



# Sector Council Annual Reports

## 2023

A photograph of an organic farm landscape, showing rows of crops in a field with mountains in the background under a cloudy sky. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter.

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# Dairy Council Annual Report | 2023

The Organic Trade Association's **Dairy Council** gives members in the dairy industry an organized and ongoing forum for discussing organic-specific dairy issues, challenges, and opportunities. It seeks to work together to grow the organic industry and to utilize the Organic Trade Association member community system for networking and problem solving. The Dairy Council brings together farmers, handlers, processors, and manufacturers to discuss ideas around promotion, research, and education; to vocalize the sector's benefits; to identify opportunities for continuous improvements and advance solutions; and to advocate for dairy policy.

## Council Highlights | 2023



- The Council focused on the Organic Dairy Market Assistance Program by communicating about existing program benefits and executing a strategy to ensure total program commitments are offered to farmers.



- The Council disseminated and gathered input on regulatory topics such as the Federal Milk Marketing Order, dairy labeling, and organic rulemaking (OLPS & SOE).
- The Council elevated and contributed to supply chain enhancement options.

## Council Priorities | 2024

- The Council will advocate for dairy and supply chain elements in the Farm Bill.
- Continued education on program and regulatory affairs.
- Elevating the positive attributes of organic dairy.

## Why participate?



OTA's Dairy Council is the dedicated space where dairy farmers, dairy brands and those in the dairy supply chain can collaborate and share both short-term and long-term opportunities and challenges present in the sector.

## COUNCIL MEMBERS



Fagundes  
Bros. Dairy



Karlin Strategic  
Consulting, LLC

100% GRASSFED  
MAPLE HILL.  
= organic =



The Dairy Council is led by Chair Adam Warthesen (Organic Valley) and Vice Chair Blake Alexandre (Alexandre Family Farm). If you are interested in joining the Council, please contact Danielle Cote ([DCote@ota.com](mailto:DCote@ota.com)).

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# Dietary Supplements Council Annual Report | 2023

Founded in 2016, the **Dietary Supplements Council** aims to provide a forum for discussing issues, challenges, and opportunities related to the organic dietary supplement industry and to develop and grow the sector by raising awareness and increasing access to educational materials and resources.

## Council Highlights | 2023



- Education around Strengthening Organic Enforcement, tracking USDA's view of Dietary Supplements as food and therefore covered by NOP, residue testing for specialty crops, and grower group lawsuits.
- Preserving industry collaboration and sharing, monitoring and disseminating information related to the suspension of certifiers/products in India and restoration of certified organic options originating in the country, and providing continuing support to the industry on pathways to offering certified organic dietary supplements.

## Council Priorities | 2024



- Monitoring USDA enforcement of NOP violations by dietary supplements, implementation of Strengthening Organic Enforcement, and FDA guidance for the Foreign Supplier Verification Programs.
- Education and support that will grow the certified organic dietary supplements category and the Council.

## Why participate?



The dietary supplements council brings camaraderie, support and industry/government intelligence vital to the category and to its future success. This support includes monitoring USDA enforcement of NOP violations by dietary supplements, implementation of Strengthening Organic Enforcement, and FDA guidance for the Foreign Supplier Verification Programs.

## COUNCIL MEMBERS



Richard D. Siegel  
Law Offices

Sheila Linderman  
Consulting



The Dietary Supplements Council is led by Jeffrey Brams (Garden of Life) as Chair and Genevieve Albers (Traditional Medicinals) as Vice Chair. If you are interested in joining the Council, please contact Danielle Cote (DCote@ota.com).

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# Diversity Council Annual Report | 2023

Formed in 2021, the Organic Trade Association (OTA)'s **Diversity Council** aims to make a conscious effort to ensure that our successes within the organic movement promote diversity rather than perpetuate social inequalities. Members work to develop practices and processes that embed justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) into the fabric of OTA and the organic movement.

## Council Highlights | 2023



Two participants of OTA's Diversity and Entrepreneurship Program achieved organic certification and one participant converted into a paid OTA membership. The Council recruited an additional nine Diversity and Entrepreneurship Program participants.

The Council provided letters of support for two program participants for federal grants that got funded.



The Council funded three coalition partners to attend the OATS Organic Field Crop Course training, provided 38 scholarships to Organic Week and other major industry events, and two internships

## Council Priorities | 2024



- Organic certification education
- Training for coalition partners
- Expansion of Diversity and Entrepreneurship program
- Building partnerships that diversify access to capital

## COUNCIL MEMBERS



*Kellee James (Argus Media) serves as the Chair of the Diversity Council, alongside Carla Balen (Organically Grown Company) as Vice Chair. Stephanie Jerger, OTA's Vice President of Administration, is the staff liaison to lead its work. To join the Diversity Council, please contact Stephanie (sjerger@ota.com).*



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# Farmers Advisory Council Annual Report | 2023



The Organic Trade Association's **Farmer's Advisory Council (FAC)** provides the Organic Trade Association Board of Directors and staff with input from small- and medium-sized organic farmers, ranchers, and growers on matters pertinent to advancing organic agriculture, with a specific focus on OTA's policy agenda. Established in 2013, FAC was designed to formalize and improve communication between OTA and organic producers. Through open dialogue, FAC gives organic farmers a voice to directly influence OTA's policy and enables OTA to better represent the diversity of organic producers in its policy and advocacy.

