

Organic is good for the U.S. economy



GROWTH

The almost **\$50 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 \$49 billion in 2017. Organic has averaged double-digit growth over the last five years.¹



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 2017, and continue to forecast full-time employment growth in 2017. More than **65% of organic farms sell in wholesale markets**, creating a distinct value chain in the greater food economy. From processors to packers, distributors to marketing cooperatives, the organic industry employs Americans across the entire supply chain.²



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**. Two-hundred and twenty-five counties across the U.S. are identified as organic hotspots and are as diversified as the organic industry, representing the various kinds of organic agricultural activity and accompanying businesses: crop production, livestock production, and organic processors.³



DOMESTIC PRODUCTION

The nearly \$50 billion-a-year industry is supported by **more than 26,000 certified organic operations nationwide**, from strawberries to beef, wheat to eggs, and cotton to cosmetics. Organic farms and businesses are present in all 50 states. When viewed as a commodity class, organic is the fourth largest food and feed commodity in the United States. While the **number of organic operations grew by 7% in 2017**, demand for organic regularly outpaces supply, making organic a viable opportunity for U.S. farmers.⁴



FARM NET INCOME

Organic farms are 35% more profitable than the average farm and have higher gross receipts. Premiums paid to organic farmers can range from 29 to 32% above non-organic prices. The increased profitability from organic production in many cases is what makes staying on the farm possible.⁵



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.⁶ The market rewards businesses that opt in. Likewise, consumers are free to make choices to support organic products every time they make a purchase.



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.**⁷



CONSUMER DRIVEN

The USDA Organic label is highly trusted by over 75% of families nationwide.⁸ 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.**⁹

Organic relies on a strong USDA organic program



Federal spending on organic, including the annual \$12 million 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 trusted, verified, and enforced claim. This burgeoning industry requires critical support from the National Organic Program for oversight and uniform standards.

1 The Organic Trade Association. *2018 Organic Industry Survey*.

2 The Organic Trade Association. *2018 Organic Industry Survey*.

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

4 USDA's Organic Integrity Database, April 2018.

5 Crowder, David W. and John P. Reganold (2015). *Financial Competitiveness of Organic Agriculture on a Global Scale*. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 112(24), 7611-7616.

6 House GOP (2016). *The Economy. A Better Way: Our Vision for a Confident America*.

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

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

9 Nielsen. *UPC Scan Data of 100,000 Households*. (2016).

