

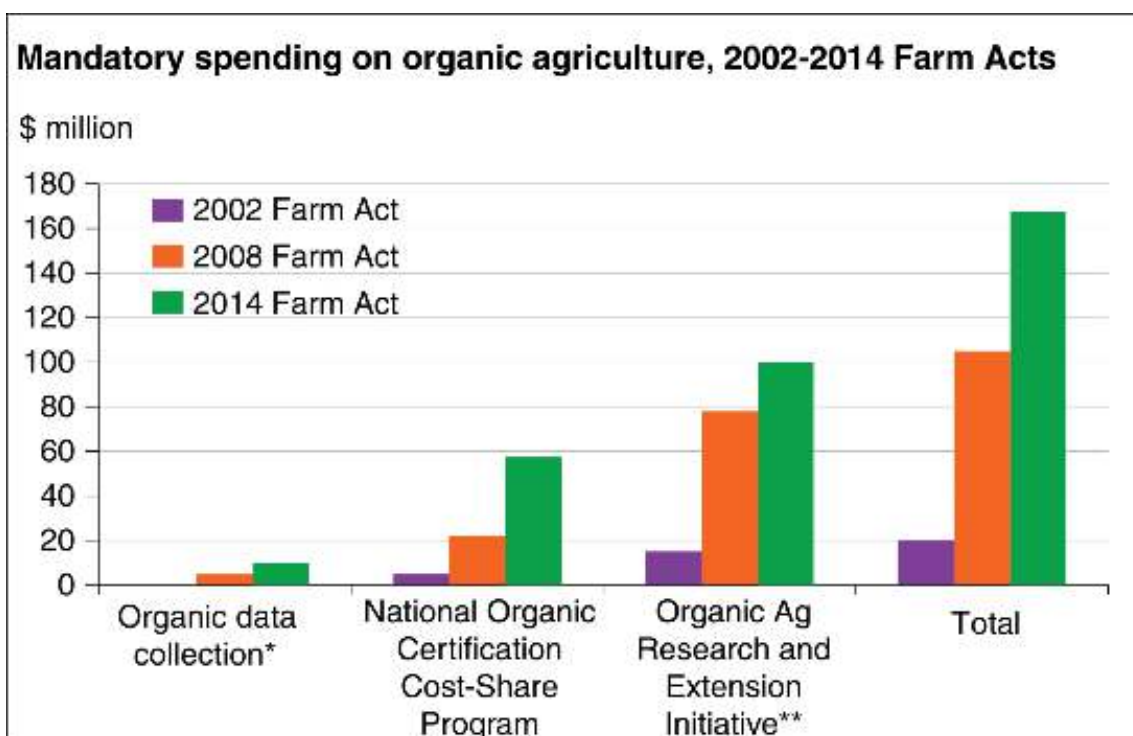


# Organic Working Group Update

September 17, 2015  
Expo East



# Federal Funding for Organic





# **USDA Organic Vision and Leadership**

## Departmental Leadership: Priorities



### **USDA Goals and Vision for Organic**

- USDA Strategic Plan
- Departmental Guidance
- Organic Working Group



# USDA Strategic Plan & Organic Agriculture



- **Goal:** increase the number of certified organic operations to 20,000 by 2018
- **Strategy:**
  - Research and education
  - Outreach to farmers through field offices
  - Risk management tools (crop insurance)
  - Reduce paperwork / eliminate duplication
  - Make certification simpler – small & beginning farmers



## USDA Departmental Guidance on Organic



USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack's May 2013 departmental guidance on organic agriculture instructed all agencies to incorporate organic into their mission and outlined 5 priorities:

- Training and outreach
- Growing the sector
- Regulatory reciprocity (reducing paperwork)
- Research
- Data

## USDA Organic Working Group



- The Organic Working Group (OWG) is led by AMS Administrator **Anne Alonzo**, has members from all across USDA
- The OWG tracks progress against the Secretary's annual goals for organic
- External speakers present at OWG meetings and brown bag lunches
- Coordination with local & regional, sustainability & food waste, beginning farmers, and veterans efforts



## **Field Agency Initiatives: Conservation, Financing, and Infrastructure**



## Conservation and Organic



### Natural Resources Conservation Service

- New programs for transitioning producers
- Environmental benefits of organic webinar series
- Training and technical guidance for field staff





