



Organic
Hotspots

U.S. ORGANIC HOTSPOTS AND THEIR BENEFIT TO LOCAL ECONOMIES

Organic is the fastest growing sector of the U.S. food industry. Organic food sales increase by double digits annually, far outstripping the growth rate for the overall food market. Now, an unprecedented and conclusive study links economic health to organic agriculture.

WHAT EXACTLY DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Simply put, organic creates jobs and economic growth, boosts household incomes, and reduces poverty levels. Organic food and crop production — and the business activities accompanying organic agriculture — create real and long-lasting regional economic opportunities.

- It identifies 225 counties in the United States as organic hotspots — counties with high levels of organic agricultural activity that have neighboring counties with high organic activity — and then looks at how these organic hotspots impact key county-level economic indicators.
- These organic economic hotspots boost household incomes and reduce poverty levels — and at greater rates than general agriculture activity, and even more than major anti-poverty programs.



Being an Organic Hotspot increases median household income by over \$2,000

Being an Organic Hotspot lowers a county's poverty rate by as much as 1.35 percentage points

- It explains that outreach and knowledge transfer are critical in creating organic hotspots. The prevalence of outreach services by organic certifiers plays one of the strongest roles in organic hotspot formation.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

We know organic agriculture benefits our environment. This significant study shows organic agriculture, and the business activities accompanying it, can also benefit local economies and help secure our financial future.

- The study's compelling findings prove organic agriculture can be used as an effective economic development tool, especially in our rural areas.
- It provides local, state and national policy makers with an economic and sound reason to support organic agriculture and to create more economy-stimulating organic hotspots throughout the country.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO NOW?

Increased funding for existing organic programs, development of new programs, and an emphasis on organic within all USDA programs can expand the economic opportunities of organic.

- As we consider the next Farm Bill, we are looking to organic as a key tool for stimulating rural economic development. We can do this by focusing on loan and grant programs, entrepreneur assistance, community development, and removing barriers to investment.
- We should also focus on programs that support organic transition, such as a transitional certification and resource conservation programs.
- Let's look to policies that can expand outreach efforts and facilitate network effects, which can create more organic hotspots and benefit local economies. Let's take the learnings from this study — around the importance of knowledge transfer and community in creating hotspots — and shift "warm" spots to hotspots across the fabric of this country.



**ORGANIC:
A BRIGHT SPOT**
for our **FARMS,**
our **FOOD,**
and our **FUTURE**