State of Organic Seed, 2016

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State of Organic Seed

Measuring progress in increasing the availability, quality, and integrity of organic seed available to US farmers

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We envision an organic food supply built on a foundation of organic seed
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What progress have we made?

• Organic seed sourcing
• Organic seed satisfaction
• Support for organic seed
• Organic seed investments

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Using organic seed for all acreage: 27% (20% in 2011)

Increased over last three years: 31%

Table 1. Over the last 3 years (2011-2013) have you decreased/increased the percentage of organic seed that you use in the following crop types?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Field crops</th>
<th>Forage crops</th>
<th>Cover crops/green manure</th>
<th>Across all crop types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Already at 100%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased the percentage</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the same percentage</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased the percentage</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 8. In general, do you have more problems with seed quality issues in non-treated conventional seed or organic seed?

- Problems are about the same for both non-treated conventional and organic seed
- Problems with organic seed are greater than with non-treated conventional seed
- Problems with non-treated conventional seed are greater than with organic seed
Figure 2. Funding for public organic plant breeding and other organic seed initiatives by year

*Values after 2014 are currently committed funds. Ultimately, funds would be expected to be greater.
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Little or no progress

- Most farmers still rely on non-organic
- Forage crop acreage
- Largest operations use relatively little
- Certifiers could use better guidance

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Figure 6. Average percent acreage planted to organic seed

![Bar chart showing average percent acreage planted to organic seed by responding farmers for different crop types: Vegetable Crops, Field Crops, Forage Crops, Cover Crops, and All Crops. The data is presented for the years 2009 and 2014.](www.stateoforganicseed.org)
Figure 7. Organic vegetable seed use by acreage

Average percent vegetable acres planted to organic seed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total vegetable acreage of respondents</th>
<th>0.01-10</th>
<th>11-50</th>
<th>51-80</th>
<th>81-160</th>
<th>161-480</th>
<th>&gt;480</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 9. Over the last three years has your certifier requested that you take greater steps to source organic seed?

2009
- Yes 61%
- No 39%

2014
- Yes 39.9%
- No 60.1%

Figure 10. Certifier requests compared to increased sourcing of organic seed

- Increased Organic Cover Crop Seed
  - Certifier did not request more steps: 27%
  - Certifier requested more steps: 35%

- Increased Organic Forage Crop Seed
  - Certifier did not request more steps: 19%
  - Certifier requested more steps: 33%

- Increased Organic Field Crop Seed
  - Certifier did not request more steps: 23%
  - Certifier requested more steps: 36%

- Increased Organic Vegetable Seed
  - Certifier did not request more steps: 40%
  - Certifier requested more steps: 55%
Ongoing challenges

- Inconsistent enforcement of organic seed regulation
- Data to track organic seed supply
- Funding and infrastructure constraints for research
- Insufficient capacity for organic seed production
- Burden of GMOs and restrictive IPRs
Recommendations

• Improve organic seed guidance
  o Measurable improvements
  o Extra measures: 5 sources + variety trials
  o Handler responsibilities

• Increase certifier and inspector trainings

• Establish a review of organic seed availability

• Support organic seed database

• Publish (quickly!) guidance on excluded methods

• Continue to address seed purity
Thank you

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