

## FOREWORD

Enclosed you will find the 2012 status report on the organic agricultural industry of Wisconsin. We are pleased to present an organic industry profile and the impact of the organic programs in place. The growth in the state organic industry has been surprisingly dramatic. The number of Wisconsin certified organic farms grew 157 percent from 2002 to 2007. Wisconsin is second only to California in the number of organic farms and ranks in the top five states in certified organic acreage. The state is also among the top five in production of most major organic crops and livestock types.

Producers have a great responsibility to feed customers varying from local to international. Many organic businesses have increased their profit margins by direct marketing to their consumers through CSA shares, farmers markets or roadside stands. From fresh produce to specialty meats to organic cheeses, producers are able to offer consumers a great product while educating them on where their food comes from. Income from sales of organic crops and livestock products in Wisconsin totaled over \$132 million in 2008. While direct marketing has grown, it is very promising that more than half of organic food sales occur through mainstream grocers. Organic purchases are becoming more and more a part of routine consumer buying habits.

The organic industry has the ability to expand its businesses by selling products worldwide. With 96 percent of the world's population living outside of the United States' borders, our export market potential is constantly growing. Wisconsin agricultural exports hit a record high in 2010 with a total value of \$2.4 billion, and 36 percent growth over 2009. Wisconsin has a strong reputation for producing safe, wholesome and nutritious products. From organic grains to prepared foods, Wisconsin products can be found around the world. The passion and drive of Wisconsin's organic producers will allow this method of production to prosper.

Wisconsin agriculture's diversity, innovation and quality better position us to meet challenges and take advantage of opportunities to be more competitive in the marketplace. In these difficult economic times, we all have the task of doing more with less. Farm, businesses, universities and government agencies must take the time to evaluate their current procedures while maintaining their core missions and goals. We are committed to working together in a public and private partnership to maintain agriculture as a leader. Wisconsin's agricultural industry has a \$59 billion impact on our state's economy, employing 10 percent of the workforce or 353,991 people. These jobs include organic on-farm production, processing, marketing and more.

We offer our thanks to the contributors to this report. We are hopeful you will find it informative and that it will provide you with the necessary facts to understand and appreciate this important segment of our state's agricultural industry. Together, we will be able to build on research and experience to grow Wisconsin's organic agriculture industry.

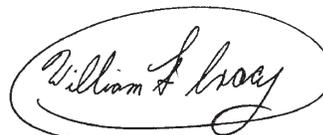
Sincerely,



Ben Brancel

Secretary

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,  
Trade and Consumer Protection



William F. Tracy

Interim Dean and Director  
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

## STATEMENT BY THE WISCONSIN ORGANIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Many advocates of organic agriculture use the word “resilient” when describing crops and livestock managed organically. Research from the University of Wisconsin and Iowa State has shown that, by building organic matter in the soil and promoting pasture, forages and cover crops, organic farms tend to recover from and adjust relatively easily to misfortune or change, which is the definition of resilience.

The past two years have presented our state with many economic challenges. Organic farmers and processors face the same downturn as other individuals and businesses. However, Wisconsin’s organic industry has demonstrated its resilience through its continued rapid growth. Consumer demand for organic food is growing, providing more opportunities for farmers and processors to enter the organic market. Young and beginning farmers are enthusiastic about organic agriculture, providing a base for future growth and long-term stability in this sector. Wisconsin’s agricultural diversity is mirrored in the organic sector, with our national leadership seen in everything from cranberries to cheese and milk to beer.

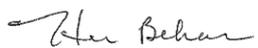
The Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council (OAC), a standing committee under the Wisconsin Agricultural Board, is comprised of organic producers, certifiers, processors, consumers and nonprofits. We work closely with state and federal agencies such as the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, as well as a variety of educational institutions. Our goal is to enhance opportunities for organic production in Wisconsin, build markets, provide assistance with infrastructure needs and facilitate economic growth through sales within Wisconsin and beyond.

Research and education are important priorities for the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council. Our technical colleges and university system offer education and research in organic agriculture that aid not only organic producers, but also provide low-input and environmentally friendly alternatives that all producers can incorporate into their farming systems.

Within the pages of this report, we hope you enjoy learning more about where organic has been, where we stand now and where we our future opportunities lie. Feel free to contact the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council with any of your comments, suggestions or concerns.

As representatives of the organic community, we on the OAC have the opportunity to see a lot of excitement and enthusiasm among organic farmers, especially young ones. With the knowledge, commitment and determination of our diverse organic producers and a strong infrastructure for our value-added products, the future of Wisconsin’s organic sector is bright.

Organically yours,



Harriet Behar  
Midwest Organic and Sustainable  
Education Service  
Organic Advisory Council Member



Jerry McGeorge  
Organic Valley  
Organic Advisory Council Member