

The Honorable Glenn "GT" Thompson  
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Scott  
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

May 25, 2023

Dear Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Scott, and Members of the Committee:

We, the undersigned, respectfully recommend that the Committee incorporate the language and programs detailed in the Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act (H.R. 2720, SOAR Act) into the 2023 Farm Bill. As you know, every dollar invested in agricultural research returns \$20 to our economy. This legislation does three things that would increase the resilience of U.S. agriculture, create economic opportunity for producers, and result in improved ecological vitality of the landscape:

1. **Bolsters the funding for the Organic Research and Extension Initiative.** The SOAR Act would provide stair-stepped budget increases to the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), from \$60 million in 2024 to \$100 million in 2028.
2. **Provides Congressional authorization and direction for the Researching the Transition to Organic Program.** The bill would also provide first-time Congressional authorization for the Researching the Transition to Organic Program (RTOP), currently known as the Organic Transition Research Program (ORG), with an authorization for appropriations of \$10 million a year from 2024-2026 and \$20 million from 2027-2028.
3. **Bolsters funding for the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative (ODI).** Providing \$10 million over the life of the Farm Bill, the SOAR Act would double the farm bill funding for this crucial joint-initiative of three USDA Agencies: NASS, Economic Research Service (ERS), and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The data produced through the ODI is essential for the development of risk management products and targeted market development. The SOAR Act also directs ERS to conduct a full, systematic evaluation of the economic impact organic agriculture has on rural and urban communities, taking into account economic, ecological, and social factors.

All of these policies represent a significant step toward providing needed investments into organic agriculture research, supporting a rapidly-growing and -maturing organic food and agriculture market. The USDA has made historic investments in supporting organic agriculture producers through the \$300 million Organic Transition Initiative (OTI), but unfortunately there is no research component to the OTI. Agricultural and economic research investments must be a part of the United States' strategy to facilitate increasing domestic organic production to meet increasing domestic and international demand for organic products. Currently, NIFA invests ~2% of their budget into direct organic agriculture research, while organic agriculture makes up more than 6% of the food sales market. The policies in the SOAR Act provide research tools to farmers, but also market signals to researchers that organic agriculture research is a valued and important area of study and incentivizes young researchers to pursue organic agriculture research projects and expertise.

Alongside these market-wide benefits, public investments in agricultural research can have significant impact on rural communities. For example, the competitive grant research programs OREI and ORG require all research projects to involve producers in their research. This participation ensures that the research conducted produces action-oriented, usable research

products that ultimately increase the economic profitability and ecological vitality of farming operations. Additionally, nearly all projects provide meaningful compensation to the participating farmers, representing a direct benefit to interested producers.

It is also important to note that investing into organic agriculture research does not only benefit organic producers. Research of practices, techniques, and systems that originate in organic research often are adopted by conventional operations due to economic and ecological efficacy. This includes the increasing use of cover crops in field crop production, as well as integrated pest management techniques like codling moth disruption in apple and pear production. Conversely, conventional research often cannot be utilized by organic producers due to the substance restrictions and systems-based method of production.

We thank you for considering the SOAR Act, and look forward to discussing these policies with you and your offices,

Organic Farming Research Foundation

**Business Support:**

PCC Community Markets  
Potomac Vegetable Farms Inc.  
National Co+op Grocers  
Straus Family Creamery  
Hanover Co-op Food Stores  
Twin Oaks Dairy LLC  
Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI)  
Organic Valley  
Whole Foods Market  
Lady Moon Farms  
Combined Farm & Business  
LaRocca Vineyards  
Stonyfield  
Lundberg Family Farms  
Taylor Farms  
Clif Bar & Company

**Academia Support:**

University of Arizona Division of Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension  
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future  
Tuskegee University  
Cornell University College of Agriculture & Life Sciences  
Washington State University  
National Association of Plant Breeders  
University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources  
University of California System  
University of California, Santa Cruz

**Organizational Support:**

Iowa Organic Association  
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY)  
Northeast Organic Farming Association-Interstate Council (NOFA-IC)  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Maine Farmland Trust  
Friends of the Earth  
Oregon Tilth  
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture  
Farm Aid  
Virginia Association for Biological Farming  
NESAWG Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group  
Chicago Food Policy Action Council  
National Organic Coalition  
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association  
Organic Farmers Association  
Wild Farm Alliance  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ)  
Organic Trade Association  
The Organic Center  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut (NOFA-CT)  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)  
Funders For Regenerative Agriculture  
Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO)  
California FarmLink  
California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)  
Center for Food Safety  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire (NOFA-NH)  
Carbon180  
Synergistic Hawaii Agriculture Council  
Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA (RAFI-USA)  
Organic Farmers Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM)  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
The Cornucopia Institute  
Land Stewardship Project  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Marbleseed