

Let's Grow American Agriculture



**TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

Impact Report 2024

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AMERICAN-GROWN ORGANIC

Empowering U.S. Farmers to Grow Healthy Food for U.S. Markets

The USDA Transition to Organic Partnership Program invests in the capacity of American farmers to meet increasing domestic demand for certified organic food.

Americans want healthy organic food to feed their families. Today, 82% of American households purchase organic produce and demand for organic continues to rise. In fact, over the past two decades, demand consistently outpaced domestic production capacity. Imported organic ingredients and finished goods fill the gap, with the United States spending an estimated \$8.9 billion on organic imports in 2024, according to research by the Organic Trade Association in 2025.

The Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) focuses on opening new horizons for American organic producers. Announced in 2022, TOPP helps U.S. farmers meet the demands of U.S. consumers by providing essential support during the transition process required for certified organic production. **As a strategic investment in domestic organic agriculture, TOPP focuses on mentorship, technical assistance, community building, workforce and market development.** These efforts help farmers successfully navigate the path to organic certification and enhance domestic supply chains for American-grown organic food.

In six regions across the United States, TOPP established and works through local support networks for transitioning farmers and handlers. **In partnership with experienced organic farmers, farmers associations, educational institutions and community-based organizations, TOPP builds infrastructures to support increased domestic organic production for years to come.**

In its first phase, TOPP has already demonstrated significant impact.



Connected hundreds of transitioning producers with experienced organic mentors.



Delivered thousands of hours of direct technical assistance.



Organized nearly 1,500 events, reaching thousands of producers, handlers and agricultural professionals in every state and select U.S. territories.



Supported over 500 operations — from urban farms to large-scale operations — in successfully achieving organic certification.



Ridge to Reef Farm, U.S. Virgin Islands, TOPP Field Day Host.

TOPP is a voluntary program that addresses multiple national priorities simultaneously.

TOPP increases the availability of domestically grown organic food to make organic more accessible to all Americans, both in availability and price.

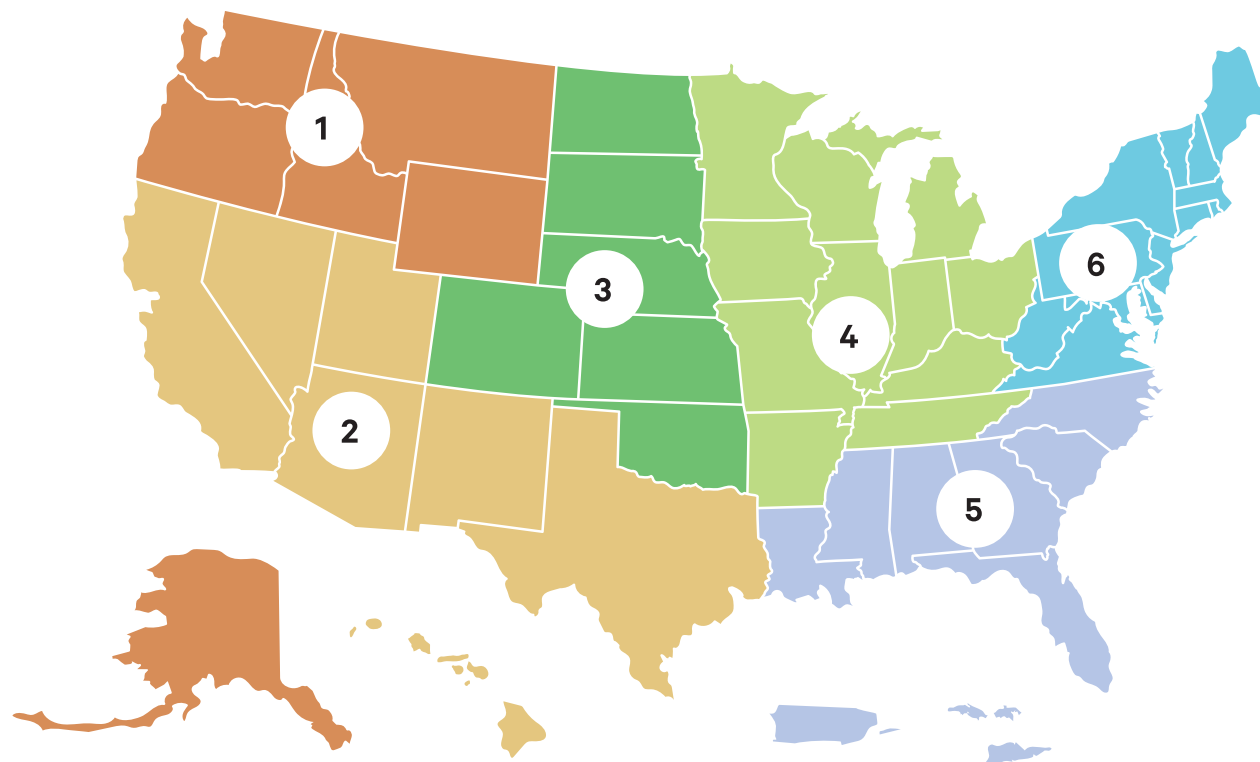
Organic agriculture also lowers exposure to harmful synthetic pesticides for rural communities and consumers, creating a healthier environment and food supply. TOPP particularly benefits young farmers, 40 years or younger, who are 20 times more likely to become USDA Organic certified than the national average.¹

TOPP's on-the-ground, farmer-to-farmer approach tackles a full spectrum of challenges. By building regional linkages of organic producers, service providers, and wholesale and retail markets, TOPP creates dynamic and durable networks that strengthen rural communities.

Through TOPP, American agricultural innovators commit to meeting the highest standards of organic production — standards that earn and uphold consumer trust. The program represents a significant investment in American agriculture, rural communities and a more secure domestic food supply — transforming challenges into opportunities for national growth and resilience while upholding the gold standard that consumers recognize in USDA Certified organic products.

1 - National Young Farmers Coalition 2022 National Survey / 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture.

We are six regions working together nationwide toward a common goal to grow America's network of organic producers.



Regional Lead & Region



1 Northwest



2 West/
Southwest



3 Plains



4 Midwest



5 Southeast



6 Northeast/
Mid-Atlantic



Scan to learn more or visit the website:
www.organictransition.org

THE USDA NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM

\$70 Billion in Sales and Growing

What is Organic?

