



# ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION

*fostering the improvement and widespread adoption of organic farming*

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman, Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry  
United States Senate  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boozman  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

July 13, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, and Members of the Committee:

We, the undersigned, respectfully recommend that the Committee incorporate the language and programs detailed in the Organic Science and Research Investment Act (OSRI Act) into the 2023 Farm Bill. As you know, every dollar invested in agricultural research returns \$20 to our economy.<sup>1</sup> This legislation does four 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) **Creates the Coordinating and Expanding Organic Research Initiative.** This initiative charges the Research, Education, and Economics agencies at USDA to catalog the current, ongoing research on organic food and agriculture topics and provide recommendations intended to increase the amount of organic agriculture research conducted and funded by the USDA.
- 2) **Directs the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to develop a plan to increase organically managed acres.** The plan will formulate how ARS, the sole in-house research operation at USDA, will dedicate a portion of their research fields to organic agriculture research. This portion must be equal or greater than the market share of organic agriculture, as determined by the National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS).
- 3) **Bolsters the organic agriculture programs operated by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA).** The OSRI 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, while also expanding the statutory priorities to include climate change, organic alternatives to prohibited substances, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. 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 \$12 million from 2027-2028.

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<https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2022/june/investment-in-u-s-public-agricultural-research-and-development-has-fallen-by-a-third-over-past-two-decades-lags-major-trade-competitors/>

4) **Bolsters funding for the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative (ODI).**

Providing \$10 million over the life of the Farm Bill, the OSRI 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 OSRI 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, ARS invests less than 1% and NIFA ~2% of their budget into direct organic agriculture research, while organic agriculture makes up more than 6% of the food sales market.<sup>2</sup> The policies in the OSRI 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<sup>3</sup> 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 OSRI Act, and look forward to discussing these policies with you and your offices,

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<sup>2</sup> In 2022, ARS spent ~\$15 million on direct organic research of their \$1.8 billion budget, and NIFA spent ~\$45 million of their \$2.2 billion on organic research.

<sup>3</sup> Changed to RTOP in the OSRI Act

Organic Farming Research Foundation, joined by  
California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)  
California Climate & Agriculture Network (CalCAN)  
California FarmLink  
Carbon180  
Center for Food Safety  
Chicago Food Policy Action Council  
Clif Bar & Company  
Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI)  
Colorado Farm & Food Alliance  
Combined Farm & Business  
Cornell University College of Agriculture & Life Sciences  
Farm Aid  
Friends of the Earth  
Fundors For Regenerative Agriculture  
Hanover Co-op Food Stores  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Iowa Organic Association  
Lady Moon Farms  
Land Stewardship Project  
LaRocca Vineyards  
Lundberg Family Farms  
Maine Farmland Trust  
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

Marbleseed

Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS)

National Association of Plant Breeders

National Co+op Grocers

National Organic Coalition

National Organic Coalition

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

Natural Grocers

Natural Resources Defense Council

NESAWG Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut (NOFA-CT)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire (NOFA-NH)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)

Northeast Organic Farming Association-Interstate Council (NOFA-IC)

Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association

Oregon Tilth

Organic Farmers Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM)

Organic Farmers Association

Organic Valley

Organization, Farm, or Business to appear on Letter

Pasa Sustainable Agriculture

PCC Community Markets

PCO - Pennsylvania Certified Organic

Potomac Vegetable Farms Inc.

Roots of Change

Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA

Stonyfield

Straus Family Creamery

Synergistic Hawaii Agriculture Council

Taylor Farms

The Cornucopia Institute

The Organic Center

Tuskegee University

Twin Oaks Dairy LLC

Union of Concerned Scientists

Virginia Association for Biological Farming

Washington State University

Whole Foods Market

Wild Farm Alliance

Women, Food and Agriculture Network