### Farm Service Agency

- Low-Interest Loans: farm storage facilities, microloans
- Bridges to Opportunity: connecting producers with USDA resources
- Organic farm tours and field education





## Rural Development

- Business & industry guaranteed loans
- Business development grants & grants to establishment of cooperative development centers
- Rural Opportunities for Investment



## Expanding Crop Insurance Tools



### Crop insurance tools for organic producers

Insurance programs:

- Whole Farm: revenue-based, for diversified farms
- Contract price elections: based on market contracts
- Price elections: crop-by-crop prices

RMA released new organic crop insurance tools in September – almost 50% of all crops have organic options





## **Organic Research and Data**

# Supporting Research and Education on Organic



## Research

- Research focuses on improving productivity and success of organic
- National Institute for Food & Agriculture provides grants externally for organic research
- Agricultural Research Service conducts internal long-term organic studies





## Farming Systems Project



### **ARS long-term, side-by-side field trials**



## Proceedings of USDA Organic Research Conference



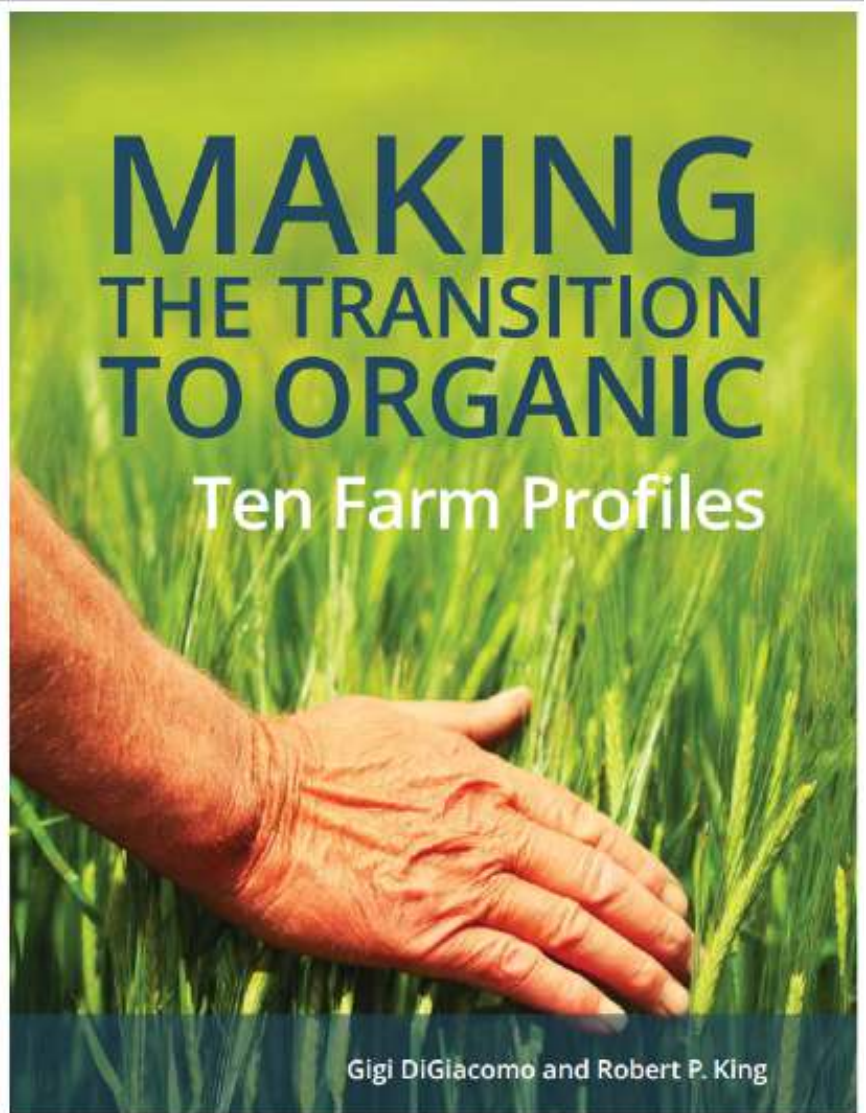
- Special organic issue of Sustainable Agriculture Research journal is now online
- Proceedings of USDA-sponsored organic symposium in Long Beach, CA in November 2014

