



The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C., 20515
The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., 20515

RE: Continuing Resolution, Farm Bill Extension and Organic

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman, and Ranking Member Scott:

Thank you for your deep dedication to U.S. agriculture producers and the companies that supply Americans and people around the world with high quality food. We know the pressure that Congress is under to meet the challenge of an expiration of the Farm Bill at the end of the Fiscal Year. The Organic Trade Association (OTA) is concerned that with the Farm Bill expiring on October 1, there will be a gap in funding for programs important to the organic trade. Given that the most recent draft of the Continuing Resolution does not include a farm bill extension, key organic programs are slated to be orphaned. We’d like to share specific concerns and strongly encourage your actions to ensure that these programs are continued so that the important work that they facilitate is not disrupted.

OTA is the largest membership-based business association for organic agriculture and products in North America - representing \$69 billion in sales in the United States. Through direct membership and its Farmer’s Advisory Council, it is the leading voice for organic trade in the United States representing over 600 businesses and 10,000 farms across all 50 states.

A disruption in funding for the voluntary and producer focused programs for Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP), the Organic Data Initiative (ODI), Organic Certification Trade and Tracking (OCCT), and the end of authority for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Program (OREI) for any length of time, would be detrimental to organic producers, the trade, and the rural economies in which we operate.

OCCSP lacks permanent baseline funding. OCCSP aids farmers in obtaining or renewing their organic certification, up to 75% or \$750 dollars per certification scope. This assists smaller and mid-size operations with costs, which have risen with increased verification requirements and fraud prevention that were implemented in 2024. Without this program, organic farmers will see their costs rise.

ODI also lacks baseline funding. It is a multi-agency organic initiative that collects information vital to maintaining stable markets, creating risk management tools, and assisting in negotiating equivalency agreements with foreign governments. Congress has historically directed the USDA to improve organic reporting, and removing this funding would move organic data collection in the opposite direction of Congressional intent. In addition, without timely access to this data, current organic farmers and those looking to transition to capture market premiums are put at a disadvantage when making decisions about farm investments or planting.

OCTT is an essential pillar of USDA's fraud prevention activities related to organic. The data collected is foundational to the recently implemented Strengthening Organic Enforcement (SOE) rule to ensure the integrity of imported goods to the United States market and make certain consumers are receiving bona fide organic goods. SOE went into effect on March 19th, 2024, and ongoing technological updates to the database are critical and necessary. A failure to maintain that system would put trade in organic certification and oversight in perilous risk.

And finally, while OREI has mandatory funding, authority ends after 2024, potentially disrupting the next grant cycle without reauthorization.

We recognize you collectively face difficult decisions as you attempt to provide some certainty to the farming community for the remainder of this year as well as the upcoming calendar year. We ask that you consider finding the funding necessary to continue the operations of these programs at USDA. Doing so will enable our members to continue creating economic opportunities for producers in rural areas, contributing to environmental improvement, market diversification, and ensuring domestic agricultural resilience.

Sincerely,



Matthew Dillon
Co-CEO
Organic Trade Association



Tom Chapman
Co-CEO
Organic Trade Association