

March 24, 2025

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

RE: Status of Funding for the Organic Market Development Program and Transition to Organic Partnership Program - Farmers and Organizations

Secretary Rollins:

We write to request the status of funds for the Organic Market Development Grants (OMDG) and Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP). These funds are essential for U.S. farmers and businesses to meet the growing demand for organic products. America imports *billions* of dollars of organic crops like corn, rice, soybeans, avocados, blueberries, strawberries, and squash that are also grown here at home. TOPP and OMD represent an America-first approach by investing in American farmers to bolster the domestic supply of organic food.

TOPP connects transitioning and organic producers with mentorship, technical assistance and resources. OMDG partners with farmers, manufacturers, and organizations to expand domestic infrastructure for processing, storage, transport, distribution, and educates consumers about USDA certified organic. Both programs were developed by the USDA to strengthen the market for domestically grown organic goods and support producers seeking organic certification.

Through USDA certified organic, farmers and businesses have the opportunity to serve U.S. consumers who choose healthy organic products grown and manufactured in alignment with their values, many of which are reflected in the MAHA movement. The beauty of organic certification is that these farmers and businesses opt into *voluntary* regulations that meet this consumer demand, as opposed to compulsory regulations. Many of these farmers and businesses are “split operations” growing or manufacturing both organic and conventional crops and products. Organic certification offers farmers access to different markets to spread the risk of farming across sectors.

Since TOPP launched in late 2022, six regional leads, two national partners, and more than 165 state and local organizations have successfully provided robust farmer-to-farmer mentoring services, technical assistance, and organic workforce development. In the federal fiscal year 2024 (FY24), this included more than 1,466 educational events reaching over 65,400 people. More than 2,225 individuals received technical assistance, and 327 farmer-to-farmer mentoring pairs were active. TOPP is proud to support the growth of American agriculture, contributing to the 3,863 operations and 260,479 acres certified USDA Organic. The top five crops served by the program include corn, grains, mixed vegetables, tree fruit, and berries, while the top five types of livestock are poultry for eggs, dairy livestock, beef cattle, sheep, and goats. Even greater impact occurred in previous fiscal years, with more planned for the future.

With OMDG grantees spanning Montana, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Iowa and many other states, this program is uniquely positioned to address key challenges in the organic supply chain. Combining tens of millions of dollars of matching business investment with USDA funding this grant program invests in infrastructure development, market diversification, and value-added opportunities to strengthen the competitiveness of U.S. organic products domestically and establish fair competition against foreign manufacturers and producers.

The impact of OMDG funding is essential to build the necessary infrastructure to support increased domestic organic production. To date, the program has contracted with 107 entities in 37 states. 68% of the funding was awarded to small businesses- mostly in rural communities with more than 2/3s of those going directly to farmers and ranchers. Over 40% of the projects are for expansion of organic grains and feedstuffs, a crop that U.S. net imports for organic despite being a net exporter in conventional agricultural. The signers on this letter represent projects impacting over 1000 American farmers. Many farmers and businesses that received OMDG contracts have already begun building new processing lines or renovating on-farm infrastructure. They funded projects out of pocket and are awaiting clarity on reimbursements and future expenditures. USDA certified organic is a successful public-private partnership. Through continued USDA investment in the National Organic Program, Transition to Organic Partnership Program, and Organic Market Development Grants we can continue to jointly build and grow a successful domestic organic market that serves American producers and the American public.

We welcome the opportunity to share more on the importance of these programs for farmers and businesses in our states. In the interim, we respectfully request an update on the status of the contracted funds and provide industry support for their continued completion to realize their necessary impact on growing our domestic production.

Sincerely,

Transition to Organic Partnership Program Leads

Kelly Damewood, CEO - CCOF

Ramkrishnan Balasubramanian, Chief Executive Officer - Florida Organic Growers (FOG)

Cori Skolaski, Executive Director - MOSA Certified Organic

Chris Schreiner, CEO - Oregon Tilth

Brandon Hill, Program Director - Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA)

Kate Mendenhall, Executive Director - Organic Farmers Association

Tom Chapman, Co-CEO - Organic Trade Association

Joe Dickson, Interim Executive Director - PCO Certified Organic

Farmers in support

Stephanie Alexandre, Owner - Alexandre Family Farm

Heather Jean Donahue, Owner - Balfour Farm LLC

Sherilyn Ortman, Co-owner - Berrybrook Organics LLC

Noah Simon, COO - Breadtree Farms

Benina Montes, Managing Partner - Burroughs Family Orchards

Abianne Falla, Founder - CatSpring Yaupon

Chad Heard, Chad Heard - Chad Heard Farms/Georgia Organic Peanut Association, Inc.

Christopher Barnett, Owner/Operator - Christopher Organic Farm

Casey Bailey, Owner - Clear Lake Organic Farm

Nathaniel Powell-Palm, Farmer - Cold Springs Organics, LLC

Seth Kroeck, Owner - Crystal Spring Community Farm, LLC.

Jack Geiger, Owner/Operator - Geiger Grain

Luke Gianforte, Farmer - Gianforte farm llc

Tiffany Gregory, Owner - Great Lakes Garlic Farm

Whilden Hughes, Farmer - Hughes farms

Halee and John Wepking, President and Co-owner - Meadowlark Organics

Emma Jagoz, owner + farmer - Moon Valley Farm

Todd Hardie, Todd D. Hardie - Northern Grain Growers Collaborative, Inc.

