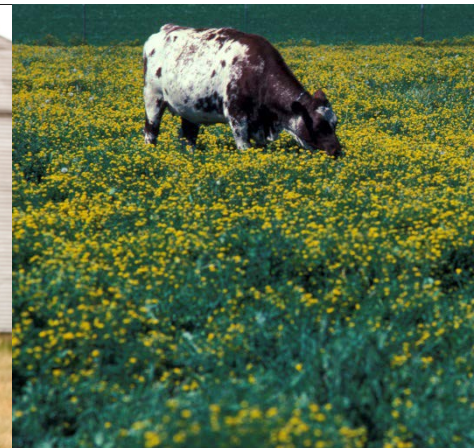




USDA's Organic Working Group Update

Supporting organic agriculture across all USDA
agencies





- **Goal:** increase the number of certified organic operations to 20,000 by 2018 – exceeded by 2016
- **Strategy:**
 - Research and education
 - Outreach to farmers through field offices
 - Risk management tools (crop insurance)
 - Reduce paperwork / eliminate duplication
 - Make certification simpler – small & beginning farmers





- The Organic Working Group (OWG) is led by AMS Administrator **Elanor Starmer**, has members from all across USDA
- The OWG tracks progress against the Secretary's annual goals for organic
- External speakers present at OWG meetings and brown bag lunches
- Coordination with local & regional, sustainability & food waste, beginning farmers, and veterans efforts



Marketing Programs



- **Organic Exemption Rule:** As of February 2016, organic exemption extends to “split” operations (producing or handling organic **or** 100% organic products), who can apply to no longer pay assessments for market promotion activities into Research & Promotion Programs or Marketing Orders
- Research & Promotion Program examples: United Soybean Board, National Watermelon Promotion Board
 - Research and promotional activities to develop and strengthen markets
- Marketing Order examples: California almonds, pears from Oregon & Washington
 - Grades, sizes, and quality requirements and research and promotional activities



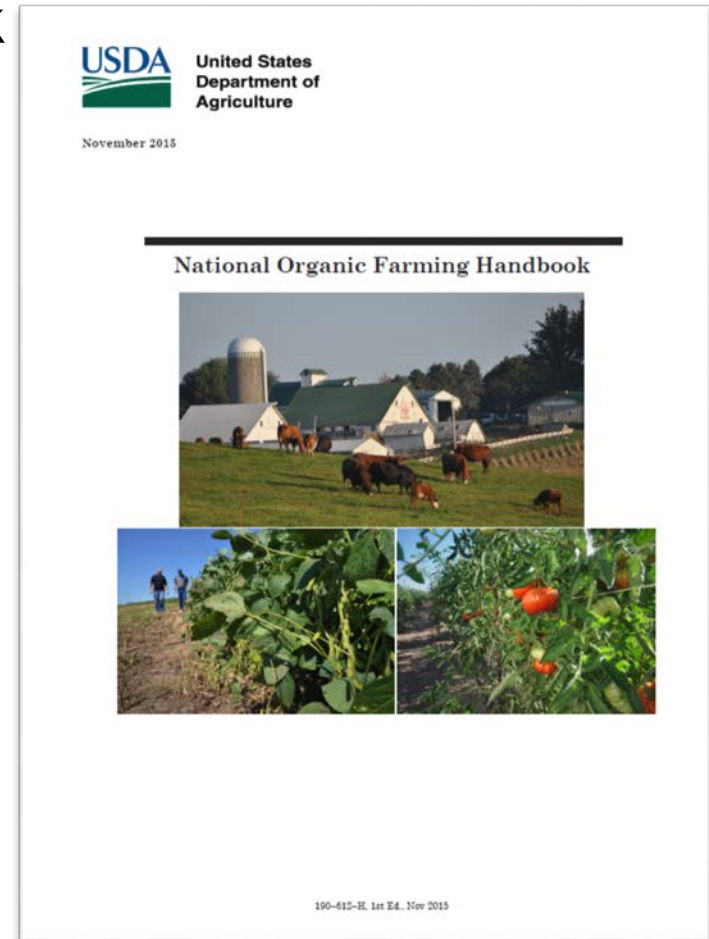
Conservation Programs



Natural Resources Conservation Service National Organic Farming Handbook

- Published summer 2015
- Guide for conservation planning and implementation on organic farms
- Describes organic systems
- Identifies key resources

nracs.usda.gov/organic





- Ongoing education and capacity building for field offices
 - Environmental benefits of organic agriculture webinar series

www.nrcs.usda.gov/organic



- Organic conservation buffer initiative
 - USDA Farm Service Agency
 - 20,000 acre target for Conservation Reserve Program buffers on organic lands
 - May cost share shrub and tree planting, pollinator habitats, etc. planted in blocks or strips

www.fsa.usda.gov/organic





Risk Management & Disaster Assistance



Crop insurance tools for organic producers

Insurance programs:

