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Organic farm group urges comments on 2012 farm bill

by *Sustainable Food News*
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The Organic Farming Research Foundation said Wednesday that the House Agriculture Committee is now accepting initial public input on the development of the 2012 Farm Bill, and urged consumers to tell the committee that organic farming must be a top priority.

Compared to previous farm bills, organic farmers made significant gains in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Organic agriculture research funding increased nearly five-fold, Congress created a new program to support farmers transitioning to organic, and funding for the Organic Certification Cost Share Program increased from \$5 million to \$22 million over five years.

However, even with these wins, the amount of federal dollars currently supporting organic agriculture still represents a tiny fraction of all federal agricultural spending.

For example, the organic share of the federal agricultural research budget still stands at less than 2 percent.

The Santa Cruz, Calif.-based organic farming advocacy group said the committee is accepting comments on its Web site only through June 14.

To submit comments, [visit the House Agriculture Committee's farm bill feedback page and fill out the online form.](#)

OFRF suggested the following talking points:

- Organic farming is one of the fastest growing segments of U.S. agricultural production and organic food is one of the fastest growing sectors of the U.S. food retail market.
- Organic farming systems have the potential to conserve water, improve air quality, and build soil quality while providing high quality food and fiber for consumers here and abroad.
- If we want to see the U.S. organic sector continue to grow and thrive, we need to invest in programs that support organic farmers, including:
 - Research and Extension Programs that expand the breadth of knowledge about organic farming systems and provide that knowledge to organic farmers.
 - Conservation Programs that reward organic farmers for the conservation benefits of organic farming systems and provide technical support for organic farmers who want to improve on-farm conservation.
 - Transition Programs that provide technical support to farmers who want to transition to organic farming practices but don't know how.
 - Crop Insurance Programs that work for organic farmers and reimburse them for any losses based on the organic market value of the crop, not average conventional prices.

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