

## ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- **Ranking 1st in the nation**, California has **5,055 organic businesses**, 3,061 of which are organic farms that **sold over \$3.5 billion of goods in 2021**.
- California's top organic **commodities are chicken, strawberries, and grapes** by dollar sales, but California is also the **national leader of many vegetable, nut, and leafy green products**.
- California's organic market is projected to grow **another 28% through the next five years, along with the national market**, due to increasing consumer demand and interest in climate-resilient agriculture.
- California reported **1.7 million certified organic acres** in 2021, over a quarter of the total organic acreage in the US.
- **90% of Californians purchase organic** products, higher than the national average.



## ORGANIC RESEARCH

- The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) **has awarded over \$22 million in grants** to the state's research institutions for organic research, **which translates to over \$440 million in economic activity**, according to the Economic Research Service.
- Agricultural Research Service (**ARS**) has historically funded over **30 projects** in the state researching organic topics, but **only two continue** and are slated for closure, **revealing a significant gap in the agency's research portfolio**.
- **The UC System** has played a crucial role in organic agriculture research, investigating organic farming topics that answer Californian farmers' concerns.
- One research project is looking into **grazing in tree crop orchards and vineyards** to understand compounding benefits of nutrient management, soil health improvement, and pest control while controlling any food safety risks.



## ORGANIC MARKET & RESEARCH'S ROLE

Nationally, the organic market continues to experience significant growth—**organic produce now makes up more than 15% of the total produce food sales**. Despite this growth, **organic agriculture research funding makes up less than 2% of the total research budget at the USDA** and less than 1% of the Agricultural Research Service's budget.

Organic farmers require research that does not depend on aligning chemistry with genetic traits, but on aligning natural systems to create vitality and a resilient agroecological system. Put simply, **organic research applies to all farming systems**. In contrast, chemistry- and genetics-focused research is not always applicable to organic farmers.

It is essential to ensure that the USDA's research budget is applicable to all farmers and is focused on public welfare **in order to sustain organic agriculture's growth and fully leverage its economic potential**.

### REGIONAL RESEARCH PRIORITIES

- **Weed, pest, and disease management:** Non-chemical solutions tailored to organic systems. Invasive species like the Spotted Wing Drosophila offer unique challenges organic producers of perennial crops like berries and grapes. These high-value specialty crops can also be sensitive to increasing disease pressure.
- **Support for transitioning farmers:** Research and resources for conventional farmers transitioning to organic production related to managing production costs during transition.
- **Soil health:** Advancing organic practices that improve soil fertility, structure, and carbon sequestration that help farmers control their production costs through nutrient cycling.

### NATIONAL POLICY PRIORITIES

- **Increase organic agriculture research:** Boost USDA's ARS (Agriculture Research Service) organic research funding to 6% (current: 1%) with a request for \$35M in appropriations.
- **Expand NIFA organic research:** Bring funding for USDA's NIFA organic research programs to \$150 million a year by increasing the Organic Research and Extension Initiative and Organic Transitions Research Program budgets.
- **Fully fund the Organic Data Initiative (ODI):** Expand and modernize ODI with a \$1M appropriation to improve organic data collection and reporting.
- **Support Sustainable Agriculture Research (SARE):** Fully fund SARE by securing \$60M for research into sustainable farming practices.

## ABOUT THE ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION

OFRF is a non-profit organization founded in 1990 to advance organic agriculture through scientific research. As champions of organic farmers across the U.S., we work to foster the improvement and widespread adoption of organic farming systems by cultivating organic research, education, and federal policies that bring more farmers and acreage into organic production. Through these efforts, we are working to create a more resilient and sustainable agricultural system that values healthy environments and healthy people.

*This informational sheet includes data and insights from various sources, including the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF). For more detailed information and resources, please visit [OFRF](http://OFRF).*