- Whole Farm: revenue-based, for diversified farms
- Contract price elections: based on market contracts
- Price elections: crop-by-crop prices

Transitional option – producers with contracted price incentives during the transition may apply for higher crop insurance coverage





- **Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)** now allows separate market prices to be established for organic crops and sales to direct markets
- Provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops
- Protects against natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses, or prevent planting



Data & Analysis



- USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released the 2014 organic producer survey in September 2015
- NASS' 2015 Organic Producer Survey is in process, results will be published in September
 - Two years of sequential survey data – unprecedented level of information and data trends
- NASS also conducting 2014-2015 organic certifier survey for acreage and livestock head data



Telling the story of organic with data

According to the Agricultural Census, organic producers were:

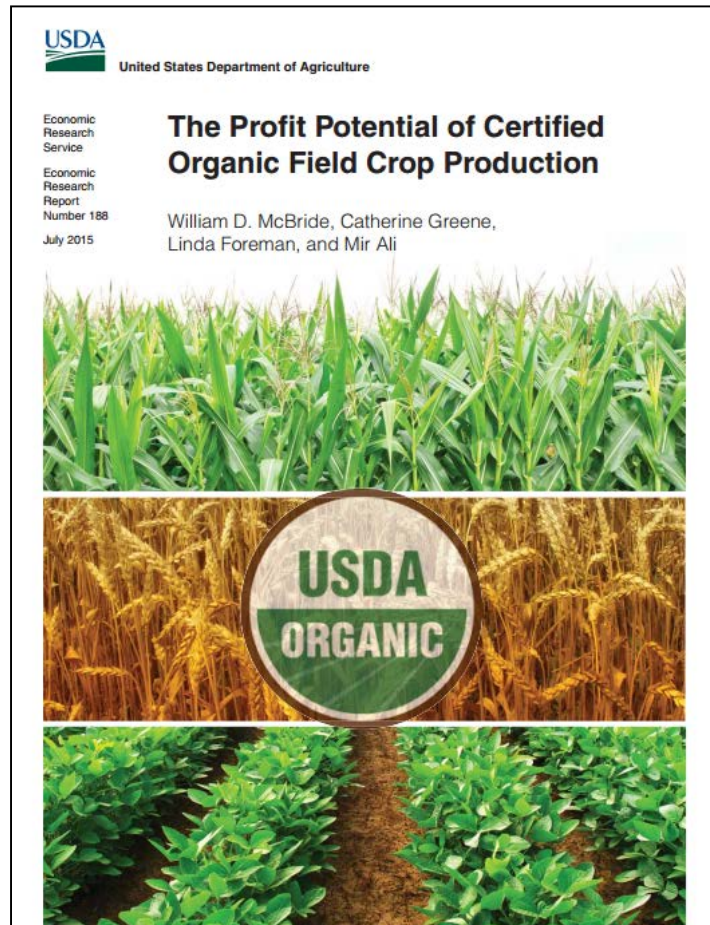
- More likely to be beginning farmers
- Younger: 26% under 45 years old, compared to 16% of all principal operators
- More likely than other farms to participate in direct sales markets



Profit Potential of Certified Organic Field Crop Production

- Organic producers are less likely to work off-farm
- Despite higher per-acre costs, organic has greater returns

