



ORGANIC  
FARMING  
RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION

POLICY BRIEF

**ORGANIC AGRICULTURE  
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS  
TO THE  
PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION TEAM**

*January 2009*

## **Introduction**

The new Administration’s policy review plus recent legislative provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill provide an important window of opportunity to further the widespread adoption and improvement of organic agriculture systems. Towards these ends the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) developed a set of recommendations which were submitted to the Presidential Transition Team. In addition OFRF queried its own Organic Farmers Action Network (OFAN) to collect recommendations from organic farmers and other organic agriculture stakeholders. OFRF also consulted with other organic farming policy groups and endorses their recommendations. This OFRF Policy Brief compiles these statements, as a full set of initial objectives for consideration by the Obama Administration and Secretary Vilsack.

**Part I** includes the policy recommendations OFRF fashioned in conjunction with the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition as they appear in the *Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s Transition Team Briefing Papers*. These are immediate administrative actions, presented according to the Transition Team’s specifications.

**Part II** is a distillation of the comments received through the OFAN network. These recommendations are much less detailed but demonstrate the range of opportunities and needs that organic farmers believe the new Administration should prioritize.

**Part III** provides links to recommendations developed in parallel efforts by other representatives of the organic sector, the National Organic Coalition and the Organic Trade Association. OFRF is fully supportive of these recommendations.

**The common thread among all these items is the importance of expanding the presence of organic farming systems in the U.S. landscape. Advanced organic systems are the best available platform for rapidly developing the science and practice of ecologically adaptive agriculture. The positive impacts of diversified organic farming and markets accrue directly to economic security, pollution reduction, pollinator conservation, watershed recovery, soil carbon sequestration, energy efficiency and public health. These policy recommendations are conducive and essential to enabling all these benefits.**

-Mark Lipson, Senior Policy Analyst, [mark@ofrf.org](mailto:mark@ofrf.org)

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## **PART I. Programmatic Recommendations**

### **I.A. SCALING UP ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND EDUCATION**

#### **Relevant Programs**

Competitive Research Grant Programs:

- Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)
- Organic Transitions Research (ORG)

Other Programs:

- Agricultural Systems Competitiveness and Sustainability, Agricultural Research Service
- Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, National Agricultural Library
- Organic Market and Production Data Collection
- National Needs Graduate and Postgraduate Fellowship Grants Program

Agencies:

- Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
- Agricultural Research Service (ARS) including the National Agriculture Library
- Economic Research Service (ERS), Market and Trade Division
- National Agricultural Statistics Service, (NASS)

#### **Recommendation – Administrative Action**

**Position U.S. agriculture to remain competitive and meet the challenges that lay ahead by facilitating the coordination of organic research, education, and extension efforts of the land grants, 1890's, and federal agencies.** Multiple national needs call for a wide-scale national effort on ecological agriculture and food systems, maximizing the production of conservation commodities (soil, water, energy, wildlife, pollinators) and healthy food. The gradual proliferation of REE agencies and programs with activities related to organic agriculture is producing a wider range of science and education to address these needs, but the efforts lack overall coordination and strategy. Successful coordination will require a combination of administrative actions and budget proposals.

#### **Specific Administrative Actions**

**1. Implement Advisory Board Recommendations.** Immediate action can be taken to implement the March 2008 recommendations of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB) concerning organic research and education activity. Administrative actions recommended by the NAREEEAB include:

- Complete the hiring of a National Program Leader for organic agriculture at NIFA/CSREES; Develop a “roadmap” to guide and coordinate USDA organic research and extension activity;
- Establish a focus for organic agricultural systems within the National Needs Graduate and Postgraduate Fellowship Grants Program to encourage specialization in organic agriculture in colleges and universities; and
- Develop an online clearinghouse of research and other information on organic agriculture at the National Agricultural Library’s Alternative Farming Systems Information Center.

**2. Establish Inter-agency collaboration between REE and NRCS on organic conservation commodities.** Under the 2008 Farm Bill, the two agencies have complementary mandates to integrate organic production with conservation outcomes. The research title mandates new commitments to organic research for conservation outcomes, and the conservation title establishes new initiatives to encourage organic conservation systems. USDA leadership should ensure that the agencies intentionally take a collaborative, synergistic approach to these goals from the outset.

