

2012 Organic Land Grant Assessment



When an organic farmer succeeds,
we all thrive.

Cultivating Organic Farmers

BACKGROUND

Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) is the only national, non-profit organization to track and report organic programs and activity in the U.S. land grant system. Our leadership position ensures that education, research, and outreach services are highly responsive to the needs of certified organic farmers and ranchers.

Because federal funds support the land grant system, OFRF expects it to be responsive to the educational and research needs of all its constituents, including the growing organic sector. As the organic industry has grown from \$7.4 billion in sales in 2001 to \$28.6 billion in 2010, OFRF expects the land grant system to keep up the pace with increased investment in organic research, outreach, and training opportunities.

In 2001 and 2003, OFRF published the first inventories of organic activity in the land grant system. At the time, OFRF used the metric of certified organic research acres as the primary indicator of institutional commitment to conducting research meaningful to organic producers.



Today, OFRF is delivering an updated inventory of land grant organic activity using more sophisticated methods to measure an institution’s level of commitment to organic agriculture. Each institution has been assessed using an 8-point system that integrates all three elements — organic research, extension, and education — into a single score that provides a firm basis on which to compare organic activity at each institution. Points were given for having certified organic research land; having a student organic or “sustainable” farm; offering an organic major, minor, or certificate; providing organic Extension resources; and other factors.



The quantitative data generated from this report will allow us to drill deeper into answering questions including:

1. What elements of organic research programs are most relevant to the urgent needs of organic farmers?
2. What programs best train future organic farmers?
3. To what degree do student organic farms build greater consumer awareness?

Land Grant Organic Trends	2003	2011
# of states with certified organic research acres	18	37
# of student organic farms	9	36
# of organic academic programs offered	0	8
# of states offering organic Extension resources	42	45



TRENDS

The top six campuses with a full 8 points are:

- ▶ Colorado State University, Fort Collins
- ▶ University of Minnesota, St. Paul
- ▶ University of Florida, Gainesville
- ▶ University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- ▶ Michigan State University, East Lansing
- ▶ Washington State University, Pullman

Of these, University of Tennessee is the newest addition to the organic scene, featuring an organic research farm for research and teaching, an 8-month organic farm internship program, and a new Organic Production concentration in the Plant Sciences major.

We are seeing a clear commitment by institutions in most states to conduct research on certified organic research land. In fact, having certified organic research or student farm land has become the norm for the majority of land grants. Some institutions manage their programs under the rubric of “sustainable agriculture” and manage their facilities organically but don’t feel the need to certify the land.



OFRF believes that the process of certifying research land and student farms is crucial for two main reasons: it presents an educational opportunity for students and researchers, and it dedicates an area to ongoing organic management, a critical factor in generating useful data from research conducted at these sites.

OFRF is seeing the most distinctive trends in the area of education. When OFRF began assessing land grant organic activity, the primary concern was to discover whether or not the land grants were generating relevant production information for organic producers and conveying this information to the organic farming community. Over the past 8 years, the role of the land grant universities as a training ground for the next generation of organic farmers, ranchers, and researchers has expanded greatly, as reflected in the four-fold increase in student organic farms and the proliferation of organic academic programs offered.



Five years ago, Washington State University was first in the country to offer students a major in organic agriculture. Today, these eight land grant universities provide students the option for an organic major, minor, or certificate:



Colorado State University

Fort Collins

Interdisciplinary Minor in Organic Agriculture.



University of Florida

Gainesville

Organic Crop Production is a “specialization” option offered to undergraduates through the Horticultural Science Department.



Michigan State University

East Lansing

Sustainable and Organic Program of Study in Horticulture and an Organic Farmer Training Program certificate.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

University of Minnesota

St. Paul

The Horticulture Major features an Organic Horticulture and Local Food Program of Study.



University of Tennessee

Knoxville

Organic Production concentration of study in the Plant Sciences major.



Washington State University

Pullman

B.S. in Agricultural and Food Systems with a major in Organic Agriculture Systems and an Undergraduate Certificate in Organic Agriculture.



The University of Georgia

University of Georgia

Athens

Certificate Program in Organic Agriculture.



