

Fact Sheet:

Transitioning to Organic Farming for Non-Operator Landowners



What is organic farming?

Organic farming avoids synthetic chemicals and focuses on improving soil health, water quality, and biodiversity through natural methods. It aligns with long-term land stewardship goals, promoting sustainability and conservation.

Why should non-operator landowners consider organic farming?

As a landowner, transitioning your land to organic can:

- **Increase land value.** Certified organic land can command higher rental rates and attract more tenants.
- **Support conservation goals.** Organic practices protect soil, water, and biodiversity, ensuring the land remains productive for future generations.
- **Provide financial benefits.** The demand for organic products continues to grow, offering better market opportunities for farmers and higher lease values for landowners.

Key benefits of organic farming for non-operator landowners

- **Environmental stewardship:** Organic farming supports conservation by improving soil health, preventing erosion, and protecting water resources.
- **Long-term value:** Organic practices ensure sustainable land use, which preserves the productivity and value of your land for the long term.
- **Higher rental income:** Organic-certified land is more attractive to tenants and can lead to increased rental rates.

Steps to transitioning your land to organic

- 1. Partner with the right farmer.** Choose a tenant who understands organic practices and is committed to conservation goals.
- 2. Understand the certification process.**
 - Select a U.S. Department of Agriculture-accredited certifying agent.
 - Help your tenant develop an Organic System Plan (OSP).
 - Support them through the 3-year transition period.
- 3. Annual review and inspections.** Ensure compliance with USDA organic standards through regular updates to the OSP and annual inspections.

Challenges of transitioning to organic



Yield reductions.

During the first few years, yields may decline as the soil adjusts to organic practices.



Higher input costs.

Organic-approved inputs can be more expensive, but long-term benefits like improved soil health will reduce input dependency.



Pest management.

Without synthetic chemicals, organic farmers rely on preventive measures, crop rotations, and biological controls.

Financial support for organic transition

Encourage your tenant farmer to explore financial support programs to offset costs.

- **Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP).** Reimburses up to 75% of certification fees, capped at \$750 per category.
- **Natural Resources Conservation Services Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).** Provides financial assistance for conservation practices, such as soil health improvements and pest management.
- **State-specific programs.** Some states offer grants and loans to help support organic transitions.

Conservation and long-term stewardship

Organic farming aligns with non-operator landowners' conservation interests by:

- Reducing the environmental impact of farming through natural inputs and sustainable practices.
- Supporting biodiversity and healthy ecosystems.
- Protecting the land's natural resources, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Next steps for non-operator landowners

- **Talk to your tenant.** Start a conversation with your tenant about the benefits of transitioning to organic farming.
- **Explore financial programs.** Encourage your tenant to apply for financial assistance programs like OCCSP and EQIP.
- **Align on goals.** Work with your tenant to set shared goals around conservation, long-term stewardship, and financial profitability.



For more information on transitioning your land to organic farming, contact a USDA-accredited certifying agent or explore resources at USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.