## **Budget Proposals**

**1. “Fair Share” funding for the ARS NP-216 Organic Research Action Plan.** ARS’ national program for Agricultural Systems Competitiveness and Sustainability has a plan for organic research objectives but lacks sufficient funding to pursue this plan. The Administration should redirect funding within the Agricultural Research Service to achieve a “fair share” of agency funding for organic objectives by FY 2011. The “fair share” benchmark would match the “direct organic” portion of ARS’ budget with the U.S. retail market share for organic foods and agricultural products (about 4%). Relative to the FY 2008 expenditures, this would mean slightly more than a doubling, from approximately \$15 million to \$36 million.

**2. Increased funding for the National Agricultural Library’s Alternative Farming Systems Information Center.** As organic research results proliferate, dissemination of information becomes a critical limiting factor for the overall goals of widespread adoption. The NAL-ASFIC program is well positioned to lead the dissemination function within USDA. Maintenance of a national “information clearinghouse” for organic agriculture (as recommended by USDA’s Research Advisory Board) will require an ongoing annual budget allocation of \$250,000. This should be incorporated into the President’s FY 2010 budget proposal.

## **Background in Brief**

U.S. sales of products labeled organic -- produced under legal restrictions generally prohibiting toxic agricultural pollutants -- have grown steadily at 12-20% annually since the late 1980s. In 2007 the U.S. organic market totaled about \$20 Billion, nearing 4% of all U.S. food retail sales. Growth of domestic organic agriculture has lagged well behind demand, limited by federal policy obstacles and the near-absence of scientific research and extension support.

Agricultural research and extension specific to organic agriculture was virtually taboo until the mid-1990s. Congressional recognition supporting organic agricultural research began in 1997. Dedicated programming began in FY 2001 but did not exceed 0.2% of USDA-REE expenditures until after the 2002 Farm Bill. FY 2008 federal direct-organic REE expenditures were roughly \$27 million, about 1.2% of the total mission area.

The small but growing body of research on organic systems consistently validates the long-term potential of advanced organic agriculture to match conventional yields while providing superior performance with respect to pollution reduction, wildlife conservation, energy consumption and farm profitability. Recognition of these multiple benefits has resulted in slight, but steadily increased funding and institutional capacities.

The 2008 Farm Bill provides a significant increase for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), the flagship competitive USDA grants program for organic science and education. With the increases mandated by the new Farm Bill, total combined FY2009 REE for organic systems and markets should be \$35-40 Million. (This represents about 2% of total REE allocations, still only half the percentage of U.S. market shares for organic foods.)

## **Obama-Biden Platform**

**“Encourage Organic and Sustainable Agriculture:** Organic food is the fastest growing sector of the American food marketplace. Demand for sustainable, locally grown, grass-finished and heritage foods is also growing quickly. These niche markets present new opportunities for beginning farmers because specialty operations often require more management and labor than capital.”

**“Expand Research at Land Grant and 1890 Schools:** The research and education provided by the nation’s land grant and 1890 colleges played a pivotal role in establishing America’s competitive advantage in agriculture....Barack Obama and Joe Biden will increase research and educational funding for projects such as enhancing the profitability and competitiveness of small and mid-size farms, entrepreneurial education for adults and youth learners, and research on alternative energy production systems and how to produce conservation commodities efficiently.”

## **I.B. NATIONAL ORGANIC CERTIFICATION COST SHARE PROGRAM**

### **Relevant Program**

Program: National Organic Certification Cost Share Program

Agency: National Organic Program (NOP)/Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

### **Recommendations - Administrative Actions**

**1. Ensure Proper Funding Distribution:** When analyzing the initial \$5 million provided for the NOCCSP through the 2002 Farm Bill, there were distribution inequities that should be avoided with the new 2008 Farm Bill funding cycle. Some states ran out of NOCCSP funding relatively quickly, while others never fully utilized their funds. We recommend that USDA take the following actions to prevent this problem from occurring again:

- When allocating funds to the States, USDA should use NOP's list of existing certified farms and handlers as a reference, but should also factor in a 5 percent average national growth rate in certified organic operations, based on ERS' most recent data on total certified organic operations in the United States.
- States should be given an annual deadline for distributing their funds to eligible farmers and handlers in their states. Any funds not distributed by that date should be re-pooled and re-distributed to other states based on demonstrated need.