Regulated by federal law, the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) develops and enforces consistent national standards for organically produced agricultural products sold in the United States. **This small USDA program is responsible for an industry valued at nearly \$70 billion.**

NOP accredits third-party organizations to certify that farms and businesses meet national organic standards. In this successful public-private partnership, these certifiers and the USDA work together to enforce the standards, ensuring a level playing field for producers and protecting consumer confidence in the integrity of the USDA Organic seal.

Organic farmers volunteer to become certified organic and meet rigorous growing standards in order to use the USDA Organic seal.



Bair-Trax Farm, Ohio, Grazing Innovations Pasture Walk.

Why Organic?

Farmers choose to adopt organic farming methods because organic certification is the gold standard for encouraging healthy soil, keeping water clean and reducing exposure to synthetic pesticides. In addition, organic farming protects wildlife, encourages biodiversity and supports animal welfare. Plus, consumers seek out organic packaged foods because they prohibit most artificial colors, flavors and preservatives. Farmers also recognize that domestic organic production creates jobs and that the USDA Organic seal elevates consumer trust for quality products and health.

**\$69.7
Billion**

3.4% Growth in 2023²

With 3.4% growth in 2023, USDA Organic sales have grown to a \$70 billion industry.

**Over
88%**

Consumers know organic.

88% of consumers are familiar with USDA Organic, the highest ranking of trust for certification labels.³

**Over
70%**

Younger generations are paying attention.

More than 70% of Millennials (ages 28-43) and Gen Z (ages 12-27) report that the USDA Organic seal matters and is an important consideration when choosing their food.³

**Nearly
60%**

There is value in organic.

Nearly 60% of consumers say that USDA Organic warrants higher prices. The more consumers know about organic, the more willing they are to pay higher costs.³

USDA Organic is the gold standard.

The USDA Organic seal stands for quality and integrity in sustainable agriculture and food production.



THE CHALLENGE

Meeting American Consumer Demand for Organic

Americans want to feed their families healthy, organic food — the U.S. market for organic products has seen double-digit market growth for decades. But domestic production hasn't kept pace. The United States has 17,321 farms with organic sales, coast to coast,⁴ but that number is decreasing rapidly. As a result, **the United States faces a critical disconnect between increasing consumer demand for organic products and the capacity to produce them domestically.**

This gap has created a significant dependence on imported organic goods. In 2024, the United States spent an estimated \$8.9 billion on organic imports⁵ and that trend isn't slowing down. Forty percent of organic industry professionals indicate that they expect to expand imports even further,⁶ including many grains, vegetables, fruits and other products that could be produced domestically. These are missed opportunities for American farmers and rural economies.

Despite significant market opportunity, farmers who consider transitioning all or a portion of their operations to organic encounter issues that threaten to keep them from pursuing or completing certification.

Transition challenges for farmers

- *A three-year transition period during which farmers must follow organic practices without receiving premium prices, creating a considerable financial gap.*
- *Organic System Plan (OSP) development.*
- *Lack of technical knowledge about organic methods and systems.*
- *Limited access to organic-specific infrastructure.*
- *Isolation from experienced organic producers.*

These intersecting challenges threaten agricultural resilience, rural economic development and consumer access to trusted organic products. **Fortunately, these are just the kinds of dilemmas TOPP is designed to address.**

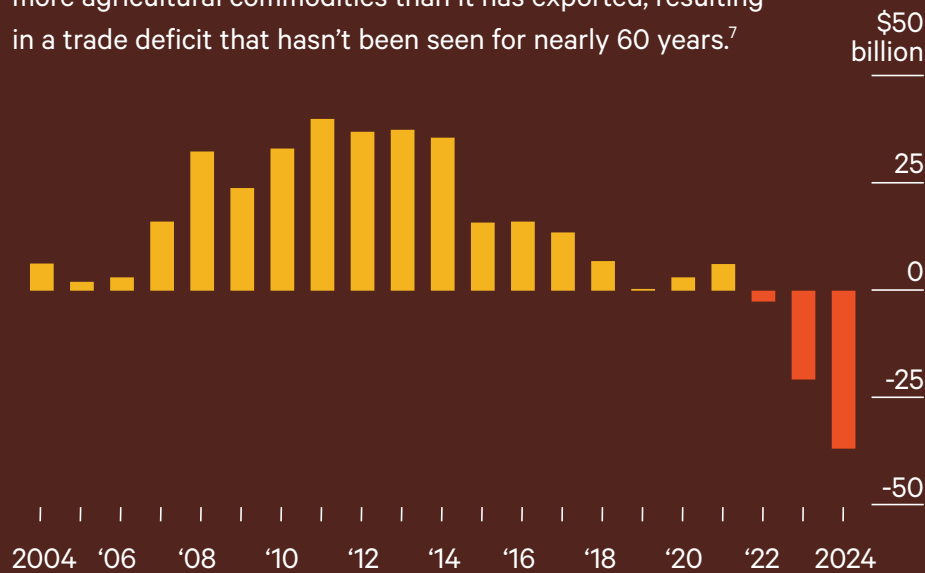
Through core programming focused on mentorship, technical assistance and educational resources, TOPP partners across the country create a pathway to certification, self-determination and market opportunities for farmers across the organic spectrum.

4 - USDA NASS, 2022 Census of Agriculture / 5 - Organic Trade Association presentation, February 2025 / 6 - Organic Trade Association's 2024 Organic Industry Survey.

Yichao Rui, Ph.D., conducting organic research trials at Rodale Institute. Photo Credit: Rodale Institute.

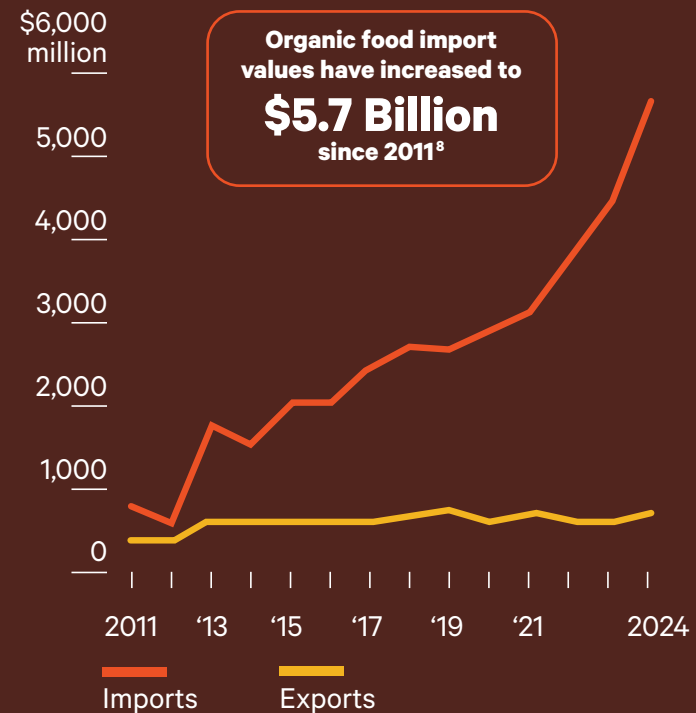
American Farmers Can Close the Gap

For three consecutive years, the United States has imported more agricultural commodities than it has exported, resulting in a trade deficit that hasn't been seen for nearly 60 years.⁷



7 - Source: "U.S. agricultural import values outpaced export values again in 2024," USDA Economic Research Service, April 1, 2025.

