

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- **Ranking 5th in the nation**, Washington has **1,355 organic businesses**, 730 are organic farms with **over \$1.1 billion in sales** in 2021.
- Washington's top 10 crops are generally **specialty crops like apples, potatoes, cherries and grapes**.
- Washington's organic market **grew 29% from 2019-2021**. The national organic market is projected to grow **another 28% through 2025** due to increasing consumer demand and interest in climate-resilient agriculture.
- Washington reported **nearly 135,000 certified organic acres** in 2021.
- Organic apple production represents a significant portion of the state's organic economy, with **263 organic apple farms generating \$600 million in sales in 2021**.



ORGANIC RESEARCH

- The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) **has awarded over \$25.5 million in grants** to the state's research institutions for organic research, **which translates to over \$500 million in economic activity**, according to the Economic Research Service.
- Agricultural Research Service (**ARS**) has historically funded **over 40 projects** in the state researching organic topics, **but only four remain active, revealing a significant gap in the agency's research portfolio**.
- Washington State University has played a crucial role in organic agriculture research, investing **nearly \$6.5 million** on organic farming since 2020 that directly answers farmer concerns.
- One cutting-edge research project is developing cultivars of buckwheat that deliver both attractive economical outputs as well as build soil health and offer other ecological benefits.



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.