**2. Improve Outreach and Information Dissemination:** When the NOCCSP was first authorized, there was little outreach to potential recipients. As a result, use of the funds was inconsistent across states. Because the program is currently administered through State Departments of Agriculture, these agencies are the best conduit for outreach. However, in most cases, certifiers would have the best data regarding the certified farms and handlers in each state. Therefore we recommend that USDA take the following actions:

- When distributing NOCCSP funds to State Departments of Agriculture, USDA should require each State to inform the potential recipients regarding the availability of the assistance, and to distribute a fact sheet developed by USDA.
- NOP should provide information about the NOCCSP to all Accredited Certifying Agents (ACAs) located in the United States, including contact information regarding the State agencies and personnel administering the program.
- NOP should require the ACAs to send an annually updated list of certified entities to the relevant State agency for each State in which the certifier operates.
- NOP should organize data that is already collected annually regarding certified operations into a searchable database available to the public and state programs that provides updated information about certified entities in each state.
- NOP should post on its website a clear description of the NOCCSP and include contact information and links for the State programs and personnel administering the program. Currently, the NOP website only includes information about the 16-State AMA program.

**3. Establish Reporting Requirements and Tracking Mechanism:** It has been difficult to access clear and consistent information from USDA regarding the status of the initial \$5 million allocation provided for the NOCCSP. Part of the problem was inconsistent information from the States regarding their use of the funds. We recommend that USDA take the following actions to address these concerns:

- When distributing the NOCCSP funds to the various State Departments of Agriculture a letter from USDA should also accompany those funds stating clearly what information the States are required to provide to USDA, in what format, and the deadlines for providing the information. In this manner, it will be much easier for USDA to track the information and provide consistent data about the funding status of the program.
- States should be required to provide data on the number of requests and disbursements to organic farmers and handlers, as well as any projections on change in demand for the program for the next fiscal year.

### **Background in Brief**

For many organic farmers and handlers, particularly those of small and medium scale, the annual cost of organic certification can be burdensome. In recognition of this problem, Congress created the NOCCSP as part of the 2002 Farm Bill, and provided \$5 million in one-time mandatory funding for the program. The funding provided was depleted early, leaving farmers in many States without funding in 2006 and 2007. Fortunately, the 2008 Farm Bill reauthorized the NOCCSP and provided \$22 million in one-time mandatory funding for the program, to be available until fully expended. A separate mandatory funding allocation of \$7.5 million was made for organic certification cost-share assistance for producers in 16 states, through the reauthorization of the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Act.

### **Obama-Biden Platform**

**“Encourage Organic and Sustainable Agriculture:** Organic food is the fastest growing sector of the American food marketplace....To support the continued growth of sustainable alternative agriculture, Barack Obama and Joe Biden will increase funding for the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program to help farmers afford the costs of compliance with national organic certification standards..”

## **I.C. ORGANIC CONVERSION ASSISTANCE**

### **Relevant Program**

Program: Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Agency: Natural Resources Conservation Service

### **Recommendation – Administrative Action**

**Support the widespread adoption of organic systems by ensuring adequate and appropriate technical assistance and nationwide access to the newly authorized support for organic conversion and conservation practices under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).**

### **Specific Administrative Actions**

**1. Ensure Adequate and Appropriate Technical Assistance.** Technical assistance lies at the very heart of NRCS' mission and is critical to the successful delivery of conservation financial assistance programs. With its knowledge and management-intensive, systems-based production model, successful adoption of organic systems will hinge on NRCS' ability to provide comprehensive technical assistance. As a result, NRCS should take a coordinated approach that includes contracting with NGOs, certifiers, and others who currently have the appropriate expertise to provide the necessary outreach and assistance in the near-term, while working to build capacity within the agency to deliver adequate technical assistance over the long-term. A coordinated approach should include:

