



ORGANIC  
FARMING  
RESEARCH  
FOUNDATION

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023



The last year has been an incredibly exciting time for OFRF as we have been building the organizational infrastructure to radically scale up our work, helping organic and transitioning farmers be successful. The true cornerstone of OFRF's impact lies not just in the education we provide or the policies we advocate for but profoundly in the relationships we nurture. Our journey through 2023 has been marked by an incredible expansion and deepening of relationships—each one a testament to the collective spirit that powers our mission.

In 2023, we brought on some incredible new staff as well as three new board members with decades of expertise in organic agriculture. We also initiated a handful of bold new projects, expanded partnership agreements with USDA programs, and deepened relationships with other organizations across the country. These relationships, both new and longstanding, have not only enriched our understanding and passion for organic agriculture but have also amplified our impact. From fields to federal buildings, we engaged in **RESEARCH, EDUCATION, and ADVOCACY** to foster the improvement and widespread adoption of organic farming systems. Our community is instrumental in making all this happen. We are grateful to have you on the journey with us.

*Brise Tencer*

- Brise Tencer,  
OFRF Executive Director



# IMPACT



Photo: Local Color Farm & Fiber  
Featured in OFRF Crop-Livestock Integration resources



**850+**

Downloads of [crop-livestock integration resources](#) in the first 3 months after they were published



**1.3K**

Hours of [educational videos](#) watched



**15**

Translations to [Spanish resources](#)



**3K+**

Attendees across 18 [webinars](#)



**20**

Cosponsors added to OFRF-led research bills



**60+**

Meetings with representatives



**230**

Signatures gathered for sign-on support letters



**2**

Marker bills introduced

**“2023 showed us the power of partnerships.**

Our multi-year partnership with NRCS has allowed us to increase the staff that we have. New staff enable us to move forward with some really exciting initiatives providing assistance on organic transitions, farmer-led research, and making the wealth of University research more accessible to farmers who need it. Each of these projects, and many more, are being done in partnership with other advocates for organic agriculture.”

- Bryan Hager, OFRF Board Chair & Farmer at Crager Hager Farm





# RESEARCH

## The National Organic Research Agenda (NORA)

**O**FRF has funded over 360 grants to up-and-coming researchers across North America who have worked on a wide range of issues in organic production.

Dr. Alejandra Guzmán Luna recently concluded her OFRF-funded project in Chiapas, Mexico working alongside small-scale organic coffee producers from the CESMACH (Campesinos Ecológicos de la Sierra Madre de Chiapas) cooperative. This community relies on certification for their economic prosperity, but practices in their traditional milpa agricultural system were in conflict with their organic certification, and organic coffee growers within CESMACH were struggling with food insecurity because they could not grow crops for themselves and maintain certification for their coffee crop.

Dr. Alejandra’s participatory action research focused on capacity building and training to ensure the growers understood how to produce staple crops using the traditional milpa (corn, bean, squash) agro-ecosystem. This project helped establish demonstration milpa plots where growers learned they could produce their traditional foods without the use of synthetic fertilizers and retain organic certification. It also fostered intergenerational knowledge exchange between youth and elders in the community.

You can watch the journey through three documentaries the youth created to share what they learned about agroecological systems and milpa, published by the transdisciplinary creative group Espora Media.



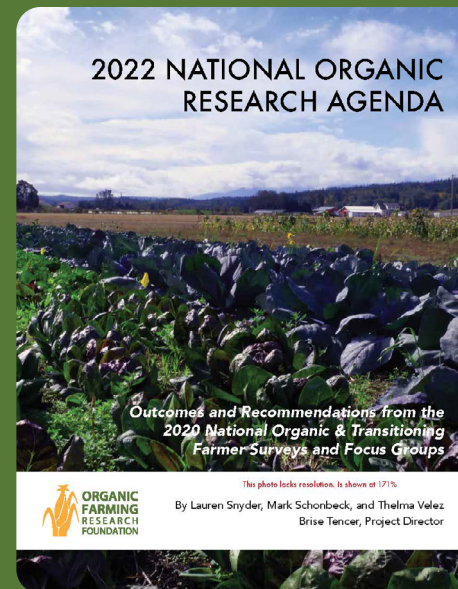
 [Maíz Matazano](#)

 [Semilla de vida](#)

 [Somos Milpa](#)

The NORA report is a roadmap for organic agriculture research, guiding funding and priorities to address key challenges and opportunities within the industry. OFRF published the most recent NORA report in 2022, and 2023 saw us putting it into action!