**[www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/sar/issue/view/1329](http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/sar/issue/view/1329)**



NIFA-funded project:  
**Tools for Transition**

**[eorganic.info/](http://eorganic.info/ToolsForTransition)**  
**ToolsFor**  
**Transition**



## Data on Organic Production



### Data

- National Agricultural Statistics Service reports on organic production data, acreage, volumes, and prices
- Agricultural Marketing Service publishes organic market prices weekly, including fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy
- Economic Research Service provides cost of production data on organic corn, soy, wheat, & dairy

## Organic Producer Survey



Hot off the presses!  
The 2014 Organic Producer Survey results  
were released **today** at noon.

**[www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Organic\\_Survey](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Organic_Survey)**

**Webinar:** Sept. 29, 1:00 Eastern Standard Time

**[www.readytalk.com](http://www.readytalk.com)**, passcode 720 6000

## Market News



- Newly available Market News reports
  - Local and regional
  - Non-GMO grains
- Organic reports expanding
- New portal simplifies reporting, continues to improve



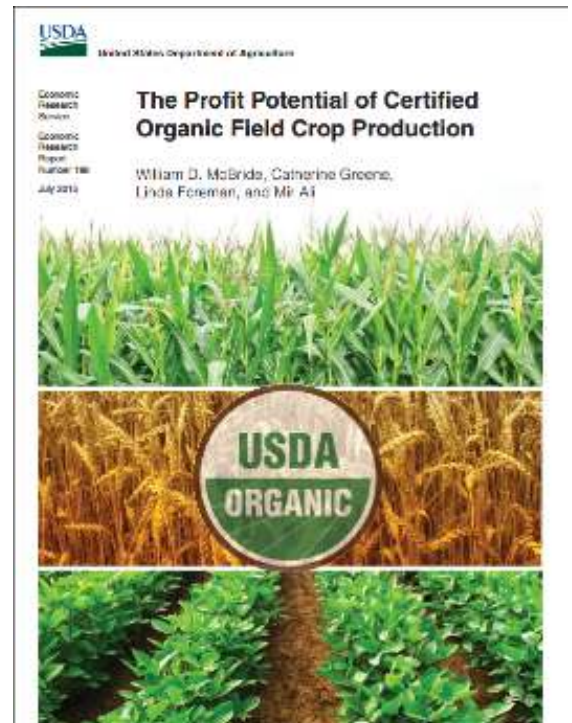
## Economic Research



### Profit Potential of Certified Organic Field Crop Production

- Organic producers are less likely to work off-farm
- Different cultivation practices – more mechanical weed control, more diverse crop rotations
- Despite higher per-acre costs, organic has greater returns

[www.ers.usda.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov)





## **Training and Outreach**

# Organic Literacy Initiative



## Organic Literacy: Organic Fundamentals and USDA Support

- Online training modules & in-person workshops
  - Over 30,000 USDA staff trained on organic since 2012
- In-depth guides to organic production & certification
  - Focus on field office tools
- Organic “portal,” a one-stop shop for organic resources

**[www.usda.gov/organic](http://www.usda.gov/organic)**

- New content coming soon – focus on transition, sound & sensible



# USDA Organic Portal



USDA United States Department of Agriculture

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Topics Programs and Services Newsroom Blog

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You are here: Home / Organic Agriculture

**Overview**

- Organic Agriculture
- Benefits of Organic Certification
- Is Organic an Option for Me?
- Organic Fact Sheets
- Organic 101 Blogs

**Programs and Services**

- View Organic Standards
- Become Certified Organic
- Find Financial Resources for Farmers
- Learn About Research and Education
- Get Production and Conservation Assistance
- Buy Improved Crop Insurance
- Access Economic and Market Information
- Import or Export Organic Products
- Contact Your Local Field Office


**Sign Up**

Get updates on USDA's Organic topics with your email address:

**Is Organic an Option for Me?**

Are you thinking about transitioning to organic? Learn how the USDA supports organic agriculture through standards, enforcement, certification, market information, funding, extension, and research.