- Cooperation with Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) to build a research agenda that fosters the knowledge base necessary for NRCS to maximize the conservation outcomes of organic systems.
- Encouragement of state and local NRCS offices to develop partnerships with ARS, Land Grant Universities, State Departments of Agriculture, and growers' organizations in their area to identify scientific and educational opportunities related to organic conservation systems.
- In addition to increasing the capacity of existing staff through trainings and inter-agency collaboration, hiring an organic expert in each state who can serve as the state organic technician or organic specialist.
- The conservation technical assistance that is provided will need to be tailored to the systems-based approach of organic production and also need to be proportionate to the knowledge-intensive nature of organic production. As a result, the technical assistance amount for organic conversion may in many instances be twice the level of ordinary EQIP. NRCS must take these considerations into account when determining technical assistance rates.
- To ensure successful organic systems, technical assistance for marketing and business planning to provide farmers with the knowledge and skills necessary to sustain the economic viability of their organic conservation production systems should be made available, in addition to conservation technical assistance.

**2. Ensure Nationwide Access.** No longer should those farmers looking to transition to organic production, anywhere, be told that EQIP does not pertain to them or be told that their state or county does not have the relevant conservation practice standard or activity for organic conversion. As a first step, the agency should ensure that all counties and all states offer an organic conversion practice or suite of practices. As a second step, NRCS needs to create a nationwide set-aside -- or a similar mechanism that would achieve the goals of a nationwide set-aside -- to ensure that the program is offered in every state, and that producers

looking to transition to organic production in every county of every state, have the ability to compete for a substantial separate pool of funding, increasing the likelihood that they would be able to access funding.

We propose the following guidelines for a nationwide set-aside mechanism:

First, with the organic share of the domestic food retail market approaching 5%, it seems that an initial set aside that reflects this share would be a reasonable to get the program off the ground.

This figure would include money to provide both financial assistance and technical assistance.

The national set-aside money should be allocated to each state based on a formula that takes into consideration the ratio of existing organic acreage to conventional acreage in the state and the rate of increase in organic acreage in the state in the last five years.

Second, the national allocation to each state should be treated as a minimum, and should not preclude states from setting aside additional money from their state EQIP budgets for the program. To encourage states to set-aside additional funds for the transition to organic production, an allowance to re-pool any unused funding for general use should be included. The timing for this re-pooling option should come after the main EQIP ranking process and contract signing which usually takes place in January or February and allow for sufficient time for transitional producers to access the funding.

### **Background in Brief**

Prior to the 2008 Farm Bill, several states took it upon themselves to offer assistance for transition to organic production through their respective state EQIP programs. The Northeast states also provided such assistance under the Agricultural Management Assistance program as well as EQIP. Congress, recognizing the wisdom of this activity, has now authorized organic assistance, including organic conversion assistance, under EQIP at the national level.

The 2008 Farm Bill established the new Organic Production and Transition Assistance as an option within EQIP. Farmers who are embracing organic production for the first time, as well as farmers who are expanding their organic crop production or increasing the size of organically- managed livestock or poultry operations, are eligible for financial and technical assistance under the new provision. Producers who agree to develop and carry out an organic system plan and pursue organic certification through USDA's National Organic Program can receive up to \$20,000 per year with payments not to exceed \$80,000 during any 6-year period for financial assistance in implementing conservation practices related to the transition to organic production. Technical assistance is not factored into the maximum payment.

### **Obama-Biden Platform**

**“Encourage Organic and Sustainable Agriculture:** Organic food is the fastest growing sector of the American food marketplace. Demand for sustainable, locally grown, grass-finished and heritage foods is also growing quickly. These niche markets present new opportunities for beginning farmers because specialty operations often require more management and labor than capital.”

**“Partner with Landowners to Conserve Private Lands:**...Barack Obama and Joe Biden will put an unprecedented level of emphasis on the conservation of private lands...”

