

U.S. ORGANIC

A GLOBAL LEADER IN SUSTAINABILITY

In Brief:

- Organic agriculture in the U.S. is based on practices that not only protect environmental health, but also strive to improve it. Organic farmers understand that what ‘you put into the soil has a profound impact on what you get out of it’. This is why they rely on natural processes and materials when developing farming systems—these contribute to soil, crop and livestock nutrition, pest and weed management, attainment of production goals, and conservation of biological diversity.

Environmental Stewardship: A commitment to continuous improvement

- In 2015, more than 2.45 million hectares (6.05 million acres) of U.S. farmland were classed as organic.
- U.S. organic practices work to maximize carbon fixation while minimizing the loss of that carbon once returned to the soil, reversing the greenhouse effect.
- U.S. organic farmers strive to preserve and protect natural habitats with the understanding that a diverse biological landscape helps to feed people and nourish the planet.
- U.S. organic entails the use of cover crops, green manures, animal manures and crop rotations to fertilize the soil, maximizing biological activity and helping to maintain long-term soil health.
- Organic farming practices in the U.S. help to improve the health and population of important crop pollinators, predominantly bees, which have been declining in the past decade which in turn could adversely impact global food security.
- U.S. organic farmers use rotational grazing and mixed forage pastures for livestock operations and alternative health care for animal wellbeing.
- All organic farms in the U.S. provide access to the outdoors so that animals can exercise in natural surroundings.
- Pest management on organic farms relies on the ‘PAMS’ strategy: Prevention, Avoidance, Monitoring and Suppression.



The "USDA Organic" label ranks among the **TOP 3** seals for consumer recognition

Social Responsibility: A commitment to future generations

- U.S. organic food production offers consumers a choice in the marketplace that can help to meet personal health priorities.



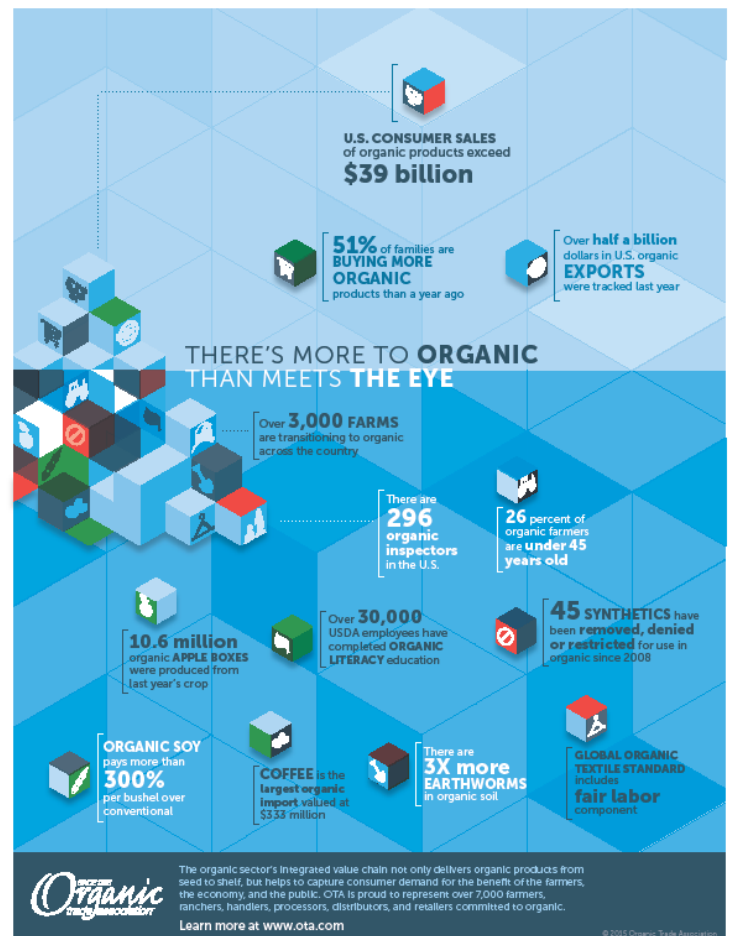
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- Organic foods are rich in nutrients, such as iron, magnesium, and vitamin C, which are critical to maintaining good health.
- 26% of U.S. organic farmers are under 45 years old. Organic producers are also more likely to be 'beginning' farmers, with 27% entering farming in the past 10 years.
- More than 3,000 U.S. farms are in the process of transitioning to organic production.
- There are 296 organic inspectors throughout the U.S.
- In 2014, the U.S. had more than 50 IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) affiliates across in the country.

Economic Profitability: A commitment to long-term viability

- There are more than 19,500 organic operations in the U.S., representing an approximate 250% increase since 2002.
- Consumer demand has grown by double-digits every year since the 1990s — and organic sales increased from \$3.6 billion in 1997 to more than \$39 billion in 2014.
- 51% of families in the U.S. buy more organic products than a year ago.
- Organic products are now available in nearly three of four conventional grocery stores, and often have substantial price premiums over conventional products.
- Over half a billion dollars in U.S. organic exports were recorded in 2014.
- In 2014, the organic fruit and vegetable category generated \$11.6 billion in sales, up 15% from 2012.
- 94% of organic operations in the U.S. plan to maintain or increase employment levels.
- The U.S. organic food industry created more than 500,000 American jobs in 2010.
- For every \$1 billion in retail sales of organic products, 21,000 more jobs were created throughout the U.S. economy.



Resources

- Transitioning to Organic Production. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education, 2006.
- 2010 Impacts of the U.S. Organic Foods Industry on the U.S. Economy. M+R Strategic Services. Published by Organic Trade Association, 2012.
- Overview of Organic Agriculture. Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Updated June 2015.



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