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**Organic Agriculture**

USDA is committed to helping organic agriculture grow and thrive. To help meet Secretary Vilsack's goal of increasing the number of certified organic operations, USDA is delivering results through its many programs which serve the growing organic sector. October 2012 marked the 10th anniversary of the USDA Organic Seal, and we are proud that it has become a leading global standard.

**What Is Organic Agriculture?**

Organic agriculture produces products using methods that preserve the environment and avoid most synthetic materials, such as pesticides and antibiotics. USDA organic standards describe how farmers grow crops and raise livestock and which materials they may use.

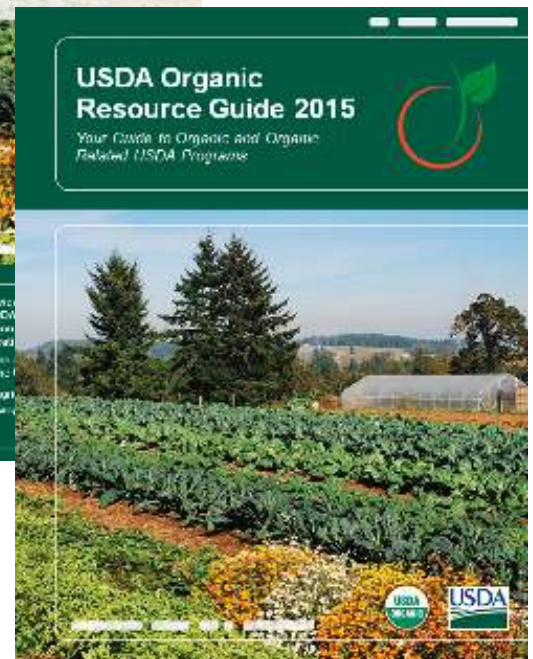
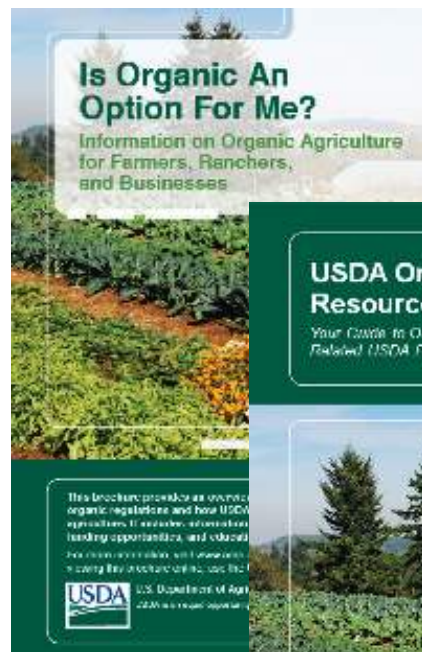
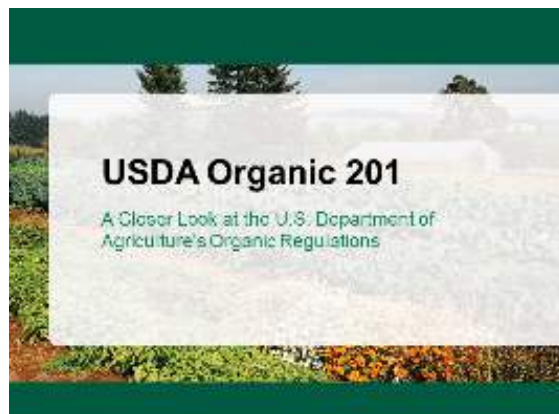
Organic farmers, ranchers, and food processors follow a defined set of standards to produce organic food and fiber. Congress described general organic principles in the Organic Foods Production Act, and the USDA defines specific organic standards. These standards cover the product from farm to table, including soil and water quality, pest control, livestock practices, and rules for food additives.

Organic farms and processors:

- Preserve natural resources and biodiversity
- Support animal health and welfare
- Provide access to the outdoors so that animals can exercise their natural behaviors
- Only use approved materials
- Do not use genetically modified ingredients
- Receive annual on-site inspections



# Organic Literacy Initiative Snapshot





## Questions?

**Betsy Rakola**

**USDA Agricultural Marketing Service**

**Organic Policy Advisor**

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