

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- Rhode Island has **50 organic businesses**, 28 are organic farms with **over \$1.5 million in sales** in 2021.
- Rhode Island's top organic **commodities are specialty crops like tomatoes, onions, and lettuce.**
- Rhode Island's organic market **added eight farms from 2019-2021.** The national organic market is projected to grow **another 28% through 2029** due to increasing consumer demand and interest in climate-resilient agriculture.
- Rhode Island reported **257 certified organic acres** in 2021.
- Organic specialty crops represent a significant portion of the state's organic economy, with **26 organic crop farms with \$1.4 million in sales in 2021.**



ORGANIC RESEARCH

- The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) **has awarded over \$3.5 million in grants** to the state's research institutions for organic research, **which translates to over \$70 million in economic activity**, according to the Economic Research Service.
- Agricultural Research Service (**ARS**) has funded no research in the state, **representing a gap in the agency's research portfolio.**
- The University of Rhode Island has played a crucial role in organic agriculture research, investing **over \$3.5 million in research** on organic farming since 2021 that directly answers organic farmer concerns.
- One cutting-edge research project is developing tools for the state's specialty crop producers that lower food safety barriers to larger markets.



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).