

Organic is good for the U.S. economy



GROWTH

The \$52-plus billion-a-year organic industry is a bright spot in the U.S. farm economy.

U.S. organic sales have grown substantially from \$1 billion in 1990, when the organic law was signed, to \$8.6 billion in 2002 when the USDA seal was introduced, and now to over \$52 billion in 2018. U.S. organic food sales continue to grow at a rate more than double the growth rate of the overall U.S. food market, and now accounts for nearly 6% of all food sales.¹



FARM HEALTH

Organic farms provide opportunities to make farming economically viable. The number of organic farms grew by 39%, while the total number of farms in the U.S. shrank by 3% between 2012 and 2017. During that same time period, organic farm income nearly doubled while the income of all U.S. farms remained stagnant. Furthermore, the average value of products sold from organic farms is double the average value sold from all U.S. farms. Younger farmers gravitate to organic—the average age of organic farmers is six years younger than that of the national average of all farmers.²



JOBS

Organic farms, suppliers, and handlers are creating jobs across the country by opening, expanding, and retooling handling, manufacturing, and processing facilities. Over 50% of organic businesses with more than five employees reported an increase of full-time employment during 2018, and **over 60% continue to forecast full-time employment growth in 2019.**³



RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES

Organic hotspots kick-start rural economies—counties with high levels of organic agricultural activity whose neighboring counties also have a high level of organic activity—**boost median household incomes by an average of \$2,000, and reduce poverty levels by an average of 1.3 percentage points.** 225 counties across the U.S. are identified as organic hotspots.⁴



SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Organic production has always required practices that advance sustainability in agriculture like crop rotation, cover cropping, building soil health, increasing biodiversity, and reducing nutrient pollution. The prohibition of the most toxic agricultural chemicals in organic farming not only benefits the environment, but also reduces farm worker exposure and improves occupational health.⁵

1 The Organic Trade Association. *2019 Organic Industry Survey*.

2 USDA National Agricultural Statistic Service. *Census of Agriculture: 2012 and 2017*.

3 The Organic Trade Association. *2019 Organic Industry Survey*.

4 Jaenicke, Edward C. (Penn State Agricultural Economist). 2016. *U.S. Organic Hotspots and Their Benefit to Local Economies*.

5 The Organic Center. 2018. *Organic Agriculture: Reducing Occupational Pesticide Exposure in Farmers and Farmworkers*.

ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION
Bold Steps to
PROMOTE and PROTECT
ORGANIC

FOCUS
ON SOLUTIONS

CONTINUOUS
IMPROVEMENT

EMBRACE
INNOVATION

PLAN FOR
THE FUTURE

Organic is a choice

ELECTIVE STANDARD



Bottom line, **organic is a voluntary regulatory program** for producers and handlers who choose to meet a strict federal standard and market their products under the USDA Organic seal. The organic program provides uniform standards and enforcement for those who choose to participate. The market rewards businesses that opt in.



MARKET-BASED LABEL

Competition and choice are the bedrocks of the entire American economy. Consumers drive demand in the marketplace, and the U.S. food and agriculture industries continues to evolve. American farmers and consumers should be able to decide which foods they want to grow and buy. The result is valued-added agriculture that consumers desire. **Organic options are now offered in 75% of all categories on supermarket shelves.**⁶



CONSUMER DRIVEN

The USDA Organic label is highly trusted by over 75% of families nationwide.⁷ This standard is valued and transparent in a sea of sometimes confusing labeling claims. U.S. families respond by increasing their purchases of organic every year. In fact, over **82% of households across the U.S. now purchase some organic products.**⁸

Organic relies on a strong and responsive USDA organic program



Federal spending on organic, including the annual \$14 million for the National Organic Program, produces **big returns from a small investment.** A healthy market for organic products requires a clear market distinction backed by a level playing field and a trusted, verified, and enforced claim. This burgeoning industry requires critical support from the National Organic Program for oversight and uniform and robust standards.



ACCOUNTABILITY & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Organic standards are not advancing. **The failure of government to keep pace with the market and industry is harming and fragmenting the market.** Inconsistent standards are becoming the norm.

Continuous improvement has been a bedrock principle of organic for more than two decades. USDA must collaborate with accredited certifiers to advance the outcomes on farms, ranches, and facilities certified to the USDA National Organic Program.

Congress should work with industry to repair the public-private partnership and advance organic standards.

6 SPINS. *Consumer Insights Powered by IRI Shopper Network for Year Ending 12/28/2014, UPC Coded Items Only.*

7 The Organic Trade Association. *U.S. Families' Organic Attitudes and Beliefs 2016 Tracking Study.*

8 Nielsen. 2016. *UPC Scan Data of 100,000 Households.*