By aligning research efforts with the needs of organic farmers and the broader organic community, the NORA guides us in ensuring that organic research and policy advancements effectively support sustainable practices, enhance productivity, and promote environmental stewardship in organic agriculture.



*“The significance of the NORA report lies in its representation of the voices and experiences of organic and transitioning farmers across diverse cropping & livestock systems, production scales, and geographical locations nationwide. The findings serve as a roadmap for shaping future research, education, extension, and policy development to propel the organic sector forward.”*

- Chris Schreiner, Oregon Tilth, Executive Director (Organic Certifier)

*“As an economist working in organic agriculture over the past 25 years, I have come to rely on OFRF’s survey efforts to help prioritize research efforts. The NORA report provides farmer insight that is not available elsewhere; it has informed my work at the state level with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and has been instrumental to development of the organic price reporting service for the Upper Midwest, which I created in collaboration with the USDA Agricultural Market News Service.”*

- Gigi DiGiacomo, University of Minnesota, (Researcher)



Photo: Traditional and organic milpa of Doña Amalia, a member of the coffee cooperative.

# Farmer Led Trials

In the fall of 2023, we launched the [Farmer-Led Trials \(FLT\) Program](#), which recognizes that farmers are experimenters by nature and provides funding and technical support for developing and conducting on-farm research. We received 30 applications from farmers across the county and [ten were selected](#) to participate in the first-year cohort. We are excited to introduce them to you and look forward to watching them grow!

Our team will spend the next year with them, coaching, teaching, and amplifying their work. Utilizing our new [Farmers Guide to Conducting On Farm Research](#) these farmers will walk through the seven steps of developing an experiment. This resource is available on our website and includes informational illustrations and worksheets.

We are excited to support more farmers to confidently participate in practical, high-impact trials and connect them with the wider agricultural community to share what they learn. Over the next year we will highlight one farmer story each month on our [blog](#).



*“Being part of the FLT program was a no-brainer for us on our farm. The land on our farm is in desperate need of rejuvenation and planting cover crops is the obvious solution. By partnering with OFRF, not only do we get some funding but we get to create a project that will help us determine the very best cover crops to solve some of our soil health issues. We get expert advice and feedback through all stages of the project from planning, implementing, data collection, and interpreting results. Then, at the end, our farm gets answers to legitimate questions that will improve our soil and we get to share this data with others who might be asking the same questions.*

***FLT’s are a win-win-win scenario for the farmer, the research group, and future farmers who will be able to learn from the data.”***

**-Tim Colby, Colby Farms, FLT Program Participant**

## Farmer Led Trials, First Cohort

*Applications for the 2025 cohort will open this fall.*

Rhianna Simes,  
Verdant Phoenix  
Farm

Research on the impact of tarping and tilling to determine the best practices on soil health and weed termination on her small scale farm setting.

Tim Colby,  
Colby Farms

Research comparing cover crop species to reduce soil compaction has the potential to help farmers identify the best cover crop options when facing this challenge.

Maggie Dungan,  
Salad Days Farm

Research on the effects of soil solarization on soil health has the potential to help us understand the impacts of this practice on the biological community of the soil over time.

Lindsey Klaunig,  
Trouvaille Farm

Research on the use of shadecloth on pepper production for seed yield has the potential to help us understand if this practice is economically viable.

Nathan Lada,  
Green Things Farm  
Collective

Research on the effects of row distances in yield of beets and radishes will help farmers fine tune their production practices to maximize yield in intensive small scale farming settings.

Jorge Reyes,  
Reyes Vineyard

Research on the use of mulch in vineyards has the potential to help us understand the effects on soil moisture retention and weed management.

