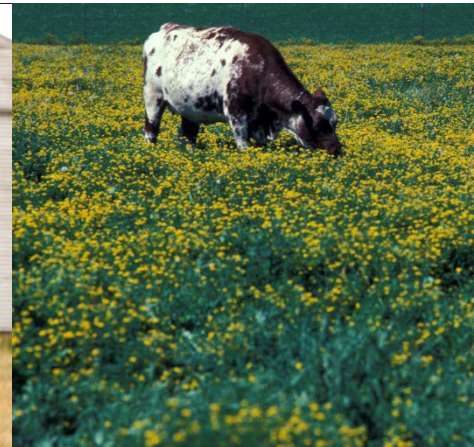




# USDA Organic Action Plan

## Betsy Rakola, Organic Policy Advisor

October 27, 2014





- Organic Policy Advisor Role
- Organic Literacy Initiative update
- Organic Working Group update
- Stakeholder engagement



- Permanent staff position advising the Office of the Secretary
- Coordinates USDA Organic Working Group, develops fiscal-year specific action plans
- Implements USDA's 2013 Departmental Guidance on Organic Agriculture
- Participates on other inter-agency USDA initiatives

# Organic Literacy Initiative



**USDA ORGANIC**

## USDA Organic 101

*What Does the Organic Label Mean?*

## Is Organic An Option For Me?

Information on Organic Agriculture for Farmers, Ranchers, and Businesses

This brochure provides an overview of the USDA organic regulations and how USDA supports organic agriculture. It includes information on getting certified, funding opportunities, and educational resources.

For more information, visit [www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo](http://www.ams.usda.gov/organicinfo) or, if viewing this brochure online, use the icons in each section.

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August 2012

## USDA Organic 201

*A Closer Look at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Organic Programs*

## USDA Organic Resource Guide 2012

*Your Guide to Organic and Organic-Related USDA Programs*



Tool	Description
<a href="#"><u>Organic 101 &amp; 201 Training Modules</u></a>	Online, self-guided training modules with information on USDA organic. Also available in USDA AgLearn (for USDA employees only).
<a href="#"><u>National Organic Program Website</u></a>	USDA website with policy information, lists of certifying agents, and more
<a href="#"><u>Printable Resources</u></a>	Posters and brochures on USDA programs and services for organic farmers, ranchers, and handlers
<a href="#"><u>USDA Organic Resource Guide</u></a>	Detailed information on key USDA programs and services for organic producers and handlers
<a href="#"><u>USDA Organic Portal</u></a>	Website with resources from across USDA for organic producers and handlers

[www.ams.usda.gov/OrganicInfo](http://www.ams.usda.gov/OrganicInfo)

[usda.gov/organic](http://usda.gov/organic)



## Farm Bill program implementation update

- Organic Research and Extension Initiative - \$19 million
- Cost share increased - \$11 million available through states
- Organic data initiative restored - \$5 million for data collection
- Organic crop insurance expanding
- Research and promotion “checkoff” exemption
- Option for proposal of organic checkoff program



Secretary Vilsack's May 2013 departmental guidance on organic agriculture outlined 5 priorities, which form the basis of the Organic Working Group's project action teams:

- Training and outreach
- Supporting transition to organic
- Regulatory reciprocity (reducing paperwork)
- Research
- Data



## Reciprocity team goals

1. Conservation - ongoing: Natural Resources Conservation Service and National Organic Program (NOP) are coordinating conservation program requirements and organic system plans.
2. Non-GE label claims – complete: Food Safety and Inspection Service streamlined procedures for certified organic meat and poultry processors
3. Crop insurance - new: Risk Management Agency and NOP will conduct a needs assessment for crop insurance documentation.





## Research team goals

1. Review and respond to NOSB research priorities.
2. Conduct a stakeholder needs assessment of organic research priorities and develop a white paper on critical research needs.



## Organic Research & Extension Initiative research highlights

- Public corn breeding to increase cultivar access
- Natural strategies to alleviate enteric pathogens in poultry
- Cover cropping and no till in organic systems
- Assessing organic agriculture's impact on climate change mitigation

Rodale Institute visit to USDA



## Data team goals

1. Publish an inventory of data regarding organic and non-genetically engineered agriculture at USDA
2. Improve trade codes for better tracking of exports and imports



## Other data highlights

- Organic special tabulation, 2012 census

[www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/)

[Online Resources/Special Organics Tabulation/organictab.txt](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/OnlineResources/SpecialOrganicsTabulation/organictab.txt)

- Organic producer survey – publishing in 2015
  - Data is key to developing new tools for organic producers. Please help us spread the word!



## Training and outreach team goals

1. Update and republish the Organic Literacy Initiative
2. Work with external partners to distribute organic resources beyond the USDA





## Supporting the transition to organic team goals

1. Assess technical and financial resources for organic transition at USDA
2. Create websites and fact sheets explaining resources for farmers and processors to transition to organic



## Focus on stakeholder engagement through outreach and education

- We want to hear from you!
- Organic policy advisor will host a webinar series on OWG topics during the winter and early spring to solicit stakeholder comments and ideas.
- USDA & NOP will participate in several conferences and annual meetings this fall/winter.



## Thank you

**Betsy Rakola**

**USDA Organic Policy Advisor**

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