OTA's Farmers Advisory Council is one of the largest coalitions of organic farmers and organic farming organizations in the United States. It represents nearly 9,500 organic livestock, poultry, grain, and specialty crop producers.

## Council Highlights | 2023



- Developing organic Farm Bill priorities
- Connecting farmer-members to various USDA support programs

## Council Priorities | 2024

- Campaign to support organic in the Farm Bill through Continuous Improvement and Organic Market Development bills
- Host USDA to give an update on the Organic Transition Initiative
- Inform communications to NOSB and USDA championing organic research priorities
- Study ways to inform youth programs about organic

## Why participate?

OTA's FAC helps connect members to other organic producers across the country. Farming can be a lonely occupation and it helps to hear that others face similar challenges and overcome the common challenges. FAC also provides timely and important information on USDA programs and activities. Finally, FAC provides a vehicle to educate OTA staff and board on issues and concerns facing organic farmers.

## COUNCIL MEMBERS



**CROPP COOPERATIVE™**  
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FAC is co-chaired by Doug Crabtree (Vilicus Farms) and Michael Menes (True Organic Products). FAC is supported by OTA's Legislative and Farm Policy Associate Laura Holm. If you are interested in joining FAC, please reach out to Laura (lholm@ota.com).

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# Fiber Council Annual Report | 2023

The Organic Trade Association (OTA)'s **Fiber Council** successfully works to strengthen and grow the organic fiber and textiles sector. Formed in 2015, the Council aims to create a cohesive voice across fiber categories within the trade association, advance the promotion and protection of the organic brand, and grow the organic fiber sector overall. The Fiber Council includes representatives from companies across the supply chain, from farmers to manufacturers, certifiers, researchers, retailers, and more. Members also include representatives from the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) and Textile Exchange, two leading organizations focusing on organic textiles, allowing continuous interaction and dialogue between the organizations.

## Council Highlights | 2023



- The Council hosted a very well received webinar titled Follow the Thread: From Farm to Finished Product.
- The Council engaged with research fellows to learn how their efforts might impact the organic fiber sector, including the Consensus Building institute, the University of Wisconsin and The Organic Center.

## Council Priorities | 2024



- The Council is developing an organic claim webinar to help the public understand the different certification opportunities and to recognize greenwashing.
- The Council is also focused on ensuring the smooth import of organic textiles from other regions.
- The Council is working to support the Organic Market Development Grants that have been given to those working in the organic fiber sector.

## Why participate?



Being a Fiber Council member gives those in the fiber sector an opportunity to engage with the larger community of organic fiber producers and certifiers. The sector can come together with common issues and concerns and because of that we can affect greater movements and changes in our sector.

## COUNCIL MEMBERS



The Fiber Council is led by Elizabeth Tigan (Oregon Tilth) as Chair, George Mathew (Avocado Green Brands) as Vice Chair, and Aida Bustamante (Control Union Certifications North America LLC) as Secretary. If you are interested in joining the Council, please contact Danielle Cote (DCote@ota.com).



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# Grain, Pulse and Oilseed Council Annual Report | 2023

The Organic Trade Association (OTA)'s **Grain, Pulse and Oilseed Council** is made up of member companies with a role in the organic grain, pulse and oilseed space covering the entire supply chain from growers to processors to manufacturers. Council members are committed to ensuring the resilience and profitability of organic grain, pulse, and oilseed production in the United States. The Council was first established in 2015 in response to concerns about organic grain shortages, both for food and animal feed, which had forced companies to import large amounts of organic grain and limited new product development. Within the Council, members work together to identify and overcome barriers to domestic organic grain acreage growth by understanding key challenges and providing recommendations for pre-competitive supply chain solutions.

## Council Highlights | 2023



- Meeting attendance up 17% from 2022
- Membership up 33% from 2022
- Member round table discussions on:
  - USDA Organic Transition Initiative
  - Organic Opportunity Communications Toolkit



- Facilitated expert briefings on:
  - Regenerative Agriculture Program
  - Organic Grain Market Overview
  - SOE Implementation (several updates)
  - Organic Agronomy Training Service

## Council Priorities | 2024



- Engagement and representation among the Grains Council
- Promoting organic as a solution to climate change
- Sharing and/or developing data resources for business decision-making and supply chain transparency
- Incentivizing and removing barriers to transition to organic production
- Promoting the distinct value proposition of 'organic'

## Why participate?



- Community, connection, and education
- Discover and unlock opportunities that otherwise wouldn't have existed
- Ensure members of the grains sector are in the flow of relevant industry, policy, and regulatory information
- Access to thought leaders, subject matter experts and policymakers
- Gain a macro view on issues that matter to the sector
- Get real-time access to data and resources

## COUNCIL MEMBERS



The Grain, Pulse and Oilseed Council is led by Edward Fish (Bay State Milling Company) as Chair, Tobi Strohan (Sunrise Food International) as Vice Chair and Matt Nidlinger (Consolidated Grain & Barge, Co.) as Secretary. If you are interested in joining the Council, please contact Danielle Cote (DCote@ota.com).



