which provided the scientific basis for the dietary guidelines.
- [Look for the USDA Organic Seal](#)

# Farm Service Agency (FSA)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

As described on page 9, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) manages farm commodity programs; farm ownership, operating, and emergency [loans and loan guarantees](#); [conservation and environmental programs](#); [emergency and disaster assistance](#); [energy programs](#); and domestic and international food assistance through an extensive network of [field offices](#).

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In addition to the [Transition Incentive Program](#) and the [Conservation Loan Program](#) described on page 9, FSA provides the following programs which, among others, may be of interest to organic producers:

- [Farm Loans and Loan Guarantees](#) for purchases related to farm operation or ownership. There are also loans that specifically target minorities, women, rural youth, and beginning farmers and ranchers.
- [Disaster Assistance Programs](#) to help producers recover from losses. This includes programs for those raising livestock, honeybees, farm-raised fish, crops, and forests.
- [Conservation Programs](#) to help landowners protect eligible fragile croplands and grazing lands using rental contracts, cost-share and incentive payments, or conservation easements (as applicable).
- [Microloans](#) (direct farm operating loans) with a shortened application process and reduced paperwork designed to meet the needs of smaller, non-traditional, and niche type operations. Apprentice and mentorship programs, non-farm business experience, and farm labor experience are acceptable alternative solutions for helping to meet farm experience and managerial requirements.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Management

[Rich Iovanna](#), 202-720-5291 or main line: 202-720-7163

Field Offices

Find your nearest [USDA Service Center](#) with FSA presence

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [FSA State Offices](#): Find out how each program is implemented in your State
- [FSA Website](#): Official website for USDA's Farm Service Agency
  - [Farm Loan Programs](#)
  - [Disaster Assistance and Emergency Programs](#)
  - [Conservation Programs](#)
  - [Energy Programs](#)

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## Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) provides children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education. Benefits are provided in the form of food or food benefits, conferred in cash-like form via vouchers, electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards, checks, coupons, or food instruments that can be used to purchase food.

### PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

FNS does not have any programs specifically related to organic agriculture. However, there are opportunities for organic foods to play a role in several FNS programs:

- [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children \(WIC\)](#) provides Federal grants to States for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk. Participants receive benefits in the form of checks, coupons, electronic benefits transfers (EBT), and cash-value vouchers. In 2009, FNS clarified policies regarding the purchase of organic foods by participants in the WIC program.

#### [Are organic foods WIC-eligible?](#)

- Some organic forms of WIC-eligible foods (e.g., milk, eggs, cheese) meet the nutritional requirements set forth in WIC regulations and are therefore authorized. However, WIC State agencies are responsible for determining the brands and types of foods to authorize on their State WIC food lists. Some State agencies may allow organic foods on their foods lists, but this will vary by State. The decision may be influenced by a number of factors such as cost, product distribution within a State, and WIC participant acceptance.
  - Organic fruits and vegetables purchased via the WIC cash-value voucher are authorized; there is not State discretion to disallow them. The cash-value voucher may be redeemed for any WIC-eligible fruit and vegetable.
- Through State agencies, WIC supports the [Farmers' Market Nutrition Program \(FMNP\)](#) and the [Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program \(SFMNP\)](#), which provide WIC participants and eligible seniors age 60 or older, respectively, with coupons to purchase fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown (may be organic or conventional) fruits and vegetables through authorized farmers, farmers' markets, and roadside stands.
  - [The Child Nutrition Programs](#) are federally assisted meal programs operating in schools, child and adult day care settings, and summer feeding sites. The programs provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals and snacks to children and elderly adults. Purchasing decisions generally are made by local educational agencies (LEAs) and may include organic foods.
  - Organic producers may have a high level of interest in the USDA [Farm to School Initiative](#) which connects schools (K-12) with regional or local producers in order to serve nutritious, healthy meals using locally sourced foods. Producers and producer groups are eligible for the [Farm to School Grant Program](#).