## **I. D. CROP INSURANCE FAIRNESS FOR ORGANIC FARMERS**

### **Relevant Programs**

Programs:

- Federal Crop Insurance
- Organic Market and Production Data Initiatives

Agencies:

- Risk Management Agency (RMA)
- Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP)/Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

### **Recommendation – Administrative Actions**

Facilitate swift improvements in crop insurance for organic producers by requiring an immediate cross-agency collaboration to establish organic as an “end use” category, ensuring the use of sound science in determining whether to remove the current penalty surcharge paid by organic farmers on their crop insurance premiums, and encouraging the development of new insurance products particularly suited for organic farmers.

### **Specific Administrative Actions**

**1. Recognize organic crop prices for insurance purposes.** Require immediate, coordinated action by agencies (RMA, AMS, FSA) to establish recognition of organic production as an “end-use” category in price reporting and price-election for application across all types of crop insurance products. The absence of such recognition is a primary obstacle to the expansion of U.S. organic production as farmers are deterred by the lack of adequate insurance for organic operations. Establishing an “end use” category for organic production would provide the basis from which to offer price elections that reflect organic crop prices.

Section 12023 of the 2008 Farm Bill requires the development and implementation of procedures to be able to offer price elections for organic crops beginning in the 2010 crop year. Coordinated policy development by all the relevant agencies will be required to achieve the desired outcomes. As a result, collection of organic price data and preparation for recognition of organic as an “end-use” category should be undertaken by the agencies immediately.

**2. Use peer reviewed sustainable and organic agriculture research findings in determining whether to remove crop insurance surcharge premiums currently charged to organic farmers.** The 2008 Farm Bill also requires a review of underwriting, risk and loss experience with organic farming to determine whether systematic variations exists between organic and conventional production. If the review shows no systematic variation, the current 5 percent penalty surcharge on organic production is to be removed. The agency is contracting out the review. It is crucial that the review consider the full range of available data and research, including data collected by the National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Agricultural Marketing Service as well as the substantial body of peer reviewed research and journal articles comparing organic and conventional production from a risk management standpoint. The review should also consult with independent experts in the field, including pioneering farmers.

**3. New Insurance Products for Organic Producers.** Beyond adjusting existing crop insurance products for fairness, RMA should begin investigating options for new insurance products

specifically suited to organic farming. Proposals should be solicited for this work under Section 508(h) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act.

### **Recommendation - Budget Proposal**

Facilitate swift improvement in crop insurance for organic producers by requesting \$2 million in funding for the Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives in FY 2010.

Noting the *“critical importance of collecting data related to crop loss risk, and farm-gate prices, in order to determine appropriate products and premiums for crop insurance policies offered to organic producers,”* the Managers of the 2008 Farm Bill provided \$5 million in mandatory funding for the Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives to jumpstart organic data collection efforts at USDA. The Managers, recognizing that *“remedying the unmet data collection needs of the organic sector will require further investment,”* also provided an additional annual authorization of appropriations for up to \$5,000,000.

Inclusion of \$2 million in the Administration’s FY 2010 budget request for additional organic data collection can help ensure that the data necessary to restore fairness to federal crop insurance policies and develop additional risk management products particularly suited to organic producers is available.

### **Background in Brief**

Organic farmers applying for crop insurance are currently automatically charged a 5% surcharge on crop insurance premiums because they are organic (based on the assumption that organic practices are riskier than conventional farming practices). In addition to paying a surcharge, if the organic farmer does suffer a crop loss, the farmer is reimbursed at the lower conventional crop price and not at the higher value of their organic products. These inequities in crop insurance have served as deterrents to farmers considering transitioning to organic production.

Section 12023 of the 2008 Farm Bill sets in motion the development of improvements to federal crop insurance for organic producers by requiring a study of the basis for the current premium surcharge organic farmers must pay and procedures to offer price elections that reflect the price of organic crops. The ability of this provision to restore fairness to crop insurance for organic producers is dependent upon the quality and quantity of organic data.

### **Obama-Biden Platform**

**“Encourage Organic and Sustainable Agriculture:** Barack Obama and Joe Biden will also... reform the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Risk Management Agency’s crop insurance rates so that they do not penalize organic farmers.”

