



Organic food and farming is built on a commitment to shape our collective future for the better. The organic industry is creating jobs, stimulating our economy and delivering quality products in high demand. Consumer expectations drive improvement, and organic farms and businesses work hard to have a positive impact on people and the planet.



## Organic is good for the U.S. economy

### GROWTH

The \$55-plus billion-a-year organic industry is a bright spot in the U.S. farm economy. U.S. organic sales have grown substantially from \$1 billion in 1990, when the organic law was signed, to \$8.6 billion in 2002 when the USDA seal was introduced, and now to over \$55 billion in 2020. U.S. organic food sales continue to grow at a rate more than double the rate of the overall U.S. food market and now account for nearly 6% of all food sales. Organic produce captures 15% of the nation's overall fruit and vegetable market (1).

### RESILIENCE

Despite economic conditions, organic sales soared in 2020, up 12% from 2019. The Spring 2020 “pantry load” rush resulted in a combined organic sales spike of about 42% (2). Behind the scenes, the organic supply chain adapted its practices to keep pantries and refrigerators stocked, and supported their communities through donations, shifting business models to produce essential supplies, retooling work processes to protect employees, enhancing employee benefits, and taking creative measures to meet demand.



## FARM HEALTH



It's not an easy switch, but each year more farmers choose to go organic. Organic farming creates more jobs with greater stability. The number of organic farms grew by 39% in recent years, while the total number of farms in the U.S. shrank by 3%. During that same period, organic farm income nearly doubled while the income of all U.S. farms remained stagnant. Furthermore, the average value of products sold from organic farms is double the average value sold from all U.S. farms. Younger farmers gravitate to organic—the average age of organic farmers is six years younger than that of the national average of all farmers (3).

## JOBS

Organic farms hire more people per acre, and those people work for more days of the year (4). Organic suppliers and handlers are creating jobs across the country by opening, expanding, and retooling manufacturing, and processing facilities. Over 50% of organic businesses with more than five employees report an increase of full-time employment and the majority continue to forecast full-time employment growth (5).



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT



Organic hotspots kick-start rural economies—counties with high levels of organic agricultural activity whose neighboring counties also have a high level of organic activity—boost median household incomes by an average of \$2,000, and reduce poverty levels by an average of 1.3 percentage points. 225 counties across the U.S. are identified as organic hotspots (6).

## Organic is good for people and planet

### ACCESS

The organic sector is committed to ensuring that organic is accessible to everyone. Together, we are building institutional, community, and individual capacity for collaborative actions that empower all people to exercise the right to healthy and sustainable food. With over 1 in 5 children in the United States living in a food-insecure household, organic can play a critical role in the healthy development and long-term health outcomes for at-risk communities.



### SUSTAINABILITY

Organic production requires practices that advance sustainability in agriculture like crop rotation, cover cropping, building soil health, increasing biodiversity, and reducing nutrient pollution. The prohibition of the most toxic agricultural chemicals in organic farming benefits the environment, reduces farmworker exposure and improves occupational health (7).

### CLIMATE

Organic agriculture is proven to sequester more carbon in the soil and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Supporting organic is a meaningful way to help mitigate climate change.

- A switch to organic could reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions by around 20% (8).
- Organic systems can reduce global warming potential by 18% (9).
- Organic farms use 50% less new reactive nitrogen, a potent greenhouse gas (10).



RESEARCH SHOWS  
ORGANIC SOILS  
ALREADY SEQUESTER  
26% MORE CARBON  
THAN SOILS FROM NON-  
ORGANIC FARMS (11)

Organic is an increasingly important part of American agriculture and represents one of the fastest-growing food and farming sectors in the U.S. and global marketplace. Organic provides economic opportunities for farmers, creating jobs and lifting rural economies, while also utilizing sustainable farming practices that are proven to help mitigate the threat of climate change. Organic also provides a safe, healthy choice to consumers, who are increasingly seeking out the trusted USDA Organic seal on the food and products they purchase for their families.

## REFERENCES

(1) The Organic Trade Association. 2020 Organic Industry Survey

(2) SPINS. 2021

(3) USDA National Agricultural Statistic Service. Census of Agriculture: 2012 and 2017

(4) Lynn Finley, M. Jahi Chappell, Paul Thiers & James Roy Moore. 2018. Does organic farming present greater opportunities for employment and community development than conventional farming?

(5) The Organic Trade Association. 2019 Organic Industry Survey

(6) Jaenicke, Edward C. 2016. U.S. Organic Hotspots and Their Benefit to Local Economies

(7) The Organic Center. 2018. Organic Agriculture: Reducing Occupational Pesticide Exposure in Farmers and Farmworkers

(8) Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems, Volume 25, Special Issue 2: "Sustainable Agriculture Systems in a Resource Limited Future" June 2010

(9) Kuan M. Goh (2011) Greater Mitigation of Climate Change by Organic than Conventional Agriculture: A Review, Biological Agriculture & Horticulture

(10) Shade, J., Cattell Noll, L., Seufert, V. et al. Decreasing reactive nitrogen losses in organic agricultural systems. 2020

(11) Ghabbour E.A. et al. 2017. Chapter One - National Comparison of the Total and Sequestered Organic Matter Contents of Conventional and Organic Farm Soils. Advances in Agronomy, 146, 1-35