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# Produce Council Annual Report | 2023

The Organic Trade Association's **Produce Council** is a community of diverse stakeholders across the organic produce value chain that convenes on issues of importance to the organic produce sector. Founded in 2020, the Council amplifies the needs of the produce community within the Organic Trade Association and serves as a venue for shared learning and advancing outcomes to support a thriving and resilient organic produce sector.

## Council Highlights | 2023



- In 2023 the Council focused on Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) implementation and National Organic Standards Board meeting preparation.
- The Council also dove into the topic of plastic usage when it looked as though plastic mulch could be removed from the National List.

## Council Priorities | 2024



- The Council will remain focused on SOE implementation for the first part of the year.
- The Council is also forming a plastics task force to talk about plastic usage in produce and where the industry is going with plastics.

## Why participate?



The Council provides valuable insights from others in the fresh produce industry and provides a space to collaborate on similar issues and concerns experienced throughout the produce sector. Having a trusted small group of people to be able bounce ideas off and ask questions is one of the most valuable benefits of participating in the Council.

## COUNCIL MEMBERS



The Produce Council is led by John McKeon (Taylor Farms) as Chair, Mike Dill (Organically Grown Company) as Vice Chair, and Emily Musgrave (Driscoll's, Inc.) as Secretary. If you are interested in joining the Council, please contact Danielle Cote (DCote@ota.com).



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# Sustainability Council Annual Report | 2023

OTA's Sustainable Food Trade Action (SFTA) Council joined forces with two OTA Task Force groups to form the new **OTA Sustainability Council** in 2023, representing 95 companies. The Sustainability Council serves as a hub for all member stakeholders engaged in sustainability management strategies. The Council meets quarterly with additional opportunities to connect and collaborate throughout the year.

## Council Highlights | 2023

Over four meetings in 2023, the Sustainability Council used the Organic Wheel of Sustainability as a framework for discussing true cost accounting of organic.



- February 21, 2023 – Good for Planet
- April 11, 2023 – Good for People & Animals
- July 11, 2023 – Good for Business
- October 10, 2023 – Report out of collective council member achievements and metrics

The Council identified council member initiatives and collected data points to enhance clear and consistent messaging around organic and sustainability. The Organically Grown Company's Organic is the Answer campaign was shared as an example of how Council members can utilize OTA's Communications Toolkit to communicate the benefits of organic to their audiences.

## Council Priorities | 2024

Continue exploring the organic value proposition regarding sustainability. The scheduled slate of topics and speakers includes:

- Q1 - True Cost Accounting - Earth Economics
- Q2 - ESG Language - Good Company
- Q3 - Packaging - TBD
- Q4 - Carbon Sequestration - TOC and others

## Why participate?



The shared values, objectives and challenges that council members face and discussing how we are all thinking about or actively tackling these challenges is of great benefit to me. Great ideas and accomplishments are shared, and common goals are explored from various angles, all of which requires an engaged group.

## COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Sustainability Council is led by Joseph Brinkley (Bonterra Organic Estates) as Chair, John Foster (Wolf & Associates: The Organic Specialists) as Vice Chair, and Beth-ann Roth (RK Invest Law) as Secretary. If you are interested in joining the Council, please contact Danielle Cote (DCote@ota.com).



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# Wine Council Annual Report | 2023

The newly formed **Wine Council** fills a current gap in services provided to existing members when it comes to the adult beverage industry, specifically the wine sector. The Council serves as a focused space and group that can address many of the issues facing organic wine growers and brands in the organic and made with organic grapes category for wines.

## Council Highlights | 2023



- The Council launched! 2023 was its inception year with its inaugural meeting taking place in December 2023.
- The Council worked on its plans and agenda items for the coming year (2024), which will focus on equivalency issues, NOSB petitions for a number of items, packaging and labeling concerns.
- Started discussions on SO2 use for organic wine and parity with EU guidelines.

## Council Priorities | 2024



- Education, equivalency issues with exports, labeling barriers from TTB
- We are prioritizing, in 2024, materials and methods that could be more aligned in equivalency agreements, our domestic challenges around SO2 amounts and materials allowed, and packaging concerns.
- EU-US Organic Equivalency Arrangement

## Council Highlights | 2023

The Wine Council provides perspective on other producers' challenges and solidarity for advocacy for organic wine specific issues. The Council provides a dedicated time and space to speak with and hear from industry colleagues facing similar challenges. The council provides an opportunity to work together on strategies and tactics to overcome industry challenges and gives the organic wine industry a voice in helping make positive change to organic winegrowing in the US.

## COUNCIL MEMBERS



The Wine Council is led by Joseph Brinkley (Bonterra Organic Estates) as Chair, Cain Thompson (O'Neill Vintners & Distillers) as Vice Chair, and Eliza Frey (Frey Vineyards) as Secretary. If you are interested in joining the Council, please contact Danielle Cote (DCote@ota.com).

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