8 - Source: USDA Economic Research Service. Note: Data from USDA Foreign Agriculture Service, Global Agricultural Trade System, and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).



THE TOPP SOLUTION

A Comprehensive Approach

TOPP actively meets the needs of American farmers, processors and handlers and consumers through a coordinated approach spanning six regions across the United States. Rather than a one-size-fits-all solution, TOPP supports regionally-specific systems tailored to local needs and conditions.

At its core, TOPP connects new-to-organic producers with experienced mentors who provide practical guidance based on their real-world experience.

These mentor-mentee relationships prove invaluable for producers navigating organic certification. TOPP partners in every region support their efforts, providing technical assistance to address specific production challenges, from weed management to organic paperwork processes.

Through hundreds of field days, workshops and educational events, TOPP builds dynamic networks of producers and service providers (such as extension agents, crop advisors, organic certifiers) who share knowledge and hands-on support.

This program is particularly effective at reaching farmers who may have previously faced barriers to accessing support through a model of local partnership that creates site-specific resources appropriate to geography and scale.

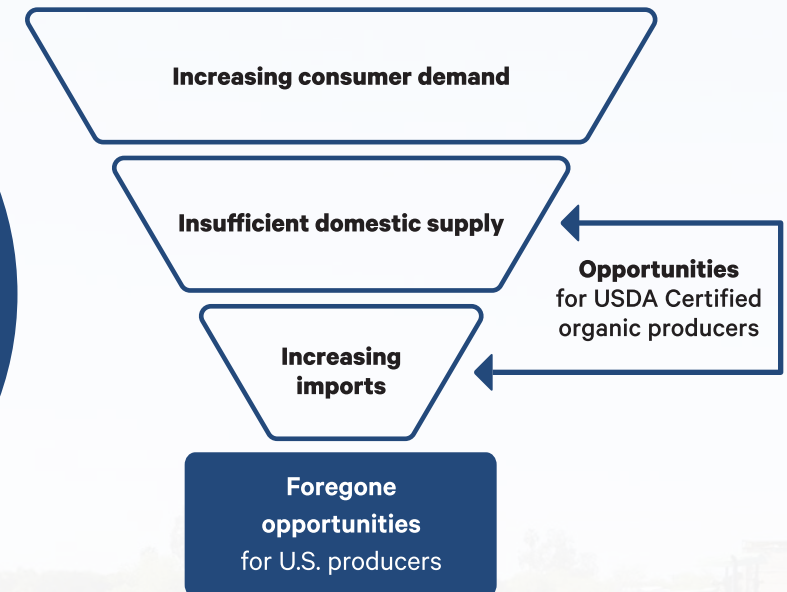
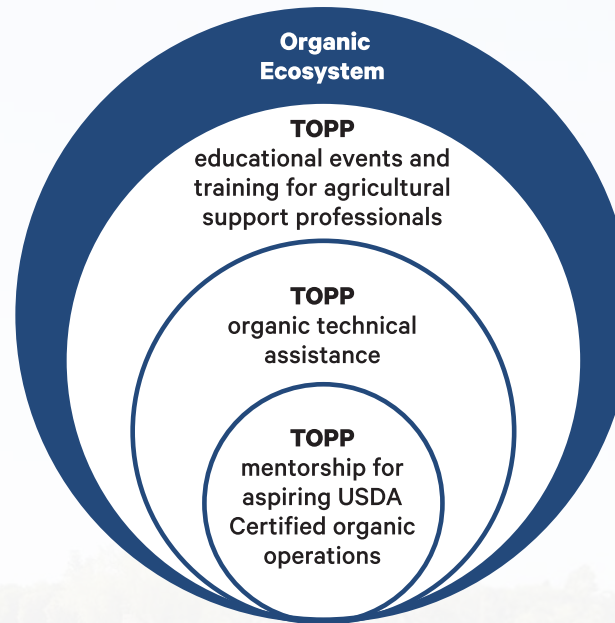
TOPP was built to strengthen and grow the larger organic ecosystem by creating a range of resources to suit producers' needs, time and learning styles. Producers can attend in-person events in their community such as field days, seminars, workshops and conferences. Once producers are ready to transition, TOPP makes technical assistance and mentorship readily available and free.

TOPP also strengthens the broader organic infrastructure by developing an agricultural workforce educating service providers to support organic production, and providing education and technical assistance to handlers and processors that play key roles in the organic supply chain.

By supporting producers through every stage of transition, TOPP increases the number of certified operations while creating resilient regional networks to serve upcoming generations of organic leaders.

Multi-Layered National Support

TOPP is widening USDA Organic engagement among industry professionals, U.S. producers and handlers, and the general public. From mentorship to public events, the program is a bridge to complementary and ongoing efforts within the organic industry.



U.S. UNMET MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

- Increasing consumer demand for organic
- Increasing imports to meet demand, bypassing American producers
- Aging American producers and farm economy challenges
- Insufficient number of farmers transitioning to USDA Certified organic

TOPP SUPPORT PROGRAMS

- Supporting organic transition by providing farmers, ranchers and handlers:
- Mentorship
 - Organic technical assistance
 - Educational events
 - Training for agricultural support professionals

CERTIFICATION GROWTH

- Growth in USDA Certified organic acres and number of operations

AMERICAN-GROWN ORGANIC BENEFITS

- Expanding opportunities for U.S. farmers and ranchers
- Strengthening rural economies
- Ensuring domestic food stability and consumer trust

NATIONAL
COLLABORATION

Partnerships in Action

Partnerships are the foundation of TOPP’s success, connecting stakeholders across the organic ecosystem to strengthen America’s organic sector.