Ryan Erisman, Owner/Operator - Odyssey Farm, LLC

Emma de Long, co-owner - PA Flax Project

Angela Jackson, Organic Ag Transition Advisor Contractor - South Dakota Specialty Producers Association

Alexia Akbay, Chief Executive Officer - Symbrosia Inc

Chris Johnson, Owner - Tuscarora Grain Co. LLC.

Kevin c sullivan, Owner - Two River mushroom

Jonny de Jong, Co-Owner - Venture Milk, LLC

Justin W. Rich, President - Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association

Organizations in support

Taylor Henry, Owner - Acres USA

Curtis Davepnot, Manager - Admiral Maltings

Alan Gurganus, Executive Director - Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network

George Nathan Brown, Owner - Amaltheia Dairy, LLC

Heather Dilworth, Owner - Big Sandy Organics

Roland McReynolds, Executive Director - Carolina Farm Stewardship Association

Jennifer Lapidus, Founder/Principal/GM - Carolina Ground, L3C

Bobbi Howard, Director, Farm and Community program - Center for Rural Affairs

Ethan Page, Faculty, Local Food and Agriculture - Central Wyoming College

Michael G. Berry, Regulatory Programs Assistant Manager - Clemson University
Department of Plant Industry

Wondirad Gebru, Director, Division of Plant Industry - Colorado Department of Agriculture

Lisa Boldt, Executive Director - Colorado Grain Chain

Mary Ellis, BFR Program Director - Farm Connect Montana

Stephanie Blumhagen, Executive Director - FARRMS

Perri Campis, Executive Director - Georgia Organic Peanut Association, Inc.

Alexis Chase, Executive Director - Georgia Organics

Jay Vetter, Executive Director - Grain Place Foundation

Matthew Grieshop, Director - Grimm Family Center for Organic Production and Research at
Cal Poly

Margaret A. Smith, Ph.D., Iowa Organic Association Board President - Iowa Organic
Association

Tom Buller, Executive Director - Kansas Rural Center

Craig Stevenson, CEO - Lundberg Family Farms

Sarah Alexander, Executive Director - Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

Stephen McKaskle, CEO/ Founder - McKaskle Family Farm LLC. Braggadocio Mo

Cassie Dahl, Organic Agriculture Specialist - Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Helene Murray, MISA Executive Director - Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture
(MISA)

Christine E. H. Coker, Research and Extension Professor of Urban Horticulture -
Mississippi State University

Tracey Dion, Chair - Montana Organic Association

Abby Youngblood, Executive Director - National Organic Coalition

Kelly Cartwright, Executive Director - Natural Soybean and Grain Allian

Andy Pressman, Director of Agriculture - NCAT

M. Ray McKinnie, Associate Dean and Extension Administrator - North Carolina A&T State
University - Cooperative Extension

Steven A. Lommel, Director of NCARS & Associate Dean for Research - North Carolina
State University

Marcie Craig, Executive Director - Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York

Helen Rortvedt, Deputy Director of Programs and Operations - Northeast Organic Farming
Association of Vermont

Mallory Krieger, National Program Director - OATS | The Organic Agronomy Training Service

Oren Holle, President - OFARM
Khara Strum, Executive Director - Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Amy Wong, Coalition Director - Oregon Organic Coalition
Brian M. Buxton, Treasurer - Oregon Organic Hazelnut Collective
Brooke Gentile, Executive Director - Organic Association of Kentucky
Gordon Merrick, Senior Policy & Programs Manager - Organic Farming Research Foundation
Laurajean Lewis, Executive Director - Organic Seed Alliance
Daniel Parson, Farmer/Educator - Oxford College Farm
Andrew Yokom, Executive Director - Puget Sound Food Hub Cooperative
Nicole Atchison, CEO - PURIS
Evie Witten, Principal - Regeneration North LLC
Randi Harris, Owner - RKH Gin LLC dba Woolam Gin
Nancy A. Smith, Grantwriter/consultant - Rock Front Ranch LLC
Jeff Tkach, CEO - Rodale Institute
Joby Rumiano, Administration Manager - Rumiano Cheese Company
Casey O'Leary, Co-founder - Snake River Seed Cooperative
Joseph Button, Vice President - Straus Family Creamery
Jacquelyn Evers, Executive Director - The Land Connection
Olga Moriarty, Executive Director - The Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership
Theodore Radovich, Professor and Principal Investigator - UH Mānoa Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program
Danielle Treadwell, Associate Professor - University of Florida Department of Horticultural Sciences
Kyle Nagy, Superintendent & Orchard Operations Manager - University of Idaho - Sandpoint Organic Agriculture Center
Mary Rogers, Associate Professor - University of Minnesota
Jill Moe, Director, Desert Farming Initiative - University of Nevada, Reno
Jennifer Reeve, Professor of Organic and Sustainable Agriculture - Utah State University
Dr. Javier A. Garces, Professor & Program Chair - Valencia College
Allison Hope, Executive Director - Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association
Summer Roberts, Executive Director - Washtenaw County Conservation District