

USDA organic agriculture programs

USDA National Organic Program

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/nop>

The mission of the National Organic Program is to ensure the integrity of USDA organic products in the United States and throughout the world. The National Organic Program oversees and enforces the national organic standards. Visit their website to find information on all aspects of organic certification, including organic standards, regulations and guidance on certification, production, handling and labeling of USDA organic products, the national list of approved substances, the National Organic Standards Board, third-party agents around the world authorized to certify operations to USDA organic standards, and compliance and enforcement.

Organic Certification Cost Share Program

On the NOP homepage, look under: [Organic Certification & Accreditation/Financial Assistance](#)

The Organic Certification Cost Share Program reimburses eligible producers and handlers for a portion of the cost of organic certification. The funding is administered through state departments of agriculture. After entering into cooperative agreements with the USDA, the state agencies process applications for cost share funds and the USDA reimburses them. Applicants typically submit a one-page application form, along with proof of certification and an itemized invoice, to their state's department of agriculture. After the state agency reviews the application, they may reimburse the applicant for 75 percent of the cost of certification, up to a maximum of \$750 per year. The program is administered on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted.

In 2011, Wisconsin received \$640,000 in cost-share dollars and reimbursed \$589 per farm, on average. About 500 to 700 applicants per year apply for this funding in Wisconsin.

USDA Economic Research Service: Organic Agriculture Briefing Room

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Organic/>

This briefing room covers the scope of ERS work on organic agriculture and provides economic research, analysis and information about the production and marketing of organic products. It includes frequently updated data on organic acreage and livestock, prices and cost of production, plus special articles, reports, maps and charts on organic production, distribution, markets, trade and policy.

Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) Grant Program

<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/foi/fundview.cfm?fonum=2120>

2011 total program funding: \$19,000,000

The OREI seeks to solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities or problems through the integration of research and extension activities. This program funds projects that enhance the ability of producers and processors who have already adopted organic standards to grow and market high

quality organic agricultural products. Priority concerns include the biological, physical and social sciences, including economics. The OREI is particularly interested in projects emphasizing research and outreach that assist farmers and ranchers with whole farm planning. Projects should deliver applied production information to producers. Fieldwork must be done on certified organic land or on land in transition to organic certification, as appropriate to project goals and objectives.

Organic Transitions Competitive Grants Program

<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/foi/fundview.cfm?fonum=2480>

2011 total program funding: \$3,750,000

The overall goal of the Organic Transitions Program (ORG) is to support the development and implementation of research, extension and higher education programs to improve the competitiveness of organic livestock and crop producers, as well as those who are adopting organic practices. In FY 2011, this program focused on environmental services provided by organic farming systems that support soil conservation and contribute to climate change mitigation. Practices and systems addressed included those associated with organic crops, organic animal production (including dairy) and organic systems integrating plant and animal production.

Natural Resources Conservation Service: EQIP Organic Initiative

<http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip.html>

Begun in 2001, the EQIP Organic Initiative provides a special pool of cost share dollars for certified organic producers, and those transitioning to organic production, to implement resource conservation practices on their agricultural operations. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis, with ranking dates set each year. Some individual practices receive higher payments than regular EQIP practices, in recognition of the higher cost of organic seeds or fertilizers. Details about sign up, participation eligibility and reimbursement rates are announced each year. Eligible farmers can receive \$20,000 per year—up to \$80,000—over no more than six years. Cover crops and crop rotations, intensive grazing infrastructure (grazing plans, fencing, walkways, water lines), wildlife and pollinator habitat, and high tunnels are examples of potential practices available for funding under this program.

In 2011, \$50 million was available nationally for this program. Wisconsin has one of the top application rates in the U.S. In 2011, about 160 organic farmers from our state applied to participate in this program.