## **I.E. ISO COMPLIANCE FOR THE NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM**

### **Relevant Programs**

Programs: National Organic Program (NOP); National Voluntary Conformity Assessment System (NVCASE)

Agency: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA; National Institute of Science and Technology, Department of Commerce

### **Recommendation – Administrative Action**

**Ensure the integrity of organic certification by establishing compliance of the National Organic Program with International Standards Organization (ISO) Standard 17011.**

A number of problems have been identified regarding the NOP's performance as an accrediting body for organic certifiers. This poor performance is a major limiting factor of the program's effectiveness and in turn seriously limits the integrity and growth of the organic sector. The NOP has never demonstrated compliance with relevant ISO standards that are intended to prevent these shortcomings. As a result, the NOP should be audited for ISO compliance and implement the resulting recommendations.

The best available mechanism for this review is the National Voluntary Conformity Assessment System (NVCASE), operated by the National Institute of Science and Technology in the Department of Commerce. The NVCASE program provides audits of many types of accreditation programs against ISO/IEC 17011 (previously known as ISO 61). The scope of the program specifically includes assessment of accreditation programs for organic certification

### **Background in Brief**

The National Organic Program regulates the labeling and certification of organically produced goods under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990. The regulation (7CFR, 205.209) specifically references NOP compliance with International Standards Organization (ISO) standards for certifier accreditation agencies. ISO/IEC 17011 is the internationally accepted standard for assessment of accreditation bodies.

### **Obama-Biden Platform**

**“Encourage Organic and Sustainable Agriculture:** Organic food is the fastest growing sector of the American food marketplace. Demand for sustainable, locally grown, grass-finished and heritage foods is also growing quickly. These niche markets present new opportunities for beginning farmers because specialty operations often require more management and labor than capital.”

## **PART II**

### **Priorities from the Organic Farmers Action Network (OFAN)**

What do organic farmers and consumers want from the next Presidential Administration? OFRF asked their Organic Farmers Action Network, and here are the responses we received. For more information about OFAN, see <[www.ofrf.org](http://www.ofrf.org)>.

#### **Educate the Obama Administration**

Educational priorities include:

- The many stacked benefits of organic agriculture.
- Solutions provided by organic agriculture for problems addressed in disparate ways by USDA, EPA, and FDA.
- The state of US conventional agriculture and its impact on the environment and fossil fuel usage for agrochemicals, and how the approach of organic agriculture differs from this.
- The economic benefits organic agriculture will have, including farm income stability and the creation of new jobs.
- Organic agriculture's support of local food systems.
- Organic agriculture's ability to rebuild soils.
- The destructive nature of the dominant perspective that has influenced organic agriculture up to this point: a drive towards large scale industrial methods to meet the needs for profit at the expense of sustainable economies and ecological preservation.

#### **Develop Agriculture Policy that Meets the Needs of the Public and the Environment**

- Rewrite agriculture policy with the goals of sustaining human life, sustaining the health of the ecosystems that support agriculture, and regenerating the resources that have been depleted by agriculture for future human populations.
- Ask with every decision at every level of policy making if these goals are being met.

#### **Support Local Food Infrastructure**

- Encourage states/counties/municipalities to facilitate distribution/ warehousing/processing infrastructures and systems that are well-suited to purchasing from smaller, diversified farms instead of large monocultures.
- Support localized food production and help foster local distribution.
- Provide incentives or grants for CSAs, organic gardening, community gardens, and rural development.
- Make it easier for consumers to buy directly from farmers.

#### **Support Farm to School and Nutrition Education in Schools**

- Encourage the development of economic infrastructures that link organic farmers to school cafeterias in their neighborhoods.
- Encourage/provide incentives for schools to provide healthier food choices for students and to include benefits of avoiding chemicals in agriculture in school curriculums.
- Help develop infrastructures that allow farms to sell food to schools. Address issues of competition with large corporations that make it difficult or impossible for small farmers to stay in business.

#### **Encourage Training, Education and Support of New Organic Farmers**

- Train new organic farmers and support them to start organic farming. Create a clear path for beginning farmers as a way of combating confusion and making sense of all the information that is out there.
- Support efforts to get new organic farmers onto the land. Provide financial assistance to new

growers.

Support existing resources such as ATTRA, Local Harvest, and WWOOF.

