

## ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

- **Ranking 7th in the nation**, Arizona has **239 organic businesses**, 62 are organic farms with **over \$162 million in sales** in 2021.
- Arizona's top organic **commodities are specialty crops like lettuce, broccoli, and celery**.
- **90%** of Arizonans buy organic food, a proportion that is higher than the national average.
- Arizona's organic market is projected to continue its growth, with a projected **28% in the next 5 years** due to increasing consumer demand and interest in climate-resilient agriculture.
- Arizona reported **over 22,000 certified organic acres** in 2021, an alarming decrease from the nearly 27,000 acres in 2019.



## ORGANIC RESEARCH

- The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) **has awarded nearly \$3.5 million in grants** to the state's research institutions for organic research. **which translates to nearly \$70 million in economic activity**, according to the Economic Research Service.
- Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has historically funded **two projects** in the state researching organic topics, but those have ended and not been continued.
- The University of Arizona and Arizona State have played a crucial role in organic agriculture research, investigating topics on organic farming from 2020 to 2023 that directly answer Arizonan farmers' concerns.
- One project at the University of Arizona is investigating wine and livestock industry waste as a feedstock for high-quality, organic compost to improve soil and plant health.



## 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

- **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 fertility, structure, and carbon sequestration that help farmers control their production costs through nutrient cycling.
- **Organic seed systems:** Developing and promoting organic seed breeding for regionally adapted and resilient crop varieties.
- **Support for transitioning farmers:** Research and resources for conventional farmers transitioning to organic production.

### 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).*