Through strategic partnerships with lead organizations the Organic Trade Association (OTA) and Organic Farmers Association (OFA), TOPP creates a support network that empowers producers, facilitates markets and cultivates the next generation of organic leaders.



Montana Organic Association, Montana, National TOPP Session.

Farmer Resources	Market Development	Organic Careers	Data Collection
<p>TOPP makes critical knowledge accessible through complementary programs, including the National Organic Farmer Education Network calendar of learning opportunities, farmer-to-farmer Seeds of Success webinars and the Organic Research Content Hub. The OFA’s Farmer HelpLine provides personalized support for producers at all stages, answering questions and connecting farmers with guidance and peers across the country.</p>	<p>TOPP strengthens market connections through technical assistance workshops that help producers understand market dynamics and opportunities, while buyer-seller networking events facilitate connections between producers and potential buyers. Complementary handler education resources support processors in managing organic products effectively and transitioning their operations, addressing critical supply chain needs from field to consumer.</p>	<p>The Organic Career Network addresses workforce development gaps by connecting students with paid internships and professional development resources in farming, research, policy and certification. This program has received more than 1,000 applications from students at 190+ universities, creating structured pathways for emerging professionals to become leaders in the organic sector.</p>	<p>The ASU Swette Center For Sustainable Food Systems developed a sophisticated methodology to comprehensively measure TOPP’s nationwide influence. Their approach accounts for the complex ecosystem in which TOPP operates. To capture the full scope of impact, the Swette Center designed a robust process that includes quarterly reporting and annual cross-referencing with the USDA Organic Integrity Database, providing valuable insights into how TOPP expands organic agriculture across America.</p>

National Partnership Program Spotlight

TOPP national partners (right) deliver specialized, collaborative programs addressing key areas of need for organic producers and supply chain participants. These initiatives provide support in four critical areas: resource creation, market connections, workforce development, and data collection and reporting.



Farmer Resources

National Organic Farmer Education Network

Nationwide calendar of educational events connecting farmers with learning opportunities.

Seeds of Success Webinar Series

Virtual farmer-to-farmer networking sessions for sharing practical knowledge.

Farmer HelpLine

Direct support service answering questions about organic certification and production.

Organic Research Content Hub

Searchable platform of science-based resources for on-farm challenges.

Market Development

Market Development Technical Assistance

Workshops and tools helping producers navigate organic market requirements.

Supply/Demand Discovery Facilitation

Events connecting organic producers with potential buyers.

Handler Transition Training & Education

Resources for processors to effectively manage organic products.

Organic Careers

Organic Career Network

Connects students with paid internships and career pathways in organic agriculture.

Data Collection

Quarterly Reporting

Capturing TOPP's contributions to the larger organic ecosystem through reporting and storytelling.





2024 IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

TOPP is Growing the American Organic Ecosystem

TOPP is a catalyst for organic transition. As part of an ecosystem of activity, TOPP is widening USDA Organic engagement among industry professionals, U.S. producers and handlers, and the general public. From mentorship to public events, the program is a bridge to complementary and ongoing efforts within the organic industry. Through reporting and storytelling, partner organizations are capturing the program’s ability to increase the domestic USDA Certified organic supply. In many cases, successful transition can be attributed to the efforts of multiple people and organizations. TOPP is proud to grow American agriculture, contributing to new operations and acres USDA Certified organic in FY24.

A centralized quarterly reporting system tracks the impact of TOPP activities across six regions. Partners submit activity reports every three months, followed by thorough data quality reviews. This report presents TOPP data from Federal Fiscal Year 2024 (October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024).

ORGANIC ECOSYSTEM

TOPP is helping to expand American-grown organic, strengthening rural economies and ensuring domestic food stability.

165+
Total
Partners

3,863
New Operations
Certified*

260,479
New Acres
Certified*

**The total number of operations and acres certified, with a certification effective date between October 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024. This includes all operations and acres certified in FY24, with TOPP support and as part of the larger organic ecosystem.*

MENTORSHIPS

TOPP’s core service is mentorship for aspiring USDA Certified organic producers and handlers.

237
Mentors[†]

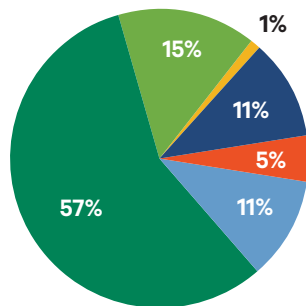
327
Mentees[†]

†Active at end of 2024 fiscal year.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & RESOURCES CREATED

TOPP offers technical support and resources to producers and handlers in their journey to USDA Organic certification.

2,225
Technical
Assistance
Engagements



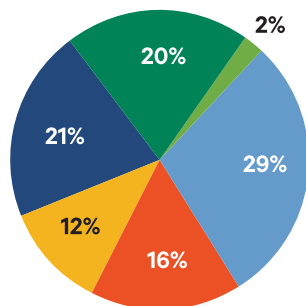
Resources Created

- 57% Presentations
- 15% Websites & Social Media
- 11% Webinars
- 5% Podcasts
- 1% Curriculum
- 11% Other

EVENTS

Hosting and attending events are key efforts to enhance technical assistance and community building for transitioning producers.

1,466
Events



TOPP Events by Type

- 20% Conference
- 2% Course
- 29% Field Day
- 16% Other
- 12% Webinar
- 21% Workshop

Publicly Accessible TOPP Resources

- TOPP offers an extensive collection of written, audio and video resources on the website.
- These resources expand assistance to operations that do not otherwise participate in TOPP programming and support.
- Resources can be filtered by subject (pest management, weed control, certification) or type of resource (audio, case studies, report, fact sheet).
- Resources are available for farmers, ranchers, processors, handlers and agricultural support professionals.



Scan the QR code for resources
or visit the website:

www.organictransition.org/resources



Over
20%

More than 20% of all TOPP mentor applicants were organic pioneers with 20+ years of USDA Certified organic production and/or handling experience.

ORGANIC PIONEER

George Siemon's Vision Paves Way for America's Agricultural Future

During the devastating farm crisis of the 1980s, a movement that would transform American agriculture took root in southwest Wisconsin when George Siemon and six fellow farmers founded what would become the dairy cooperative Organic Valley. From these humble beginnings emerged not just a business but a blueprint for how organic agriculture could sustain family farms while meeting growing consumer demand for healthy foods.