- [The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#), formerly the Food Stamp Program, helps low-income people and families buy the food they need for good health. Many farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture operations are [becoming authorized SNAP retailers](#) and these retailers, as well as supermarkets and grocery stores, may offer competitively priced organic foods.
- The [FNS Office of Food Safety](#) coordinates food safety efforts within all FNS programs.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Program Management

- Nutrition Programs: [Heather Hopwood](#), Nutrition Specialist, 703-305-2487
- Farm to School: [Deborah Kane](#), National Director, Farm to School Program, 503-326-2010
- Food Safety: [Julie Skolmowski](#), Food Safety Specialist, 703-305-1093

### Field Offices

- Click [here](#) to find USDA Food and Nutrition Service field and satellite offices.
- State contacts for Farm to School can be found [here](#).

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [FNS Website](#): Official website for USDA's Food and Nutrition Service
- [Resources for Farmers/Farmer Organizations Working with Schools](#)
- [Food Safety Resources](#): This is a compilation of food safety resources, including many links for producers who need to meet food safety requirements in school food procurement.
- The [Quality Food for Quality Meals: Buying Fruits and Vegetables](#) brochure for school food service providers includes an explanation of the USDA Organic logo and describes strategies for cost-effective ways to provide organic foods in school meals.

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# Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health regulatory agency responsible for ensuring that the Nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and processed egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged.

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

FSIS involvement in the regulation of a food product's designation as "organic" is limited to labeling. FSIS' labeling requirements are consistent with the USDA Organic Regulations.

FSIS conducts an extensive outreach program for small and very small meat processing facility operators. This is not specific to organic production but is very helpful for small-scale organic meat producers and processors.

- [FSIS Small and Very Small Plant Assistance](#) helps small and very small plant operators to find information about FSIS policies, technical assistance, and answers to common questions.
- [Labeling Claims Guidance](#) helps certified organic meat processors on including a "Non-Genetically Engineered" statement, and/or using a "Certified Organic By ..." claim, on meat and poultry labels.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### Program Management

### Small Plant Help Desk

The Desk can be reached Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (EST) at 1-877-FSIS-HELP or by email at [InfoSource@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:InfoSource@fsis.usda.gov).

### Field Offices

### [FSIS State and Regional Office Contacts](#)

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [FSIS Website](#): Official website for USDA's FSIS
- [Labeling Claims Guidance \(Organic Claims\)](#): Basic guidance on organic meat labeling, since the original implementation of the National Organic Program in 2002
- [LPDS Labeling/Label Approval Guidance](#)

# Forest Service (FS)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Forest Service (FS) sustains the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. Within the FS there are three primary mission areas: National Forest System (NFS), Research and Development (R&D), and State and Private Forestry (S&PF).

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The **National Forest System (NFS)** manages 155 national forests and 20 grasslands, which provide citizens with a wide range of natural resource-based products including clean water, "wild grown" wildlife and fish, wood, and non-timber forest products (e.g., mushrooms, berries, ramps, ginseng, and other edible, medicinal, and floral products).

- **Subsistence Management (Alaska):** FS and other Federal agencies share responsibility for managing subsistence (the harvest and use of wild plants, fish, and wildlife as food) resources and uses on Federal lands and waters throughout Alaska.

**Research and Development (R&D)** conducts long-term and short-term research to develop the scientific knowledge and tools that are used to manage forests, rangelands, and other working lands. This research includes **Invasive Species** and **Resource Management and Use** that provides science and tools to support the sustainable management and harvest of "wild-grown" and other natural resource-based products from NFS lands, non-Federal lands, and urban forests and may be applicable to organic production.

**State and Private Forestry (S&PF)** helps private landowners, State forestry organizations, Tribes, and other communities manage about 500 million acres of non-Federal rural and urban forests.

- Through the **Forest Health Protection Program**, FS provides technical assistance in integrated pest management (IPM) programs that reduce the threat of insects, pathogens, and invasive plants to our Nation's forests; maintains records of pesticide use on National Forest System lands; and prepares human health and ecological risk assessments for a variety of pest management tools. A major focus of the FS **Biological Control** program (a cooperative effort with R&D) is to establish self-sustaining populations of natural enemies that can be part of an ongoing IPM program, which in virtually all cases means fewer chemicals in the environment and a more organic approach to protecting and maintaining forest health.

