



TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

In 2023, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) was [selected](#) as a National Partner for the U.S. Agriculture Department's (USDA) Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP), a key component of USDA's broad multi-agency push to expand organic agriculture by providing more direct support and technical assistance to producers across the United States. USDA and its partnering organizations through TOPP provide locally based farmer training and education in six regions across the United States. Learn more about the work of these six TOPP Regional Centers at [organictransition.org](https://www.organictransition.org), which includes resources, regional events, and mentorship opportunities.

In addition to the six regional partnerships, two national-level TOPP agreements supplement and collaborate with the regional work, providing nationally focused coordination and services. As the National Lead for one of these agreements, OTA is collaborating with our core partners in three priority program areas: market development technical assistance for farmers and handlers, buyer and seller discovery facilitation, and handler transition training and education.

PROGRAM AREAS: SUMMARY OF SOLUTIONS AND OUTCOMES



Program Area I: Market Development Technical Assistance

- Provide market development technical assistance through workshops, tools, and resources for transitioning organic producers, both in person and virtually.
- Tailor tools and host workshops to reach producers of specific crops, market segments, or regions, and in collaboration with the TOPP regional centers.

Outcomes:

- Empower non-organic farmers to make informed decisions and effectively assess market context, risk, and opportunities based on the transitional and organic marketplace.

Core Partner:



Program Area II: Supply/Demand Discovery Facilitation

- **In-Person Activities** will prioritize tabletop buyer-seller networking events and regional buyer tours in segmented markets (led by Rodale Institute).
- **Virtual Activities** will prioritize adding transitional and organic products from TOPP participants to online clearinghouses and databases, and helping buyers and sellers discover each other, empowering and enabling needed connections (led by OTA).

Outcomes:

- Create opportunities for transitional and organic producers to find potential buyers.
- Increase the success of domestic transitioning and organic producers in the organic marketplace.
- Create opportunities for buyers to discover transitional and organic producers in virtual forums to make meaningful organic market connections.

Core Partner:



In-Person



Virtual



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Program Area III: Handler Transition Training & Education

- Develop and launch comprehensive training materials and educational resources, both written and video formats, to support handlers in effectively handling organic products by focusing on accessible and effective trainings that cover approaches, best practices, tools, checklists, and other materials.
- Publish written and video resources online on USDA's Organic Integrity Learning Center and OrganicTransition.org

Outcomes:

- Grow and diversify the domestic supply of fully certified organic operations and split organic/non-organic operations.
- Demystify the barriers to certification for non-organic operations.
- Equip non-organic and in-transition operations with resources to make informed business decisions and effectively assess market context, risk, and opportunities to engage in organic and transitional market channels.
- Improve the knowledge base of transitioning and organic handlers on handling requirements and making their business more efficient.
- Expand the domestic organic supply chain making it more resilient and diverse.

Core Partner:



RESOURCES

- Learn more about TOPP, including upcoming events and resources for your farm or business: <https://organictransition.org>
- Check out USDA's TOPP homepage: <https://organictransition.org/region/national>
- Check out TOPP success stories: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/topp/stories>
- OTA's announcement as a National Lead cooperator: <https://www.ota.com/news/press-releases/22867>
- OTA applauds USDA's \$300 Million investment into the Organic Transition Initiative <https://ota.com/news/press-releases/22416>
- OTA putting its words into actions to help grow organic: <https://ota.com/news-center/ota-putting-its-words-actions-help-grow-organic>



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Learn more and stay up-to-date here:

ota.com/TOPP