As Organic Valley's founding CEO, Siemon guided the cooperative to become North America's largest organic farming cooperative, eventually reaching \$1 billion in annual sales with more than 1,700 family farms across 36 states. **Today he's one of hundreds of TOPP mentors and technical assistance providers actively helping the next generation of growers become certified organic farmers.**

Today, TOPP builds upon Siemon's pioneering work by addressing a challenge he recognized decades ago: America's growing reliance on imported organic products despite having the land and farmers capable of meeting domestic demand.

As TOPP works to transition hundreds of thousands of acres to organic production, Siemon's vision of American farmers feeding American families with organic food continues to provide both inspiration and a practical roadmap.

George Siemon, founder of Organic Valley, Wisconsin.

ORGANIC MENTOR

Mihail Kennedy

Mihail Kennedy's B Bar Ranch has seen concrete benefits since switching to organic, like the return of natural predators that consume thousands of grasshoppers each month, reducing the need for — *and cost of* — chemical interventions. **Their focus on soil health, biodiversity and rotational grazing has boosted productivity while meeting market trends.**

As a mentor in the Northwest TOPP Program, Kennedy passes on what he's learned to help ranchers like Heather Bilden. She and her husband, who steward just under 2,000 acres in Montana, are beginning the transition to organic. Organic certification will allow them to find new markets by selling their organic calves to local organic beef operations.



B Bar Ranch, Montana, TOPP Mentor Mihail Kennedy.



FOUNDATIONAL SUPPORT

TOPP Mentors Help New Farmers Get Certified, Step by Step

When Christie Heartquist first considered organic certification for her Arizona ranch, she was worried about the paperwork. “Trying to build something from the ground up, it’s hard. You have to learn everything at once.” She wasn’t sure how to navigate the process.

But as part of TOPP’s mentoring program, she was paired with Sara Dolan, a deeply experienced farmer who is giving Heartquist the support and practical advice she needs to take her ranch across the organic finish line.

Heartquist and her husband started raising sheep, heritage pigs and beef cattle at Heartquist Hollow Family Farm in 2018, a project they started so their kids would know where their food comes from.

As their operation grew, the couple’s vision naturally expanded to include their community. Every weekend, they sell their products at four farmers markets, a fact that delights Heartquist. “To know that we’re feeding our community real food — food without any fillers, that was raised the right way — it’s an honor to be able to do that.”



Heartquist Hollow Family Farm, Arizona, TOPP Mentee Christie Heartquist and husband Scott Heartquist.



Blue Sky Organic Farm, Arizona, TOPP Mentor Sara Dolan and partner.

In 2021, they expanded their operation to include processing, and in early 2025, their facility became federally inspected, giving the Heartquists the ability to sell their product nationwide.

Over
49%

Over 49% of TOPP organic support requests identified paperwork, cost and/or minimal organic production knowledge as reasons for seeking assistance. TOPP mentorship bridges the gap for those interested in transitioning to USDA Certified organic.

But first, Heartquist is pursuing certification for the ranch, with Dolan's help. The two meet formally sometimes, but the most valuable thing to Heartquist is being able to reach out in the moment. "Knowing that I can pick up the phone any time and call her, and it won't be a big deal — that is so fantastic."

Red Prairie Farm, Oregon, TOPP Mentor Pryor Garnett.

TESTIMONIAL

"Through this (mentorship) program, our beginning farmer was able to work with an experienced orchardist who had extensive experience with organic tree management and knew the local markets well. We're excited for this fruitful connection!"

- Community Food & Agriculture Coalition, Montana.



Above: Field Day at Homestead Organics Farm, Montana.



TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE

Technical Assistance Helps Winegrower Access New Markets

On a 25-acre vineyard in Oregon's Willamette Valley, farmers Dan Rinke and Perry Heistuman huddle, discussing wine grape ripeness. **The two have known each other for a long time but their bond has grown through the Northwest TOPP mentorship program**, which compensates Rinke to give Heistuman crucial technical assistance as she navigates the three-year journey toward organic certification.

For Heistuman, certification is a necessity in today's market. "I just think it creates a better product. Being certified gives you that step up."

As a recent viticulture graduate, she's passionate about her work. But as a new grower, Heistuman needs specific advice on everything from microbe behavior to disease assessment to successfully make the switch to organic.



No Clos Radio Vineyard, Oregon, TOPP Mentor Dan Rinke (left) and TOPP Mentee Perry Heistuman (right).

50%

50% of the TOPP Northwest region's resources were created to support TOPP technical assistance efforts.



No Clos Radio Vineyard, Oregon.

On her own, Heistuman was overwhelmed by farming technicalities and the certification process. She needed someone with know-how and experience whom she could turn to with simple but pressing questions.

Rinke is the right match. For 17 years, he's been growing fruit and wine grapes in the region. He navigated his own certification process carefully, growing more attuned to the rhythms of nature as he brought his products to market. Now he has a formal way to pass on that knowledge to a new generation of organic growers.

With Rinke's expertise just a text away, Heistuman has an immediate, effective way to access the technical knowledge she needs to run a successful USDA Organic vineyard. **“Even yesterday, I could just text him,” she says. “He got back to me right away.”**



TESTIMONIAL

“Technical assistance has directly contributed to making organic farms more resilient as well as improving soil health—both with novel cover cropping research and outreach and species/variety information our team provides farmers.”

*- Oregon State University Center for
Small Farms & Community Food Systems*



Double J Jerseys, Oregon, Voles, Dogs and Raptors Field Day.
Photo Credit: Oregon State University.



Organic vegetables and fruit, Choctaw Fresh Produce.

GROWING FOR THE COMMUNITY

For Choctaw Fresh Produce, Abundance Is the Norm

Nestled among shortleaf pine, oak and sweet gum trees on a stretch of fertile ground in Central Mississippi, Choctaw Fresh Produce cultivates organic fruits and vegetables to nourish the community. **As the farm manager for Choctaw Fresh Produce and a TOPP Mentor, Daphne Snow oversees a network of four certified organic farms and the distribution of their produce to the 11,000 tribal members they serve.**

The tribe works to mitigate food insecurity and improve community health outcomes. To help students establish healthy eating preferences, Snow and her team run a farm-to-school program, making weekly produce deliveries to local schools and funding staff through the summer so they could preserve the harvest for kids to eat during the school year. For elders, they stock boxes with produce that aligns with traditional diets, including squash, turnips and blueberries.

78%

78% of TOPP Southeast region events took place in person, including farmer-to-farmer networking events.



Choctaw Fresh Produce, Mississippi, TOPP Mentor Tomika Bell.