**The USDA National Agroforestry Center (NAC)** (a partnership of R&D, S&PF, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service) accelerates the development and application of agroforestry through a national network of partners. NAC supports organic agriculture through the development and application of systems that can be used by producers to reduce the use and/or impact of pesticides in the environment (e.g., field windbreaks that provide a barrier to pesticide drift).

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Management

[Susan Stein](#), Director, USDA National Agroforestry Center, 202-205-0837

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [The USDA National Agroforestry Center \(NAC\)](#) website includes several publications including technical notes on agroforestry and its many practices: alley cropping, forest farming, riparian forest buffers, silvopasture, windbreaks, as well as publications in Spanish. A recent newsletter included an article on [organic crops in agroforestry systems](#) (2012).
- Forest Service [Biological Control](#)
- The [Forest Service Research and Development \(R&D\)](#) website includes information on research topics as well as a map of the Forest Service's network of experimental forests and ranges.

# Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) facilitates the marketing of livestock, poultry, meat, cereals, oilseeds, and related agricultural products and promotes fair and competitive trading practices for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture.

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

GIPSA impacts organic agriculture through the:

- **High Quality Specialty Grain Temporary Waiver** of mandatory inspection and weighing requirements for high quality specialty grain facilitates the development of the high quality specialty grain export market, including business transactions for organic grains

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Management  
[Grain Export](#) or 202-720-9170

Field Offices  
[Packers and Stockyards Program](#)  
[Federal Grain Inspection Service](#)

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [GIPSA Website](#): Official website for USDA's GIPSA

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# Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

As mentioned on page 10, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps people help the land through scientifically based, locally led voluntary conservation of natural resources on privately owned lands. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance that makes land more productive and the environment healthier through reduced soil erosion; improved soil, water, and air quality; energy conservation; restored woodlands and wetlands; enhanced fish and wildlife habitats; and reduced upstream flooding.

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

NRCS can partner with certified and transitioning organic producers in many capacities and helps plan and design conservation practices on eligible operations. NRCS employees can provide the technical assistance themselves or help provide financial assistance to hire certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs) through certain programs. Additionally, beyond [the EQIP-Organic Initiative](#) and the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#), described on page 10, NRCS offers the following programs, all of which may be utilized by organic producers:

- The [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#) provides financial and technical assistance to address natural resource concerns on agricultural and non-industrial private forestland. The funds may be used to implement conservation practices related to organic production. The EQIP-Organic Initiative targets organic and transitional producers specifically, but growers may also be eligible for the general EQIP funds as well as other program opportunities such as [seasonal high tunnels](#) and [on-farm energy](#) initiatives. Beginning farmers and ranchers may also qualify for higher financial assistance payments.
- The [Agricultural Management Assistance \(AMA\) Program](#) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in 16 States to help them voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations.
- The [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#) provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, NRCS helps Indian tribes, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements component, NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands.
- The [Healthy Forests Reserve Program \(HRFP\)](#) helps landowners restore, enhance and protect forestland resources on private lands through easements and financial assistance. Through HRFP, landowners promote the recovery of endangered or threatened species, improve plant and animal biodiversity and enhance carbon sequestration.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### NRCS National Organic Technical Contacts:

- [Ben Bowell](#), Organic Specialist, West National Technology Support Center
- [Sarah Brown](#), Organic Specialist, West National Technology Support Center
- [Lindsay Haines](#), EQIP Organic Program Specialist, National Headquarters
- [David Lamm](#), Natural Resources Specialist, East National Technology Support Center

Note: For program-related assistance, contact your local NRCS Field Office.

### Field Offices

The NRCS Service Center Locator is [here](#).

## ONLINE RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- [NRCS Website](#): Official website for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service
- [NRCS Conservation Programs](#)
- [NRCS State Offices](#)

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# Appendix

## USDA Organic Points of Contact

Current as of 03/15/2015. Updates may be found at [www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo](http://www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo).

Agency	Point of Contact	Email	Phone Number
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