

FACT SHEET

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN NEBRASKA:

CONSUMER DEMAND AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR NEBRASKA FARMERS

Organic farming is an important sector of Nebraska's agricultural economy. Organic agriculture is a viable model for economic growth and stability for many of the state's farmers. In some cases, extra income from producing and selling these products can allow family farmers to stay on their land. Read on to learn about organic agriculture and production in Nebraska.



MARKET GROWTH CREATES OPPORTUNITY FOR NEBRASKA FARMERS

Consumer demand for organically produced goods continues to show double-digit growth, and organic sales account for more than 4 percent of total U.S. food sales. Demand for organic food is growing so fast that consumer demand is outstripping some domestic supplies. The U.S. spends more than \$1 billion per year to import organic food, and imports of organic corn and soybeans increased 216 percent and 30 percent, respectively, in 2015.¹ This leaves much opportunity for Nebraska farmers to enter the organic market and benefit from increased price points.

NEBRASKA ORGANIC FARMERS BENEFIT FROM TWO TO THREE TIMES HIGHER PRICES THAN CONVENTIONAL FARMERS.²

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ORGANIC?

In 1990, the Organic Foods Production Act was passed, which defined standards for organic farming. Although many different production practices and products were labeled "organic" before this law was passed, today a product can only carry the "USDA Certified Organic" label if the farmer has followed specific production practices, including:



No synthetic pesticides or fertilizers or genetic engineering used in growing crops;



No antibiotics or growth hormones used in raising livestock; and



Third party certification of farm validity by an accredited certifying agent to be USDA certified.

In addition, "USDA Certified Organic" label does not guarantee any health, safety, or taste qualities in the product. Visit usda.gov/organic to learn more.

¹ "Organic Trade." U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, January 2018, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/natural-resources-environment/organic-agriculture/organic-trade/>. Accessed February 2018.

² Love, Orlan. "Organic farmers sprouting up across Iowa." The Gazette, Iowa Ideas, Sept. 20, 2017, <http://www.thegazette.com/iowaIdeas/stories/agriculture/organic-farmers-sprouting-up-across-iowa-2017082>. Accessed February 2018.



STATE ORGANIC STATS



Farmers sold **\$96 million** in organic products in 2016, up 33 percent from 2015³

162 organic farms in 2017, **128 in 2012**, 34 more in five years⁴

In 2015, Nebraska was ranked **12th nationally** in certified organic cropland acres⁵

107,371 organic acres operated⁶

Top four organic crops are **corn, hay, soybeans, and wheat**⁷

HOW DOES THE FARM BILL SUPPORT NEBRASKA'S ORGANIC AGRICULTURE ECONOMY?

Several farm programs stimulate the state's organic agriculture economy:

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program – Organic Initiative:** Supports farmers in starting specific conservation practices
- **Conservation Stewardship Program:** Offers tailored conservation plans and practices for organic producers to enhance conservation on their farms.
- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) – Transition Incentives Program:** Allows beginning and other eligible farmers to rent or buy land expiring from CRP. They must develop a management plan, which can incorporate organic production.
- **Organic Certification Cost Share Programs:** Offers farmers cost share for organic certification.
- **Whole Farm Revenue Protection and organic crop insurance:** Helps organic producers manage risk with crop insurance.
- **Value-Added Producer Grant Program:** Supports rural entrepreneurs in developing value-added operations. Organic production is one eligible value-added activity.



“Our farm has been organic since its beginning in 2012. It allows us to differentiate our product and adds value to our brand.”

– Jerry Cornett,
Lakehouse Farm LLC, Waverly, Nebraska

3 “Nebraska Organic Production up 33 percent from Previous Year.” University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Sept. 25, 2017, <https://cropwatch.unl.edu/2017/nebraska-organic-production-33-previous-year>. Accessed February 2018.

4 “Certified Organic Survey, 2016 Summary.” U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, September 2017, http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/OrganicProduction/OrganicProduction-09-20-2017_correction.pdf. Accessed February 2018.

5 “Nebraska Agriculture Fact Card.” Nebraska Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Nebraska Field Office, and Nebraska Bankers Association, February 2017, <http://www.nda.nebraska.gov/facts.pdf>. Accessed February 2018.

6 “Farms, Land, and Value of Sales of Organic Agricultural Products – Certified and Exempt Organic Farm Data.” 2012 Census of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2014, https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/Organics/organics_1_001_001.pdf. Accessed February 2018.

7 “Certified Organic Survey, 2016 Summary.” U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, September 2017, http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/OrganicProduction/OrganicProduction-09-20-2017_correction.pdf. Accessed February 2018.