University of Nebraska

Lincoln

Organic Systems Option for Agronomy and Horticulture undergraduate majors



Growing Organic Farmers, Researchers and Policy Advocates

Organic programs that include a combination of formal curriculum, production at a student farm, and marketing and distribution training may prove to produce the most highly trained organic farmers. OFRF will continue to closely track the best models for training the next generation of organic farmers, ranchers, researchers, and policy advocates. This current assessment is the basis for a larger strategy aimed at building the educational and scientific infrastructure to meet tomorrow's organic consumer demand.

Next Steps

The information gathered for this report yielded a vast amount of state-specific data on organic programs. Daily, OFRF receives requests for this information from farmers, scientists, students, organic advocates, policy makers, industry representatives, funders and citizens. OFRF plans to organize and present state-specific information and make it easily accessible to all interested parties.

Value Criteria

A point was given for each of the following attributes:

1. Certified organic research or student farm ground
2. Organic experiment station ground
3. A student organic or “sustainable” farm—a training site
4. An organic major, minor or certificate program
5. An organic course of any kind
6. A dedicated organic staff or faculty person
7. Organic Extension resources
8. An annual organic field day



State	Town	Score
THE TOP SIX		
Colorado State University	Fort Collins	8
University of Florida	Gainesville	8
Michigan State University	East Lansing	8
University of Minnesota	St. Paul	8
University of Tennessee	Knoxville	8
Washington State University	Pullman	8

THE SECOND TIER		
University of Georgia	Athens	7
University of Nebraska	Lincoln	7
Oregon State University	Corvallis	7
Iowa State University	Ames	7
North Carolina State University	Raleigh	7
Ohio State University	Columbus	7
Clemson University	Clemson, South Carolina	7
University of Vermont	Burlington	7
University of Wisconsin	Madison	7

ALMOST THERE		
Auburn University	Auburn, Alabama	6
University of Idaho	Moscow	6
University of New Hampshire	Durham	6
Cornell University	Ithaca, New York	6
University of California System	Davis, Berkeley, Riverside	6
University of Arkansas	Fayetteville	5
Purdue University	West Lafayette, Indiana	5
Kansas State University	Manhattan	5
University of Kentucky	Lexington	5
Kentucky State University	Frankfort	5
University of Maine	Orono	5
Rutgers University	New Brunswick, New Jersey	5
Penn State University	University Park	5
Texas A&M	College Station	5
Utah State University	Logan	5
West Virginia University	Morgantown	5



State	Town	Score
OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH		
University of Hawaii at Manoa	Honolulu	4
University of Massachusetts	Amherst	4
Montana State University	Bozeman	4
New Mexico State University	Las Cruces	4
North Dakota State University	Fargo	4
Oklahoma State University	Stillwater	4
University of Wyoming	Laramie	4
University of Maryland Eastern Shore	Princess Anne	3.5
University of Illinois	Urbana-Champaign	3
Louisiana State University	Baton Rouge	3
University of Maryland	College Park	3
Mississippi State University	Mississippi State	3
Alcorn State University	Lorman, Mississippi	3
Lincoln University	Jefferson City, Missouri	3
South Dakota State University	Brookings	3
Tennessee State University	Nashville	3
Alabama A&M	Huntsville	3

URGENTLY NEEDS INVESTMENT		
University of Alaska	Fairbanks	2
University of Arizona	Tucson	2
University of Connecticut	Storrs	2
Prairie View A&M University	Prairie View, Texas	2
Virginia Polytech	Blacksburg	2
Virginia State University	Petersburg	2
Tuskegee	Tuskegee, Alabama	1
University of Arkansas	Pine Bluff	1
University of Delaware	Newark	1
Delaware State University	Dover	1
Fort Valley State University	Fort Valley, Georgia	1
University of Missouri	Columbia	1
University of Nevada	Reno	1
Langston	Langston, Oklahoma	1
University of Rhode Island	Kingston	1
South Carolina State University	Orangeburg	1
North Carolina A&T	Greensboro	1
University of the District of Columbia	Washington, D.C.	0
Southern University & A&M	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	0
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Cambridge	0
West Virginia State University	Institute	0
Florida A&M	Tallahassee	0

