

Produce Council Annual Report | 2021

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. 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.

Highlights from 2021:

- Received technical policy briefings on regulatory and legislative issues important to the produce sector. OTA's regulatory staff gave a special briefing to the council regarding the petition to prohibit ammonia extract, and the outcomes of the latest lawsuit on hydroponics, and details on USDA's plans for establishing an Organic Transition Program to support farmers transitioning and staying in organic production.
- Hosted a listening session for researchers on food safety incongruities between National Organic Program standards and third-party food safety requirements. Scientists from The Organic Center and University of Rhode Island posed specific questions to council members and the feedback will be used to inform USDA-funded project to direct research toward finding cost-effective and organic-compliant tools that organic farmers can use to mitigate food safety risk and retain third-party certification.
- Engaged in a series of member roundtable discussions on impacts from covid on produce production and supply chain issues. Members shared information about accessibility of farmworkers to PPE and vaccinations throughout different regions, and other issues related to agricultural workforce safety prioritization.
- Conducted a survey to support the Produce Council's goal to promote diversity of council membership. Survey results showed representation across all roles in the organic produce value chain. Growers represented all types of production systems and scales of all size. The geographic footprint of member production/services areas reaches every state and nearly every continent. The council leaders will use the information to identify opportunities to recruit additional member participation to strengthen and promote diversity of council membership, such as increasing grower representation in Northeast.

Looking Ahead to 2022:

- Members of the Produce Council continue working on the issues in its multi-year work plan, such as: Support successful implementation of the forthcoming Strengthening Organic Enforcement final rule within produce sector with a particular focus on imports and labeling; and Support development of organic seed and planting stock and advocate for NOP to advance rulemaking for continuous improvement in using organic seed.

COUNCIL MEMBERS



The Produce Council is led by Todd Linsky (Todd Linsky Consulting) as Vice Chair, and Ricardo Crisantes (Wholesum Family Farms) as Secretary, and supported by Johanna Mirenda, Farm Policy Director. If you are interested in joining the Council, please contact Johanna (jmirenda@ota.com).



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