

Written Testimony for the Hearing on Economic Impacts of Production, Processing, and Marketing Organic Agriculture Products, 4/18/07.

Dear Honorable Members of the Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture,

Although I am a professional researcher at a Land Grant University, I write to you today as a consumer, former organic farmer and most of all, a husband, father and American. While I may draw on my expertise as an employee of Michigan State University, please understand that all views expressed in this message are my own and do not represent the University or any of its divisions.

I believe organic agriculture is absolutely vital to the future of our state's and nation's food and agriculture system. It has been widely described as the fastest growing part of the agricultural economy. The success of organic farmers is a true American success story.

Research has shown that organic agriculture brings a wide variety of social, economic and environmental benefits to rural communities (see, e.g., http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/ccc_organic_agric_e.pdf). It also is a key component of a growing movement that is bringing new meaning, in the form of citizenship and community, to our food system. Yet I believe organic agriculture has received too little attention from our public research and government institutions.

I therefore encourage you to invest in organic agriculture, bringing research dollars and other resources to bear. I believe research in both the production/biological science and economic/social science aspects can broaden the vast benefits organic agriculture has already wrought. If organic has done this well with scant attention from our public institutions, I am certain it will truly thrive with adequate investment, leading to reinvigoration our of food system and rural communities.

My final suggestions are twofold. Please do all you can to:

- (1) ensure the NOP standards remain strong in spite of the threat they face to weaken and dilute them. My research and that of other scholars has shown that consumers want strong, meaningful rules.
- (2). ensure the viability of small and medium scale family farmers, the backbone of our food system. Many of them were truly the pioneers of organic agriculture, yet they are increasingly imperiled by a food system geared against them. I encourage you to fund research that creates opportunity and create and enforce laws that foster fair competition.

Thank you very much for your time. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments on my testimony.

Sincerely
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