Realign land grant institution research with public welfare – retract the Bayh-Dole Act.

### **Remove Bias Towards Large Scale Conventional Agriculture in Food System**

Change resource allocation process away from production issues faced by conventional farmers to those faced by organic farmers.

Stop subsidizing large, monoculture conventional commodity growers.

Encourage policies that support small-scale, diversified farms.

Support policies that remove economic barriers faced by organic farmers so that they can sell their food in any market.

### **Start a USDA National Soil Fertility Program**

Recycle all clean, organic farm by-products, manures, and other wastes and all clean organic industrial waste.

Encourage municipalities to pass ordinances mandating separation of organic waste to be composted or fermented.

Fermented waste would yield ethanol and nutrient rich slurry which, along with compost, would be returned to the soil.

Re-educate people to start thinking of organic waste as a precious resource.

### **Promote Better Energy Efficiency for Farms and the Food System**

Use renewable fuels to run farms.

Shorten the Food supply chain.

Use biological fertilizers.

Close the loop so that nutrients in food waste and sewage are returned to the land.

Promote alternative energy.

### **Strengthen Food Standards and Regulation**

NOP should participate in the NIST NVCASE program to allow for oversight in meeting the requirement that NOP comply with the international guidelines for management of an accreditation body, ISO 17011. (This requirement is part of the organic rule, Section 205.209).

Keep the gold standard of organic certification – don't let corporations water it down.

Require mandatory labeling of GMO foods and other products.

### **Educate Americans About Organic Farming and Nutrition**

Support volunteerism at farms, and create programs to do that.

Encourage Americans to consume less - create a national "use only what you need" campaign to raise awareness about the implications of the American diet, overeating, and food wastage.

Appoint a White House organic farmer.

Put an organic farm at the White House.

### **PART III. Allied Recommendations**

#### **National Organic Coalition**

The following were part of a transition paper issued by the National Organic Coalition. The complete document can be found at

<<http://nationalorganiccoalition.org/NOCTransitionRecommendationsDec15-2008.pdf>>.

**Organic agriculture must be given a greater role and prominence within the Administration relative to previous Administrations. Over-arching actions that should be taken to achieve this goal include:**

Ø Designation of a point person and/or organic policy coordinator at the White House and in the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture for follow-through and on-going coordination, including the facilitation of public participation and feedback regarding these matters.

Ø Establishment of USDA cross-departmental and cross-agency coordination through an organic working group, including appropriate USDA/EPA/FDA officials to expedite administrative backlogs and to implement fairly and swiftly the significant organic provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Ø White House and USDA support for and participation in the development of a National Organic Action Plan (NOAP) <http://www.rafiusa.org/noap.html>, including White House and USDA public support for and recognition of the multiple benefits of organic agriculture. This is consistent with public-private partnership actions taken in Europe and elsewhere to plan a course for growth in organic agriculture.

Ø Close partnership with Congress to secure the resources and any additional legislative authority necessary to ensure that USDA resolves the barriers that have impeded effective implementation of the National Organic Program, and limited the potential of the U.S. organic sector.

#### **Organic Trade Association**

The OTA submitted a recommendation to [www.change.gov](http://www.change.gov) concerning implementation of the Organic Conversion Assistance provision in the 2008 Farm Bill. An excerpt appears below. The full document can be found at [http://otrans.3cdn.net/97f00ce0c4052006a9\\_f3m6bhsg.pdf](http://otrans.3cdn.net/97f00ce0c4052006a9_f3m6bhsg.pdf).

#### **EQIP Assistance for Conservation Practices Related to Organic Production**

The Farm Bill extends the purposes of EQIP to include assistance with conservation practices related to organic products, and specifically mentions the transition to organic production and organic production...In the Joint Managers' Statement (JSM), page 49, the Managers encourage the Secretary to offer technical assistance for organic conversion through this EQIP program.

[Successful implementation requires that:]

- funds remain available (requiring positive Congressional relations),
- technical assistance is provided in collaboration with private partners (requiring policy implementation), and
- NRCS actively promotes conversion as a farming strategy (also requiring policy implementation).