



CCOF

Organic Certification

Education & Outreach

Political Advocacy

Promotion

CCOF Priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill

National Organic Program

Authorize increased funding of 10 percent each year above the \$15 million per year authorization.

The success of organic depends upon consumer trust in the organic seal, which is achieved through strong national organic standards and rigorous enforcement. In an increasingly global marketplace with growing demand for organic products, the National Organic Program (NOP) will need enough funds to oversee the entire organic marketplace.

Funding for the NOP is especially important for California's producers. California is fortunate to have strong state-level enforcement through the State Organic Program (SOP). However, Californian producers are not receiving their due when it comes to enforcement resources, because they fund their own enforcement through fees paid to the SOP in addition to their certification fees. Congress should increase the NOP's authorized budget to absorb costs currently carried by California's organic farmers.

Moreover, the NOP is a low-cost program with a significant return—the organic sector returns \$200 for every \$1 spent on the NOP. Research shows that areas with high levels of organic production have higher household median incomes and lower poverty rates. Investing in organic now will ensure that U.S. rural and agricultural economies leverage the economic benefits of organic production.

National Organic Certification Cost Share Program

Protect funding at \$11.5 million mandatory funding annually.

The National Organic Cost Share Program (NOCS) is a critical farm bill program because it ensures that organic certification is affordable and accessible for all Californian producers. NOCS reimburses organic farmers, ranchers, and handlers 75 percent of their certification-related expenses up to a maximum of \$750 per certified scope. It is a federally-funded program administered at the state level, primarily by state departments of agriculture. In California, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) administers the program and distributed \$1.5 million to 1,900 producers in FY 2015-16. CDFA's successful administration of NOCS funds continues to support a wide range of California producers in meeting the strong consumer demand for organic products.

Protecting NOCS funds is especially important in the coming years because State Organic Program (SOP) fees are now eligible for reimbursement. The eligibility of SOP fees supports California's diverse agricultural community because it helps relieve the fiscal impact of these



fees, especially on small- to mid-scale producers, and it supports strong state-level enforcement of the federal organic standards by California's State Organic Program.

Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative

Increase mandatory funding from \$20 million to \$50 million annually by supporting H.R.2436, the Organic Agriculture Research Act.

The Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) is crucial for organic farmers and ranchers who rely on biologically-based inputs and management practices that require stable funding for long-term studies. The bipartisan Organic Agriculture Research Act seeks to increase annual funding for organic research from \$20 million to \$50 million in the next farm bill. The proposed increase would provide baseline funding for organic research programs, bringing much needed stability over the next 10 years to research funding for domestic organic crop and livestock production. More organic agriculture research will provide the tools and knowledge to help American farmers be more successful and sustainable. Organic research traditionally has been underfunded and is needed to encourage farmers to transition from conventional production, in turn increasing organic cropland acreage, which has largely held steady in recent years.

Organic Production and Market Data Initiative

Provide \$5 million in mandatory funding over the life of the 2018 Farm Bill and an additional authorization of \$5 million per year.

The Organic Data Initiative (ODI) publishes valuable organic data trends and information at a low cost. Historically, organic farmers and ranchers did not have routine access to organic price data. Now, the Agricultural Marketing Service uses ODI resources to regularly issue price reports for organic produce, grains, and dairy. These price data are used to set price elections for organic crop insurance. Additionally, the National Agricultural Statistics Service conducted a series of national organic surveys in 2014, 2015, and 2016. These data sources help producers determine trends in production and sales, provide useful information for producers considering certification, and allow for organic to continue to thrive and maintain stable markets.

Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program

Protect funding, include succession planning as a grant purpose, and ensure grant availability for organizations providing training and technical assistance.

The Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program (BFRDP) is an increasingly important program for the organic sector. Many of California's organic farmers started farming 30 to 40 years ago. In fact, CCOF was founded in 1973 by these farmers, and is seeing long time members begin planning for or entering retirement. Government-backed programs that provide direct support and funds for organizations providing training and technical assistance are necessary to meet the wide range of needs for beginning farmers and ranchers.



Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Protect funding at \$85 million annually. (California's share varies depending on specialty crop recipients each year.)

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is valuable to California's organic producers because the majority of organic crops grown in California are specialty crops (vegetables, fruits, and nuts). The program funds important projects related to food safety, research, marketing, and other specialty crop needs. It is important that the funds are allocated to each state so that funded projects will address each state's unique market and research needs.

Whole Farm Revenue Protection and Organic Crop Insurance

Improve crop insurance programs for organic producers.

Crop insurance options for California's producers have improved with the increase of organic price elections and the availability of Whole Farm Revenue Protection. However, organic producers continue to need additional organic price elections to ensure coverage for the full value of their crops. Although Whole Farm Revenue Protection is one of the few crop insurance options available for small, diversified farms, insurance agents have been unwilling to work with producers to use this program because it is overly complicated. Organic farmers need USDA to continue making improvements in the farm safety net to achieve appropriate risk management tools for organic farms.

Conservation Programs

Maintain funding for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), increase maximum payments for the EQIP Organic Initiative, and support Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Many organic farming practices also meet conservation goals. EQIP and CSP provide technical support and funding to implement conservation practices. EQIP is popular with organic growers because it helps them pay for farm improvements that reduce erosion and conserve energy; however, Organic Initiative contracts are limited to \$20,000 per fiscal year with a total of \$80,000 for a six-year period, contrasted with \$450,000 cap on non-organic EQIP contracts. This unnecessary cap prevents organic farmers and ranchers from making full use of EQIP funds and should be removed. CSP has not been as widely used by California's organic growers because of challenging application procedures and lack of support for existing practices. NRCS has revamped CSP; let's give it a chance to work for organic farmers.

