



CCOF

Advancing organic agriculture through certification, education, advocacy, and promotion.

CCOF Priorities for the 2023 Farm Bill

1. Advance organic agriculture in federal climate change policy

The Farm Bill should acknowledge organic agriculture as climate smart. This includes prioritizing and increasing USDA conservation program payments to farmers for organic management practices, rewarding organic producers as early adopters of climate smart agriculture, and including robust research funding to further optimize the climate benefits of organic agriculture. In addition, USDA should include organic as a qualified system in any climate smart verification or label. Organic farmers and ranchers play a key role in mitigating climate change because they build healthy soils that store carbon, and they do not rely on fossil fuel-derived fertilizers and pesticides, which reduces energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.¹

2. Expand and streamline organic certification cost share

The Farm Bill should increase funding and streamline administration of the organic certification cost-share program. Congress should increase and make permanent funding of \$52 million/year for the cost-share program and establish reimbursement payments of \$1,500 flat rate per scope. Funding levels have not increased since 2008 and were cut by 33% in 2020. Organic cost share reimbursements should be increased to keep up with inflation and to make certification more accessible, especially for beginning, small-scale, and socially disadvantaged producers. To streamline administration, USDA should accept certifier statements as sufficient evidence of payment and extend to accredited certification agencies the option to enter into cooperative agreements with USDA to administer cost share.

3. Provide farmers and ranchers tools to transition to organic

The Farm Bill should complement the new USDA Organic Transition Initiative by expanding organic technical assistance and removing barriers for organic producers to participate in state and federal procurement programs, crop insurance, and conservation programs. Successful organic transition requires financial and technical assistance, research, farmer-to-farmer mentorship, and market development. Bringing more acres under organic certification provides environmental, health, and economic benefits.

4. Continue to strengthen organic oversight and enforcement

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. The Farm Bill should increase funding for the NOP by 10% year over year.

5. Expand market opportunities for ranchers

The Farm Bill should establish a permanent USDA program to support infrastructure and training for small meat processors to extend the benefits of USDA's Meat and Poultry Supply Chain Initiatives. Lack of access to federally inspected slaughterhouses is a significant barrier for small scale and organic producers to bring their product to market. Organic livestock production and meat processing help sustain rural livelihoods and lower wildfire risk because grazing is a key fuel-reduction strategy. Investing in slaughterhouse infrastructure and workforce training can help realize the economic and environmental potential of organic ranching.

¹ Wolf, K., Herrera, I., Tomich, T.P., & Scow, K. (2017). Long-term agricultural experiments inform the development of climate-smart agricultural practices. *California Agriculture*, 71, 120-124.