

# 2019

A Year In Review  
and A Look Ahead

# WE'RE THE ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION



We are a connected community of innovators and pioneers working to shape the future for organic food and farming. Together, with our members, we are focused on solutions.



## WE ARE COMMITTED TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN ORGANIC

### Transparency and accountability

A focal point of 2019 was laying the groundwork to repair the public-private partnership that encompasses the USDA Organic program so that organic can continue to advance and meet consumer expectations. We advocate for continuous improvement and accountability in organic standards, and are working with Congress on 2020 legislation that will keep standards development in pace with the changing market and evolving consumer.

### Oversight and enforcement

As a direct result of our efforts in the 2018 Farm Bill to strengthen oversight and enforcement of the organic industry in the U.S. and abroad to root out and prevent fraud, the National Organic Program will release a proposed rule on Strengthening Organic Enforcement and Oversight in 2020 to reinforce organic regulations in ways that boost the integrity of the global organic market. The rulemaking will be the largest update to the organic regulations since 2002.

### Organic Fraud Prevention Solutions

In a major step by the organic industry to fight against fraud in the global organic system, we launched our groundbreaking Organic Fraud Prevention Solutions program. Over 50 organic companies are pre-enrolled. Three fraud-fighting training courses, produced in partnership with Michigan State University and USDA, begin in 2020 for organic businesses, accredited certifiers and organic inspectors.



## WE DEFEND ORGANIC STANDARDS AND THE INTEGRITY OF ORGANIC

### Animal welfare

We continue the fight to advance organic animal welfare standards in a legal battle of major significance to all organic farmers, businesses and consumers. The issue still before the court is USDA's repeated refusal to act on a thoroughly vetted Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices final rule that would improve livestock living conditions and care, including requiring access to the outdoors. The trade association was granted standing to move forward with the case in 2019, and filed a persuasive motion for summary judgment. A decision in our favor means the organic sector can continue to advance, and that consumers can continue to trust in the USDA Organic seal.

### Origin of Livestock

Origin of Livestock standards have vexed the organic industry and dairy farmers for over a decade. It is one of many updates to the organic standards recommended by the National Organic Standards Board that have never seen the light of day. So we took our case directly to Congress in 2019, and legislators took the unprecedented step of inserting language to fix this issue into the federal budget bill. We expect to secure a final rule on the Origin of Organic Livestock in 2020 that would put an end to this devastating economic disadvantage.

### Organic flavors

Organic standards now require the use of organic flavors thanks to a petition we submitted to help grow their availability



and use. We took this proactive step to push the needle in the direction of continuous improvement by requiring the use of organic flavors when they are available in the quality, quantity and form needed in certified organic products. We also published a practical guide to complying with the new requirements as a resource for businesses.

## WE ADVOCATE FOR ORGANIC ON CAPITOL HILL



### Organic Week

More than 200 participants joined us to discuss innovative strategies, and take steps to advance policy and private sector solutions as part of our signature Organic Week D.C. events. 2019 marked the first-ever Influencer Program where eight widely followed social media influencers chronicled their experiences at our policy conference and in Hill meetings with their hundreds of thousands of followers. In 2020, we partner with Food Tank for their first-ever summit dedicated to the Future of Organic.



### Congressional hearings

When lawmakers want to learn about organic, we know that nothing beats hearing directly from organic farmers on the challenges and opportunities they face. Following an initial Congressional inquiry on the effectiveness of the National Organic Program, we helped organize a follow-up panel of diverse organic farmers to testify in front of the House agriculture

subcommittee. We worked closely with members of Congress and those testifying to reinforce the need for robust government support of organic farming and stringent enforcement of organic standards.

### Farmers Advisory Council Fly-In

We brought organic farmers, growers, and ranchers to D.C. to meet with new and incumbent members of Congress, to familiarize freshmen lawmakers with organic, and to discuss Farm Bill implementation. The diverse group included dairy farmers, grain and specialty crop growers, and egg and livestock producers. Participants met with 48 Members of Congress, including 11 members of the House Agriculture Committee and all four chairmen and ranking members or their staff of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees.



## WE FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS WITH VOLUNTEERS AND VISIONARIES

### Member Communities

It is our privilege to represent over 9,500 organic businesses across 50 states. Our growing number of task forces, working groups, and sector councils advance solutions across the wide spectrum of our members' business interests. We have six active Sector Councils-- Dairy, Dietary Supplements, Fiber, Grains, Retailers, and Farmers Advisory --with over 120 participating companies. These communities are vibrant and resourceful.

### Board of Directors



Each year our members turn out in record numbers to choose their Board leadership in the trade association's democratic election process. Every member company regardless of size gets

one vote. In 2019, members voted to add two elected seats to diversify the Board representation. This increases the Board from 15 to 17 members. The top four vote winners will be seated in the 2020 upcoming election.

### Organic leaders

We are fortunate to have many committed and impactful individuals as members of the trade association. Every year we honor the visionaries, leaders and heroes who are working to make our world a better place. In 2019, we recognized three



outstanding individuals for their passion and dedication to growing organic with integrity. Honorees were Israel Morales Sr. (right), JV Farms Organic with the Organic Farmer of the Year Award; Lynn Coody (center), Organic Agsystems Consulting, with the Growing the Organic Community Award; and Nate Powell- Palm (left), Cold Spring Organics, with the Rising Star Award.

Nate went on to testify as a witness the hearing held by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture on Economic Opportunities for Farmers. He spoke about maintaining the integrity of the Organic seal, organic's positive role in limiting the effects of climate change on farmers, and the impact of the withdrawal of the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices rule to the organic industry.

