



Technical and Financial Assistance for Organic Producers

Organic producers use cultural, biological, and mechanical practices to maintain and improve on-farm resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. Such practices are environmentally beneficial for agricultural lands and certification can help producers access new customers and markets. However, implementing an organic system takes both time and effort. Producers may need to adopt new approaches to common agricultural challenges, such as managing pests and encouraging soil health, and must ensure their organic products do not come in contact with prohibited substances or are not commingled with non-organic products.

Several USDA agencies and external non-profit organizations provide technical assistance, educational resources, and financial assistance to support organic producers. This factsheet provides an overview of many of these programs, as well as links to additional information.

USDA Technical Assistance and Resources

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative—NRCS’ EQIP Organic Initiative provides technical and financial assistance to producers who plan and implement conservation practices that support environmental sustainability. Certified or transitioning organic producers are eligible to receive up to \$20,000 per fiscal year to use toward activities such as developing a conservation plan, improving soil quality, minimizing erosion, developing supportive livestock practices, improving irrigation efficiency, and enhancing cropping rotations. For more information on the EQIP Organic Initiative, please visit NRCS’ EQIP Organic Initiative page at <http://1.usa.gov/1TQrJhC>.

USDA NRCS Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program—USDA NRCS’ AMA program provides technical and financial assistance to help producers incorporate conservation practices into their farming operations through activities such as water management, water quality improvement, and erosion control. The AMA program is available to organic, transitioning,

and conventional producers in 16 states: CT, DE, HI, ME, MD, MA, NV, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WV, and WY. For more information on the AMA Program, please visit <http://1.usa.gov/1Qrlo0i>.

General USDA NRCS Technical Assistance—In addition to the two programs listed above, USDA NRCS provides free, general technical assistance to all agricultural producers, including certified organic and transitioning farmers. This includes direct technical assistance from NRCS conservationists, monthly webinars, and informational materials on organic practices. Organic and transitioning farmers are also eligible for all NRCS financial assistance programs. For more information on NRCS assistance programs, please visit <http://1.usa.gov/1Mphclb>. NRCS resources on organic agriculture are available at <http://1.usa.gov/1Dvg9yV>.

USDA National Agricultural Library (NAL) Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC)—NAL’s AFSIC houses resources on sustainable and alternative agricultural systems, crops, and livestock including information on organic agriculture. Librarians are available to help producers locate materials on all aspects of organic farming, including in the “Organic Roots” digital collection, an archive of historical USDA documents published before the common use of synthetic fertilizers and chemicals. For more information on AFSIC organic resources, please visit <http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/organic-production>.

USDA Economic Research Service (ERS)—USDA’s principal social science research agency, ERS tracks and reports on economic trends in agriculture, food, the environment, and rural development. As part of this service, ERS publishes specific information on the organic market including organic price premiums, consumer demand for organic food, the adoption of organic farming systems, and other economic characteristics of organic agriculture. To review ERS data and reports on organic agriculture, please visit <http://1.usa.gov/1jfmGz>.

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USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Market News— AMS' Market News includes reports on prices, volume, quality, and condition of agricultural products including organic products, providing critical market intelligence to producers. Users may access market information through a number of compiled reports including those tailored for organic agriculture, or may run custom reports through the Market News Portal. To access the Market News site, please visit <https://www.marketnews.usda.gov>.

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)— Administered by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the SARE program promotes research and education that advances agricultural innovation to promote profitability; stewardship of the land, air, and water; and quality of life for farmers, ranchers and their communities. SARE's learning center contains books, videos, and online courses on a variety of organic topics. SARE's primary function is to provide grants for research and education projects conducted by farmers, researchers, extension personnel and other qualified individuals and organizations. For more information on SARE educational resources and grants, please visit <http://www.sare.org/>.

Start2Farm—A joint program of the USDA NAL and American Farm Bureau Federation, Start2Farm is an online portal that helps connect beginning farmers to educational resources and assistance programs. The portal includes links to training, financing, technical assistance, and networking opportunities from federal and state agencies, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations. To access the portal, visit: <https://www.usda.gov/newfarmer>.

Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF2)—This program brings together resources and information from across USDA that promote and support local and regional food systems. The KYF2 website includes a list of USDA grant, loan, and support programs that can help farmers and others access local and regional food systems, as well as links to valuable tools and resources offered by USDA and their federal partners. To access the KYF2 site, visit <http://1.usa.gov/1U9XP87>.

External Technical Assistance and Resources

eOrganic—A USDA-sponsored organic agriculture community of practice that provides research-based articles, webinars, and videos on a wide range of organic topics. The site also includes an "Ask an Expert" feature that allows producers to submit specific questions related to organic agriculture to a community of experts. To explore the resources available on eOrganic, please visit <http://eorganic.info/>.

National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA) Program—NCAT's ATTRA program provides farmers and educators with information about sustainable agriculture via an extensive web site, hundreds of publications, and their own "Ask an Ag Expert" feature (toll-free-phone, web, or text). To explore the ATTRA site, please visit <https://attra.ncat.org>.

USDA Financial Assistance Programs

In addition to the previously described technical assistance programs, some of which also provide financial support, USDA has several programs that offer purely financial assistance to organic producers. A list of these programs with links to additional information include:

- **USDA Organic Certification Cost Share Programs—** administered by the NOP, AMA, and State departments of agriculture, these programs reimburse eligible operations for up to 75 percent of organic certification costs each fiscal year—<http://bit.ly/OrganicCostShareInfo>.
- **USDA NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program—** offers producers financial assistance of up to \$200,000 per fiscal year to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking or continuing conservation activities including many critical components of organic production, such as crop rotation and integrated pest management—<http://1.usa.gov/19Q9Ff2>.
- **USDA FSA Transition Incentives Program—** provides incentives for retired or retiring owners and operators to transition land enrolled in FSA's Conservation Reserve Program to a beginning farmer or rancher or a socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher for production using sustainable methods—<http://1.usa.gov/1HSsFup>.

Additional Information

For additional information on organic production and relevant assistance programs:

- See the *Organic Resource Guide* and *Is Organic an Option for Me?* Brochure available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo>.
- Find other fact sheets regarding organic regulations, certification, practices and more at www.ams.usda.gov
- Find a local USDA service center and speak to someone about available assistance by visiting <http://offices.usda.gov>.
- Visit www.USDA.gov/organic and <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop>.
- Become an Organic Insider and receive NOP email updates Sign up at <http://bit.ly/NOPOrganicInsider>
- Call the National Organic Program at (202) 720-3252



Organic Integrity from Farm to Table
Consumers Trust the Organic Label