Jennifer Barrientos,  
Kennebec Valley  
Farm

Research on the use of soil amendments versus manure compost has the potential to provide useful soil health and economic information that can lead to improved soil fertility management.

Tiffany Stanley,  
A Different Chick  
Farm and Orchard

Research comparing farm-made compost versus commercial fertilizers has the potential to reduce off-farm costs and maximize profits.

Bob Quinn,  
Quinn Farm & Ranch,  
Quinn Institute

Research on varieties for hard white winter wheat can help farmers and bakers access winter wheat varieties that can reduce risks of crop failure due to climate change.



# EDUCATION

In our NORA report, we heard from farmers that finding and accessing markets for their products was a major challenge, so we brought together a panel of three women farmers to share their insights and tips with other growers across the country for an interactive, virtual Farmer-to-Farmer Networking Session. Each panelist brought their experience of successfully managing farm challenges and engaged farmers across the country, inviting questions and sharing strategies.

## WOMEN FARMER PERSPECTIVES

**ANNA JONES-CRABTREE**  
VILICUS FARM, MONTANA

Anna discussed the importance of “creating more equitable risk-sharing models across the supply chain” and the need to build relationships with buyers for your end product ahead of time.

**PAM MACK**  
L. MARIE LTD, OHIO

Pam shared her insights on developing a specialized CSA for elderly folks, selling at farmers’ markets, retail stores, employee markets, and the farm-share program for marginalized and underserved communities.

**AMY VAN SCOIK** FROGSONG ORGANICS, FLORIDA

Amy highlighted the importance of diversification of not just the products you sell, but where and how you market and sell them, “...that was really important during the pandemic, that diversity, being able to pivot and have an online store helped when the restaurants closed and we were able to have people come to the farm.”

## Seeds Of Success

*SoS events are made possible by funding from TOPP National (OFA) and a USDA-NIFA cooperative agreement.*

Seeds of Success (SoS) is a partnered effort that provides informal spaces to reflect, share, and discuss relevant and timely challenges and opportunities in organic farming and organic agriculture research. This unique series of virtual networking sessions is interactive and engaging, cultivating fruitful conversations, encouraging the exchange of game-changing insights, and growing connections.

## Crop-Livestock Integration Resources

In the 2022 NORA report, we heard [the call](#) from organic farmers for more resources on Integrated Crop-Livestock Systems (ICLS). To address this need, OFRF dove head first into a series of interviews with highly experienced organic producers across the US and developed factsheets, farmer stories, and a video presentation that are all available for free on a [new Crop-Livestock Integration page](#) on our website. The resources focus on four themes most relevant to the farmers we interviewed:



- [Benefits](#)
- [Food Safety](#)
- [Infrastructure](#)
- [Crop Rotations](#)

*Funding for CLI resources was made possible by [Farmers Advocating for Organic](#).*

## Coming in 2024: Organic Research Content Hub

Organic farmers have long requested an accessible and centralized directory of science-based resources to help producers find and utilize agricultural research to overcome on-farm obstacles more effectively. OFRF is rising to this call by developing a new centralized Research Hub focused on collating, synthesizing, and summarizing scientific and technical resources for organic and transitioning farmers.

## Spanish Resources

[Recursos en Español](#)

OFRF is excited to introduce our [Spanish-language Resources](#) webpage dedicated to making education, research, and technical assistance resources accessible to more Spanish-speaking farmers! With partners at UC SAREP, NCAT, and ALBA, OFRF recently published a free online course in Spanish, [Los Fundamentos de la Salud del Suelo](#), focused on building soil health.

To continue striving for a more inclusive and equitable agricultural system and promote language justice, the team will continue to develop and translate grower education factsheets, video content, and technical assistance resources.



*Funding was made possible by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service through grant 21SCBPCA1002. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.*



# ADVOCACY

In 2023, our collaborative policy work led to the introduction of two important marker bills that OFRF worked with elected officials to draft: the [Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act](#) (SOAR) in the House, and the [Organic Science and Research Investment Act](#) (OSRI) in the Senate. Through sustained advocacy efforts, over 20 additional co-sponsors have signed onto these bills since their introduction.