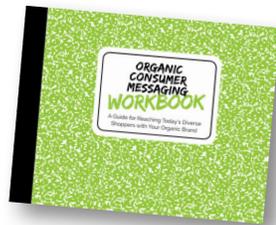


## WE TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANIC SECTOR

Where there's a will, there's a way. In 2019, the organic community took action to ensure the future of the organic sector. More than 70 organic companies contributed to GRO Organic (Generate Results and Opportunity for Organic), a major collective effort to advance organic food and farming led by the Organic Trade Association. Together, we have invested \$1.5 million to advance projects that focus on key actions:

### A consumer messaging workbook to reach today's diverse shoppers—

We made the biggest investment in consumer research that organic has ever seen to uncover what drives a consumer to choose organic and what messages penetrate deeper than others. We surveyed a group of 3,020 people balanced by age, gender, race/ethnicity, education and income. The results reveal who is most likely to purchase organic products, and what messages motivate



them. Organic brands looking for guidance on how to best reach their target shoppers can use our interactive workbook, available in early 2020, to develop their strategy.



### A national campaign to reduce consumer confusion about organic—

In partnership with Organic Voices, a digital ad campaign creatively reinforces the enormous number of chemicals used in conventional food, personal care and textile production, and emphasizes that all of these are prohibited under the USDA Organic seal. The key consumer message is "Skip the chemicals and just go with organic." The paid media buys target fringe consumers who know about organic but are not regular purchasers. The campaign, which has generated more than 15 million impressions and reached close to 4 million unique consumers, will continue throughout 2020.

### A commitment to support growers through transition to organic and beyond —

A groundbreaking technical assistance project, the Organic Agronomy Training Series (OATS), addresses the lack of experts available to help organic farmers and those who want to transition. It is an innovative, on-the-ground, train-the-trainer program for agricultural professionals working with organic or transitioning producers. In 2019, OATS hosted three pilot trainings focused on organic row crop production across the Midwest with more than a hundred participants, ranging from farmers to agronomists and crop advisors to academics. Additional trainings are planned for 2020 focused on more production systems and geographic regions.



### An organic research portfolio that confronts climate change—

With growing concern about climate change, our partners at The Organic Center are facing related challenges head-on with innovative research initiatives—exploring the ways organic farming builds soil health, investigating the impacts of organic farming practices on carbon sequestration, and highlighting the benefits organic practices have on a farmer's bottom line. These ambitious projects underway through partnerships with the University of Maryland and the University of California at Berkeley have one common goal – to advance organic food and farming through science in the fight against climate change.

Interested in learning more about The Organic Center's work to bring scientists, farmers, policymakers, and organic stakeholders together to address climate change? Take a closer look at [Organic-Center.org](http://Organic-Center.org).

# WE NAVIGATE THE WAY FORWARD FOR OUR MEMBERS

## Online education

Our wildly popular series of informative webinars, offered at no-cost to our members, looked at everything from the impact of organic on human health, to best labeling practices for organic non-food products, to the top ten organic headlines making news. We had over 1,600 attendees for the 17 webinars offered in 2019. Plan to join us to learn about the issues defining organic during regularly scheduled monthly webinars throughout 2020.

## Strict standards

We play an important role in deliberations shaping the status of materials and practices discussed at the twice-a-year National Organic Standards Board meetings. We summarize the proposals up for discussion, conduct surveys to gauge stakeholder support for additions and removals to the National List, and submit comments on behalf of our members. From gene editing to vaccines to container production, members count on us to weigh in on critical regulatory issues in organic.

## Domestic production

The U.S. is one of the world's largest producers of conventionally grown grains but the production of organic grains in this country has been slow to take off. That's why we released a critical report in partnership with the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration that drills down into the key barriers to expand domestic organic grain production, and identifies specific industry solutions to overcome the hurdles. This new information provides a roadmap to improve the future of organic grain production in the U.S.



# WE BUILD MARKETS AND FORGE CONNECTIONS

## Sourcing organic

Where in the world is organic? Find.Organic will show you! To facilitate business connections for our members and link together the rapidly growing U.S. organic supply chain, we developed a sophisticated online directory for sourcing U.S. organic products and services. Users can search for ingredients or products by name, find organic businesses ranging from certifiers to farm suppliers, and locate export-ready U.S. organic products.



## Export promotion

Bolstered by almost \$3 million annually in grant funding from the USDA Market Access Program, we showcase American organic products throughout the world. Last year, 45 companies participated in our 17 trade missions. Projected U.S. organic export sales from those activities are over 34 million U.S. dollars.

# WE HAVE A SMALL BUT MIGHTY BUDGET

## 2019 FINANCIAL SUMMARY\*



\*Income and expenses through the third quarter of 2019. Every year our finances undergo an independent audit. We are pleased to report, as usual, there were no findings in the latest review.

We focus every dollar of our approximate \$5M budget on ensuring a bright future for organic. Thanks to the Organic Trade Association members that invest in a strong organic industry! We are all in this together.



[OTA.com](http://OTA.com) | [info@ota.com](mailto:info@ota.com) | [@OrganicTrade](https://twitter.com/OrganicTrade)

## Headquarters

444 N. Capitol St. NW, Suite 445A  
Washington, DC 20001  
(202) 403-8520

## Locations

Washington, D.C. | Brattleboro, VT  
Santa Cruz, CA | Corvallis, OR