

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- Connecticut has nearly 1,200 certified organic acres that generate **over \$6.8 million in sales annually**.
- Connecticut's top organic **commodities are specialty crops like tomatoes, squash, and lettuce**.
- **87% of Nutmeggers** purchase organic products, well above the national average.
- Connecticut's organic market **grew 11% from 2019 to 2021**. The organic market nationally is projected to grow **another 28% over the next 5 years** due to increasing consumer demand and interest in climate-resilient agriculture.
- Connecticut reported **141 certified organic** businesses in 2021.



ORGANIC RESEARCH

- The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) **has awarded over \$9 million in grants** to the state's research institutions for organic research, **which translates to over \$180 million in economic activity**, according to the Economic Research Service.
- Agricultural Research Service (**ARS**) has historically **funded one project** in the state researching organic topics, but that concluded in 2016, representing a significant gap in ARS' research portfolio.
- The Connecticut State Experiment Station has played a crucial role in organic agriculture research, investing **nearly \$5 million in research** on organic farming from 2020 to 2023 that directly answers Nutmegger farmers' concerns.
- A recent award to the University of Connecticut is investigating natural biocontrol strategies to address some food safety concerns in organic leafy green production.



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 aligning natural systems to create vitality and a resilient agroecological system. Put simply, **organic research is applicable to all farming systems**, where chemistry- and genetics-focused research is not always applicable to organic farmers.

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

REGIONAL RESEARCH PRIORITIES

- **Climate adaptation and resilience:** Research on organic farming systems resilient to consistently changing climatic conditions and pest pressures like the Spotted Wing Drosophila, a risk to the region's berry and stone-fruit production.
- **Weed, pest, and disease management:** Non-chemical solutions tailored to organic systems. Persistent, creeping weeds like Canadian Thistle present unique challenges for organic producers of grain trying to maintaining adequate yields.
- **Soil health:** Advancing organic practices that improve soil health, which helps farmers control their production costs through nutrient cycling of on-farm materials like cover crop residue or composted animal manure.

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](https://www.ofrf.org).