Choctaw Fresh Produce also delivers farm-fresh, organic food to people with Type 2 diabetes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 38.4 million Americans had diabetes in 2021.⁹ Snow and the other farmers are fighting it with nutrient-dense produce.

Through the farm, Snow seeks to cultivate the next generation of growers by training them not only in organic agriculture but in the ways they can care for their community through the food they grow.

“I hope that by having a younger generation working with us, other young people will see this and know that it is a possible career choice. It can be very satisfying when you realize that you’re feeding people and being a good steward of the land.”

9 - CDC, National Diabetes Statistics Report, 05/15/24

Pennsylvania, farmer training. Photo Credit: Rodale Institute.

TESTIMONIAL

“TOPP has connected me with successful individuals in the organic sector. In a county with only one organic farmer, expanding my community with quality people willing to help me will be vital to successfully transitioning.”

- Daniel Kwiatkowski
Nebraska farmer and rancher





University of Wisconsin Arlington Agricultural Research Station, Wisconsin, training sessions for agricultural professionals.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Building the Organic Workforce: Critical Training and Resources Delivered

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Dr. Erin Silva is strengthening the organic workforce across the Midwest through targeted training and comprehensive resource development. As director of the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems and leader of the Organic Grain Resource and Information Network (OGRIN), Silva focuses on equipping not just farmers with essential knowledge but also the organic grain supply chain.

“Organic farming is knowledge intensive. To successfully earn certification, there are many new skills and techniques that must be learned, even by seasoned conventional farmers,” explains Silva.

“Before TOPP, there was a real dearth of resources to help provide this knowledge to farmers wanting to adopt organic practices.”

Through partnership with TOPP, Silva’s team has created a new “train the trainer” initiative, including the creation of a specialized organic transition specialist position and cultivating expertise among technical service providers. **This workforce development approach has particular impact in Wisconsin, which ranks second only to California in the number of organic farms nationwide.¹⁰**



10 - USDA, 2019 Certified Organic Survey Data Release 10/22/20

“With TOPP resources, we’ve built extension capacity to serve a unique but important sector of agriculture,” Silva notes. “Farmers have benefited from expanded learning opportunities and access to markets that wouldn’t have been possible otherwise.”

171
Resources

The TOPP Midwest region created 171 publicly accessible resources for producers, handlers, agricultural support professionals and the larger organic ecosystem.

The program’s newly developed online hub serves as a central repository of science-driven information, aggregating organic research, best practices and mapping resources specifically for Midwest agriculture professionals. Their comprehensive training includes winter conferences, field days, workshops and direct technical assistance.

“For several major organic commodities, we’re still importing the majority of raw products consumed domestically,” Silva emphasizes. “Organic represents a premium market opportunity for American farmers while creating vibrant rural communities. But capturing these benefits requires strong support structures through transition — *exactly what TOPP provides.*”

TESTIMONIAL

“Interning with the SE TOPP team... undoubtedly defined my career in sustainable agriculture.”

- Madeline Wise
Intern, Florida Organic Growers (FOG)



TOPP Mentee Travis Otto hosting a field day in September 2024 at his farm in Cherokee, Iowa, where he shared organic crop management tools and organic weed management insights with local farmers.

TOPP EVENTS

Field Day at Troyer Farms: Cultivating New Paths for East Coast Organics

In the rolling fields of Waterford, Pennsylvania, Zack Troyer is pioneering something increasingly rare — organic potato production on the East Coast.

A multi-generational farmer for Troyer Farms, he's leading the expansion of his family's farm to 1,500 acres of organic potatoes. Troyer Farms is also expanding into consumer sales with the launch of Folkland Foods, connecting sustainable farming directly to more American consumers.

“Organic potato farming is underdeveloped on the East Coast. Potato farmers in this part of the nation are like unicorns. There just aren't many of us left,” states Troyer.

At a TOPP-supported field day in August 2024, Troyer shared knowledge and insights with regional farmers, highlighting new market opportunities unique to organic potatoes, notably preseason guaranteed contracts.



Troyer Farms, Pennsylvania, TOPP Field Day Host.



“For us, organic potatoes are a better alternative than growing grain or forage,” Troyer noted. “Unlike grain that has price fluctuations and competes against imports, organic potatoes are more consistent. Going into the season, you know what the prices will be, allowing you to make a living, generate profit and reinvest in your farm.”

He adds, “As an American farmer, it’s hugely important for us to grow food that feeds Americans. We think people want to buy food closer to home, a few hours away instead of across the ocean. It doesn’t make sense to buy daily staples from half a world away.”

Troyer Farms demonstrates the market-building impact TOPP fosters across America’s agricultural landscape.



245
Events

In the TOPP Northeast region, there were 245 partner events such as on-farm field days.

Troyer Farms, Pennsylvania, potato processing facilities.



TESTIMONIAL

“We had over 50 registrants at the Oklahoma Organic Field Day! It was a great day full of learning and conversation. This is a huge increase in numbers from our event in Oklahoma last year.”

- Acres U.S.A.



TESTIMONIAL

“It was very interesting to learn how farmers can approach soil management from a biological perspective.”

- Farmer at Florida Organic Growers field day, McLean Family Farms, Florida.



McLean Family Farms, Florida, TOPP Field Day Host.

THE VALUE OF ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

Organic Certification Gives This Texas Farmer an Edge



Caleb Duty's grandfather owned a farm near the Texas city where he grew up. But Duty didn't develop a passion for farming until he helped with a fencing project when he was in high school. "I was outside in the sun and it was wonderful," he said. "I asked myself, 'How can I do this for a living?'"

He got that chance once he'd saved enough money to buy some cows, following a stint in the Marine Corps and another in the oilfields. Today, he manages 800 acres of farmland, including 38 acres of newly certified organic hay that he will sell to local dairy operations.

Over
22K
acres

The TOPP West/Southwest region supported the certification of at least 22,797 acres.



Duty Family Farm, Texas, Technical Assistance Recipient, Caleb Duty.

As a young person new to farming, Duty was drawn to organic certification because he saw it as a way to stand out in a place where he was surrounded by large, established farms. He also noticed that it gives growers instant credibility with buyers, who trust the USDA Organic label.

The certification process was daunting. “I have the drive and the initiative, but it’s like trying to cross the ocean. It’s very intimidating,” he said. “I wouldn’t be certified if it wasn’t for the program.”