*“The Farm Bill is a comprehensive piece of legislation that shapes agricultural policy, nutrition programs, and rural development initiatives for the next five years. My internship with the Organic Farming Research Foundation has provided me with a front-row seat to this intricate process. I’ve witnessed various organic and sustainable agriculture advocacy organizations, all working towards a common goal – a resilient and sustainable agricultural future. I’ve worked to promote different marker bills, legislation used to signal positions on issues within our legislative bodies. This work has helped me to see that the Farm Bill isn’t just an obscure collection of irrelevant policies; it’s about our farmers, our land, our health, and our food security. The bills that make up this Farm Bill will dictate the immediate future of agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and forestry of the US.”*

- Adam Bagul, Policy & Communications Intern, Summer 2023

## Internships

OFRF offers internships that can focus on policy, research, education, communication or other tasks. [Learn more here](#) and with these blog posts from 2023 OFRF interns:

[organic agriculture & advocacy](#)

[organic agriculture & public health](#)



Left to right: Abby Youngblood (National Organic Coalition), Rep. Becca Balint (VT), Dr. Jennifer Taylor (Lola’s Organic Farm), & Gordon Merrick (OFRF) in DC during a National Organic Coalition delegation, March 2023.

## Individual Impact

Eric Brennan’s story showcases the [potent impact individuals can have on policy](#) when their expertise intersects with crucial decision-making moments. As a research horticulturist specializing in organic farming systems and climate-smart agriculture, Brennan found himself pivotal in shaping Ag Order 4.0, a regulatory program aimed at safeguarding groundwater resources from agricultural runoff in California’s central coast region. His presentation to the board, grounded in his extensive research on cover crops and compost use, effectively highlighted scientific flaws and proposed alternative solutions. Brennan’s testimony proved compelling, leading to unanimous board approval of his suggestions.



Farmer Eric Brennan with cereal cover crop samples. Background: Trials of cover crop for Ag Order 4.0

OFRF’s advocacy work is rooted in engagement and connection. Stories like Brennan’s motivate us to lead our “Communicating with Legislators” workshops or to work tirelessly with partners such as the National Organic Coalition and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition to outline [Farm Bill and Appropriations priorities](#).

## Communicating with Legislators Workshop Series

*“The biggest takeaway from this was about coming across to legislators as their allies in keeping them abreast with solutions and recommendations being identified via food systems interdisciplinary research... I feel all the more prepared to work with our policy director to do more direct engagement with our legislators.”*

- Nathalie Munoz, Workshop Attendee

## Organic Is Regenerative Toolkit



Our toolkits put the power in the hands of our community to advocate for policies and science-backed practices that support organic agriculture. After years of work with National Organic Coalition and General Mills, OFRF has released our Organic is Regenerative messaging toolkit. It has everything you need, from social media graphics to citations for each and every claim.

[Download the toolkit](#)

[Other OFRF toolkits](#)

Let us know when you use them!  
[comms@ofrf.org](mailto:comms@ofrf.org)

## New Staff Hired 2023

*"At its heart, organic farming exemplifies a holistic or systems approach to farming, which intrigues me as an agronomist and self-confessed soil biology nerd. I'm also really grateful for the continued efforts to preserve the integrity of the organic label and for the freedom of choice that brings to our food system."*

-Heather Estrada,  
Research & Education Senior Scientist



*"One of the fundamental organic farming principles is to care for a living soil and the entire farming ecosystem. To do that, organic farmers nurture their soil and protect their water, biodiversity, and other natural resources. Today, more than ever, we need this type of holistic resource management to care for ourselves and our earth."*