www.ers.usda.gov





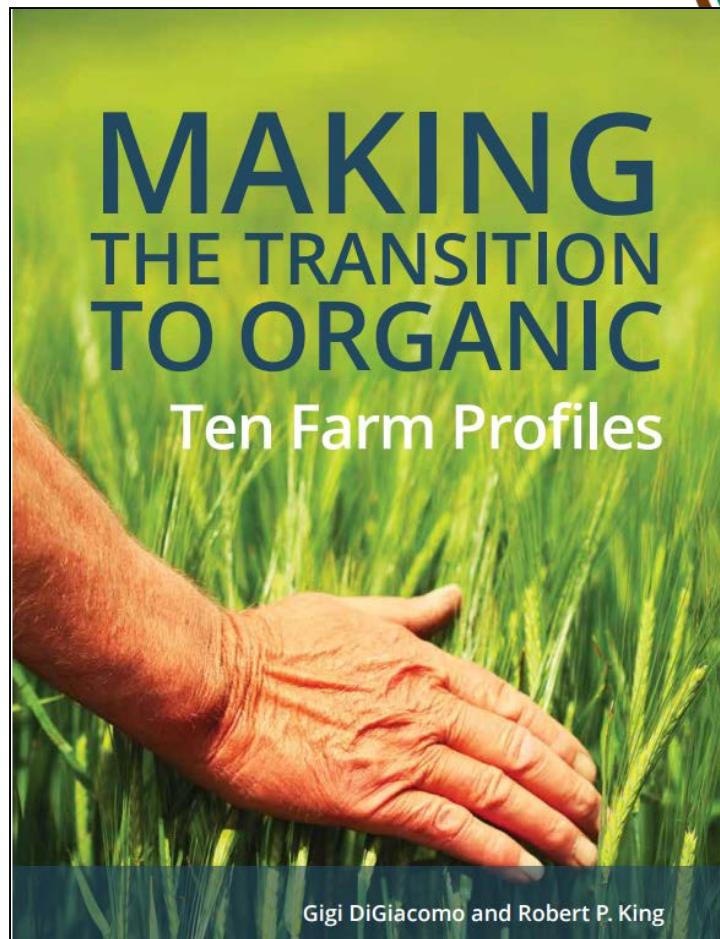
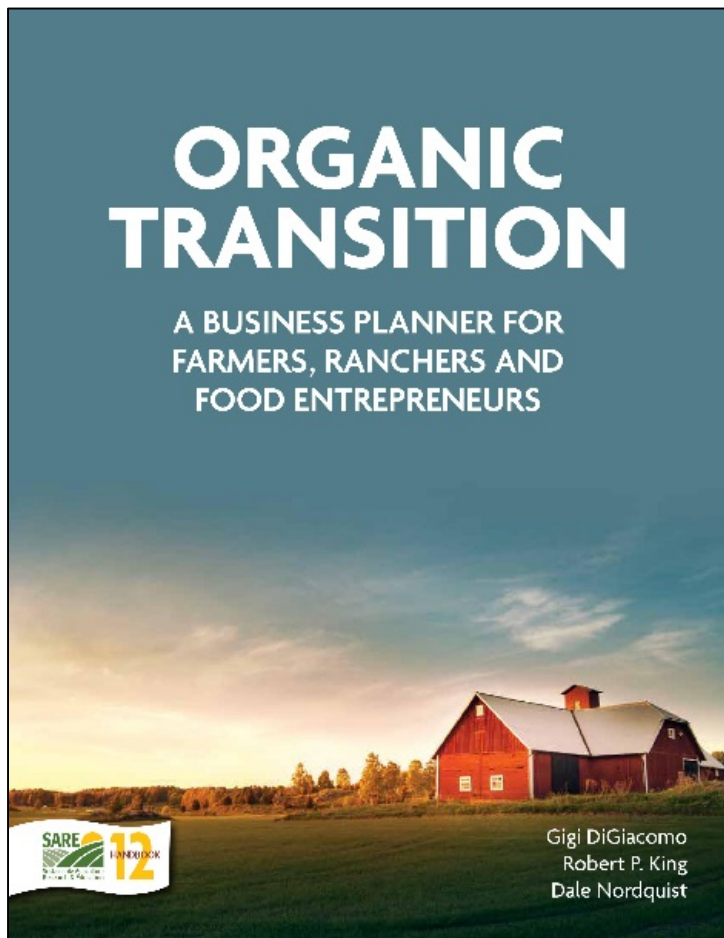
Research



- Introducing organic language into Requests for Application (RFA) of traditional research programs, such as:
 - Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)
 - Agricultural Food & Research Initiative (AFRI)
 - Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Continued incorporation of NOSB research priorities in RFAs for Organic Research & Extension Initiative and Organic Transitions Grants



Training and Outreach



eorganic.info/ToolsForTransition

Organic Literacy Initiative Snapshot



USDA Organic 101
What Does the Organic Label Mean?
How Does USDA Support It?

The USDA Organic logo is positioned to the right of the text.

Is Organic An Option For Me?
Information on Organic Agriculture
for Farmers, Ranchers,
and Businesses

This brochure provides an overview of organic regulations and how USDA supports organic agriculture. It includes information on funding opportunities, and education.

For more information, visit www.ams.usda.gov. If viewing this brochure online, use the "Print" button.

The USDA logo is located at the bottom left of the brochure cover.

USDA Organic Resource Guide 2015
Your Guide to Organic and Organic Related USDA Programs

A stylized green leaf icon is located to the right of the title.

USDA Organic 201
A Closer Look at the U.S. Department of
Agriculture's Organic Regulations



**Feel free to contact me with
questions or comments**

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