

# Organic Research in the Next Farm Bill

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow

Chairwoman, Committee on

Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

United States Senate

Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boozman

Ranking Member, Committee on

Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Glenn "GT" Thompson

Chairman, Committee on Agriculture

United States House of Representatives

Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Scott

Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture

United States House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman, Ranking Member Scott, Members of both Committees,

We write to express our gratitude for your efforts to safeguard funding for organic agriculture research but more so to convey our concern that the 2024 House Mark and Senate Section-by-Section allocations still fall well short of addressing the critical needs of the organic agriculture sector.

Organic agriculture systems offer significant ecological benefits that extend far beyond the farm. By relying on the vibrancy of natural systems, organic agriculture enhances the local ecosystem through practices like cover cropping, crop-livestock integration, and the use of perennials. These practices, thanks to public research investments, have been scientifically proven to increase soil organic matter, improve soil structure, and promote robust microbial communities, all of which are essential for long-term soil fertility and productivity. Relatedly, organic agriculture significantly contributes to both climate mitigation and adaptation, by both sequestering more persistent carbon in the soil compared to conventional methods, and reducing the reliance on fossil-fuel based inputs often manufactured internationally.

Organic agriculture is not merely an ecologically-sound method of farming; it represents a crucial lifeline for rural economies. Recent data shows that organic farming generates significant economic benefits, including higher farmgate revenues, job creation, and the sustained vitality of local businesses—far exceeding those of conventional farming. The growth potential of the organic sector significantly outpaces that of the general food market, highlighting robust consumer demand for organic products. However, the current funding proposals risk stifling this potential and jeopardizing the competitive edge of the United States in global organic markets.

We are particularly concerned that the focus of this Farm Bill might solidify the status quo in agricultural research: a persistent underfunding of organic agriculture topics. Although organic food sales make up 6% of the total market, and over 15% of the produce market, USDA-REE agencies invest less than 2% of their budget into organic topics. This approach is incompatible with the future of agriculture, which requires a holistic and systems-based management perspective that aligns with organic practices.

In light of the demonstrated positive economic impact, increasing consumer demand for organic products, and environmental benefits, we respectfully urge including funding and policy provisions set by HR 2720, the Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act, and S2317, the Organic Science and Research Investment Act. Specifically, we request:

- 1) An annual increase of \$10 million for the budget for the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI);
- 2) Congressional authorization of the Researching the Transition to Organic Program at \$10 million a year, increasing to \$20 million in the third year of the Farm Bill;
- 3) Both an increased budget for the Organic Markets and Data Initiative as well as a report on the economic impact of organic farming on communities;
- 4) The creation of an Organic Research Coordinator position within the Office of the Chief Scientist that will catalog, organize, and communicate the ongoing and future plans for organic research at the USDA;
- 5) Include climate change and the facilitation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge subject to Free and Prior Informed Consent from the tribal communities that possess this knowledge to legislative priorities for OREI.

Investing in organic agriculture research is essential for the economic prosperity of rural communities and the health of consumers across the country. We urge you to consider our request for increased funding and make organic agriculture research a national priority.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing issue. We look forward to your positive response and are eager to support actions that further strengthen organic agriculture research.

Sincerely,

Organic Farming Research Foundation

**Organizational:**

Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA)

California Climate and Agriculture Network

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association

Catskill Mountainkeeper

Coalition for Organic and Regenerative Agriculture

Farm Aid

Friends of the Earth

Grimm Family Center for Organic Production and Research at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

Iowa Organic Association

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

Marbleseed

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute

Michigan Food and Farming Systems

Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance

National Organic Coalition

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)

Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

New Entry Sustainable Farming Project

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut (NOFA-CT)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts (NOFA-MA)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire (NOFA-NH)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Rhode Island (NOFA-RI)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)

Northeast Organic Farming Association-Interstate Council

Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association

Organic Farmers Association

Organic Seed Alliance

Organic Trade Association

Pasa Sustainable Agriculture

Regenerative Organic Alliance

The Cornucopia Institute

Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA)

Wild Farm Alliance

**Farm/Business:**

April Joy Farm  
Backyard Beauty  
Betteravia Farms, LLC  
BF Farm Enterprises LLC  
Blue Skye Farms Organics  
Braga Fresh  
Bundle Sticks Farm and Education Center  
Cedar Circle Farm and Education Center, Inc.  
Clif Bar (Mondelez)  
Downriver Orchard  
Eco2Mix, Inc.  
Elderberry Wisdom Farm  
Geiger Grain  
Hanover Co-op Food Stores of VT & NH  
Happy Hollow Farm  
Healthy Way Market  
Jóia Food Farm  
Kamut International  
Kanalani Ohana Farm  
Michigan Organic Fruit  
Narrative Food  
National Co+op Grocers  
Natural Grocers  
Nature's Path Organic Foods  
Oregon Tilth  
Organic Valley | CROPP Cooperative  
Organically Grown Company  
PCO - Pennsylvania Certified Organic  
Piedmont Farming Co  
Potomac Vegetable Farms Inc.  
Pure Strategies  
Quality Organic Certifiers (QCS)  
Rancho Arco Iris  
Seventh Generation  
Spottswoode Winery, Inc.  
Steere Ranch, LLC.  
Stonyfield  
The Farmer and The Cook  
The Synergy Company  
True Organic Products, Inc.  
Twin parks organic farm

Vizcaya Museum and Gardens  
Whole Foods Market  
Wolf & Associates, Inc.