-Jose Perez Orozco,  
Research & Education Engagement Coordinator



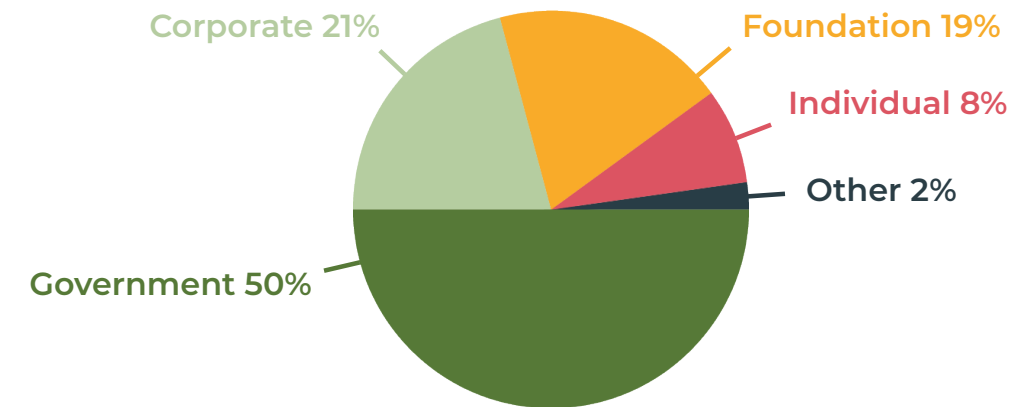
*"My first year with this remarkable organization has been filled with enlightening encounters and engaging dialogues. As I have gotten to know all our partners and friends, I've been profoundly moved by the depth of passion and commitment to our mission. Whether you have been with us from the beginning or are one of the fresh faces bringing new energy and perspectives, everyone has a story of how our work has impacted you. I am deeply grateful for this dynamic community, and I look forward to many more years of working and growing together in support of organic agriculture."*

-Leah Lawson,  
Partnerships & Development Director

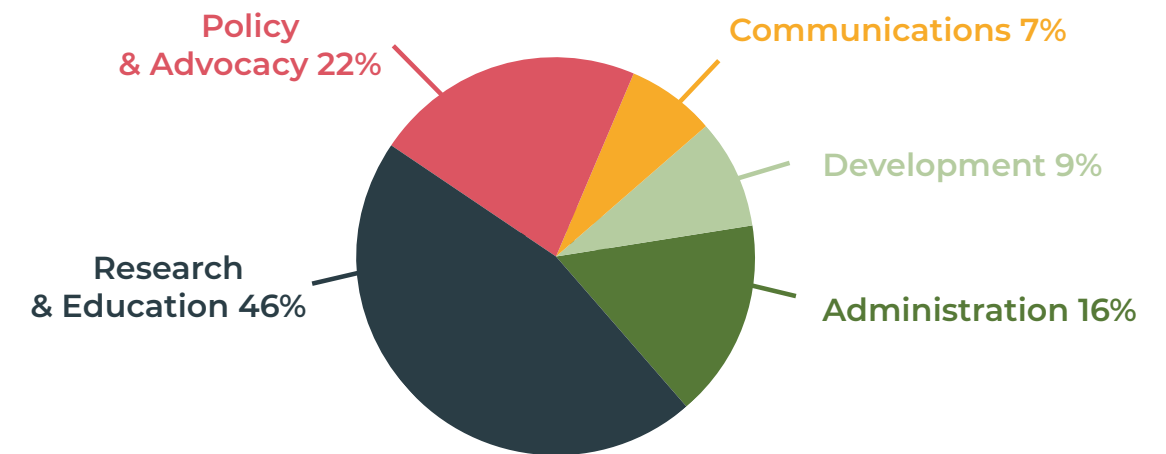


## 2023 FINANCIALS

### Revenue Sources



### Expenses by Program in 2023



*As we step into another year, we carry forward the knowledge that our strength lies in our unity. Through the lens of these relationships, we view our past achievements and future aspirations, ever grateful for the network of partners, supporters, and friends who make it all possible. Together, we're not just cultivating land; we're cultivating a movement bound by the shared belief in a sustainable, healthy, and equitable food system for all.*

### THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO BE A PART OF MAKING THAT HAPPEN!

- CASH DONATIONS
- STOCKS & SECURITIES
- VEHICLES
- IRA'S
- DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS
- CORPORATE MATCHING



Learn about ways to donate to OFRF



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