Extension Agent Bob Whitney, who leads the TOPP program in Texas through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, said the program is a hub where new-to-organic farmers connect. “There’s a family atmosphere. We’re not competing against each other. A high tide raises all boats.”

Duty agrees with Bob Whitney. And he’s ready for his first certified crop this year. “It’s the right place, the right time and I got the right stuff to do it.”



Texas, TOPP Cotton Peanut Farm Tour.

TESTIMONIAL

“Food hubs are an invaluable part of the small-farm supply chain in the U.S. Now, with the new Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule from the National Organic Program, most food hubs must get certified. Coke Farms was excited to act as a mentor for seven food hubs in California in 2024 — helping each one achieve certification.”

- Lily Nugent

Food Safety & Compliance Manager, Coke Farms



Coke Farms, California, TOPP Mentor Lily Nugent.



HEROIC HEARTS

Military Veterans Dig Deep – and Grow

Sitting in a truck on his farm in Indiana, where he grows corn, soybeans and soft winter wheat, Alan Wilson reflected on life as a military veteran and organic farmer. “I was in Iraq twice and served in the army for 10 years. Watching things grow — being a part of nurturing and shepherding life — has a healing aspect to it that I had no idea about. It has been very rewarding to me.”

Wilson had already transitioned a 600-acre farm to organic production in Kansas before the family moved to Indiana, where he started all over again. **Wilson pursued USDA Organic certification — twice — because it made sense financially. But it’s clear that farming means more to him than making a living.**

With a fresh horticulture degree in hand, his family purchased 142 acres in Indiana, complete with woods, a winding creek and 80 acres of fertile soil. This season will be his fourth on the property and the first as certified organic.

Wilson was part of a cohort of farmers led by TOPP Mentor Ryan Erisman, a veteran and farmer in Wisconsin who produces high-quality pastured pork and grass-fed beef. Erisman helps veteran farmers shift their thinking. “If we are truly working with nature in organic systems, then we shouldn’t be fighting,” he said. “We should be facilitating productive relationships at all levels.”

He encourages deep conversation — and connection. **“There’s tremendous power in experiencing this in community. You may farm independently. You may work alone. But you aren’t alone,” Erisman said.** “That is a powerful thing for farmers and veterans to understand.”

Timber Creek Pastures, Indiana, TOPP Mentee.

Over
40%

In the TOPP Plains region,
a minimum of 40% of acres that
were certified received support.





TESTIMONIAL

“The big message for veteran farmers is that the rural life and agriculture is a place where they can heal. We just need to give them some of the tools to enable them to do that financially, through [TOPP] education, advocacy, outreach and networking.”

*- Jack Geiger, TOPP Mentor and farmer
Geiger Certified Organic Farm, Kansas*



Timber Creek Pastures, Indiana, TOPP Mentee Alan Wilson and his children.



Geiger Certified Organic Farm, Kansas, Dane Geiger.



Food Connects, Vermont, TOPP Mentor Joe Dickson (left).



Three River Farmers Alliance, Vermont, TOPP Mentor Joyce Ford (middle).

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Strengthening Organic Supply Chains: Vital Partnerships in New England

When the USDA's Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule took effect in early 2024, the goal was to protect integrity in the organic supply chain by strengthening oversight and improving farm-to-market traceability.

TOPP recognized that smaller, regional food hubs would need expert guidance to adapt to these changes and continue expanding access to locally grown organic products. In New England, Joe Dickson partnered with food hub leaders.

Drawing on 25 years of organic leadership, Dickson served as a mentor to spearhead an innovative group mentorship program that helped seven Vermont food hubs earn organic certification. Together, the hubs provide enhanced market connections for more than 70 farms representing more than 6,300 organic acres, delivering trusted organic products to schools, hospitals and retailers throughout the Northeast.

“The Strengthening Organic Enforcement rule made significant changes to certification requirements, creating an opportunity to further strengthen consumer trust in organic,” Dickson explains. “With TOPP’s

support, these food hubs are now even better able to serve organic farmers, distributors and consumers.”

Over
477

The TOPP Northeast region engaged with producers and handlers through more than 477 technical assistance efforts.

Dickson's deep experience proved invaluable as the hubs navigated the new regulatory landscape, helping them develop systems tailored to their operations. His collaborative approach created shared resources and peer support networks that transformed compliance into a competitive advantage.

The economic benefits extend far beyond Vermont. Dickson's approach now serves as a model for other regions, each working to strengthen America's organic infrastructure to meet consumer demand.

By investing in mentorship and technical assistance, TOPP builds supply chain capacity, creating robust markets that encourage more farmers to transition to organic production and helps satisfy increased consumer preference for organic in the United States.

TESTIMONIAL

Fifth-generation farmer Aaron Flansburg (right) cultivates 160 acres of organic or transitioning-to-organic crops in Washington state, including wheat, barley, lentils, chickpeas, canola and alfalfa. "I owe a debt to ... my ancestors on the farm of maintaining the ground, maintaining the soil, maintaining profitability and being able to pass the farm on to the next generations," Aaron said. He began experimenting with organic farming to manage market constraints, lower input costs and gain more control over his operation. Starting in 2020, he grew seed hemp and saw firsthand the economic benefits of going organic — his organic crop commanded nearly double the price of conventional.

- Aaron Flansburg, DMS L, Inc., Washington, TOPP Mentee.



TESTIMONIAL

"We're so pleased to have organic certification services available to our farm and to other kelp producers in Alaska. It's an important piece of supporting the nascent mariculture sector here."

- Evie Witten, Co-Founder and Principal,
ReGENERATION North, member Kachemak Kelp Hub

SECURING AMERICA'S ORGANIC FUTURE — TODAY

Support for TOPP is a Commitment to American Farmers, Consumers and Communities

The foundation that TOPP is building today will determine our ability to meet consumer demand with American-grown products for decades to come.

By continuing to build domestic capacity, the United States can ensure the economic, environmental and social benefits of the growing organic market.

Since national organic standards were implemented in 2002, organic retail sales have consistently climbed and, during certain periods, grown at twice the rate or more of overall food sales. As consumer demand for organic products continues to rise, American farmers who opt for organic can look forward to substantial — *and growing* — economic opportunities.

The TOPP program offers a practical path forward for conventional farmers transitioning to organic, existing organic producers expanding their operations and consumers seeking products they trust.

The impact of the program extends far beyond individual farms. Regional networks of support across the country are creating lasting infrastructure that strengthens rural communities and boosts agricultural resilience. Continuing to build these vibrant networks is a long-term investment in

America's capacity to feed itself with high-quality products that consumers trust — and that meet their rising expectations for safe, affordable, healthy food.

By supporting U.S. farmers who want to produce these products, TOPP is establishing a solid structure that will root organics firmly in American soil.



Neely-Kinyon Farm, Iowa State University, Iowa, TOPP Field Day Host.

TOPP addresses critical national priorities that benefit all Americans



Economic Growth

Every dollar invested in domestic organic production generates additional positive economic activity through job creation, tax revenue and reduced trade deficits.



Rural Prosperity

Creating profitable opportunities in agriculture strengthens rural economies, creates jobs and establishes meaningful livelihoods that attract younger generations.



Meeting Market Demand

Helping farmers voluntarily transition to organic in response to consumer preferences enables American producers to capture premium market opportunities.



Food Security

Reducing dependence on imports strengthens national food security and reduces vulnerability to global disruptions.



Healthy Food

Organic farmers provide the best medicine by producing foods that don't contain most artificial preservatives, colors or flavors and are free of synthetic pesticides. Organic meat and dairy is raised without both antibiotics and hormones.



Consumer Trust

USDA Organic certification creates transparency and provides consistency that consumers can trust, regardless of where they shop.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, WHO HELP MAKE ALL OF OUR WORK POSSIBLE.

National • Accredited Certifiers Association • ASU Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems • First Nations Development Institute • IFOAM North America • International Organic Inspectors Association • The Lola Hampton-Frank Pinder Center for Agroecology • National Organic Coalition • National Young Farmers Coalition • Organic Agronomy Training Service • Organic Farmers Association • Organic Farming Research Foundation • Organic Trade Association • Rodale Institute • **Cross Regional** • Black Farmers Index • Intertribal Agricultural Council • National Center for Appropriate Technology • Powell-Palm Pro-Ag Services • **West/Southwest** • Agri-cultura Cooperative Network • Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association • Berkeley Food Institute • California Certified Organic Farmers • California Polytechnic State University Grimm Center for Organic Production • Chispas Farm • Community Alliance with Family Farmers • Development of Regenerative Yields Cooperative • Ecological Farming Association • Farmshare Austin • Hawai'i Farmers Union Foundation • Holley Family Farms • La Semilla Center • Latino Farm Conference • MA'O Organic Farms • People 1st Global Food and Land Reclamation Foundation • Regenerate New Mexico Conference • Red Acre Center • Southern Family Farmers and Food Systems Conference • Texas A&M AgriLife Extension • Texas Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers Conference • Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association • University of California Agriculture and Natural Resource Organic Agriculture Institute • University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program • University of Arizona Cooperative Extension • University of Hawai'i & College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resilience Research and Extension • University of Nevada, Reno-Desert Farming Initiative • University of Texas Rio Grande Valley • Utah State University • Utah State University Student Organic Farm • **Plains** • Acres U.S.A. • Center for Rural Affairs • Colorado Department of Agriculture • Foundation for Agricultural and Rural Resources Management and Sustainability • Grain Place Foundation • Kansas Black Farmers Association • Mad Agriculture • Midwest Organic Producers • Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society • Ogallala Commons • Organic Crop Improvement Association-Nebraska • Organic Crop Improvement Association • South Dakota Specialty Producers Association • South Dakota State University • Think Regeneration • University of Nebraska-Lincoln • **Northwest** • Abundant Montana • Alaska Food Policy Council • Central Wyoming College • Culinary Breeding Network • Elderberry Wisdom Farm • Farm Connect Montana High Desert Food and Farming Alliance • Plaza de Nuestra Comunidad • Leading Edge Consulting • Mad Agriculture • Montana Department of Agriculture • Montana Organic Association • Northwest Agriculture Business Center • Northwest Center for Alternative to Pesticides • Organic Seed Alliance • Oregon Organic Coalition • Oregon Organic Hazelnut Collective • Oregon State University Center for Resilient Agriculture & Food Systems • Oregon Tilth Certified Organic • Oxbow Farm and Conservation Center • Regeneration North • Salmon Valley Stewardship • Snake River Seed Cooperative • Tilth Alliance • University of Idaho • Viva Farms • **Southeast** • Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network • Carolina Farm Stewardship Association • Center for Environmental Farming Systems • Central Carolina Community College • Clemson University-Organic Certification Program • Florida Organic Growers • Georgia Organic Peanut Association • Georgia Organics • Global Growers Network • Louisiana Central • Louisiana State University Agricultural Center and Grow Louisiana • Market Umbrella • Mississippi State University Extension • North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University • North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension • Organic Growers School • Oxford College at Emory University • Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA • Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network • Sprout NOLA • University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences • University of Puerto Rico • Virgin Islands Farmers Alliance • **Midwest** • Advancing Rural Prosperity, Inc. • BIPOC Farm and Food Network • Black Women in Agriculture • Crosshatch Center for Art and Ecology • Earth Dance Farm School • Farm Research Cooperative • Farmers Rising • Food Works • Grand Traverse Conservation District • Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship • Iowa Farmers Union • Iowa Organic Association • Iowa State University, Organic Agriculture Program • Keep Growing Detroit • Knowledge Quest and Green Leaf Learning Farm • Lincoln University • Marbleseed • Michigan Food and Farming Systems • Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance • Michigan State University, Extension • Michigan State University, Organic Farmer Training Program • Midwest Organic Services Association • Minnesota Department of Agriculture • Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture • Missouri Organic Association • Natural Soybean and Grain Alliance • OCIA Chapter 1 of Iowa • OFARM • Ohio Ecological Farming and Food Association • Organic Association of Kentucky • Organic Seed Alliance • Plant it You • Practical Farmers of Iowa • Tennessee Crop Improvement Association • Tennessee Local Food • Tennessee Organic Growers Association • Tennessee State University • The Land Connection • University of Arkansas, Center for Arkansas Farms and Food • University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff • University of Missouri, Southwest Research, Extension and Education Center • University of Wisconsin-Madison, OGRAIN • Urban Farmers Coalition • Washtenaw County Conservation District • **Northeast** • American Farmland Trust • Cheshire County Conservation District • Closter Farm • East End Food Institute • Foodshed Alliance • Future Harvest • Glynwood Center • Granite State Graziers • Grow Pittsburgh • Kearsarge Food Hub • KES, 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Vermont Vegetables and Berry Growers Association • Vermont Way Foods • Virginia Association for Biological Farming • Vital Communities • West Virginia Farmers Market Association • West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition • West Virginia University Research Corporation



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