



The Honorable Andy Harris
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development and Related Agencies

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development and Related Agencies

Dear Chairman Harris and Ranking Member Bishop:

The Organic Produce Association (OPA) consists of members in the organic produce industry who focus on science-based policymaking and the ability to be innovative while respecting the tradition of organics and the integrity of the USDA Organic Seal. As the only association solely representing the organic produce industry, we are extremely supportive of the National Organic Program and USDA's efforts to support organic producers, ensuring that fresh, affordable organic produce is available to an ever-growing consumer base.

As you know, consumer demand for organic produce has increased steadily over the past decade. Despite supply chain disruptions, labor challenges, and other issues, according to the Organic Produce Network's State of Organics 2022, organic fresh produce sales grew by 3% in 2022, topping \$9.4 billion. To support this vital and growing industry, we request the following in the Fiscal Year 2024 Agriculture Appropriations bill:

National Organic Program, \$24 million. The National Organic Program develops and enforces consistent national standards for USDA certified organic products. The USDA NOP also accredits third-party organizations to certify that farms and business continue to meet national organic standards. As the organic industry and consumer demand continue to grow and become more complex, the work of the NOP is more critical than ever, and we support the fully authorized level of \$24 million, an increase of \$2 million over FY23.

Organic Transitions Research Program, \$9 million. The Organic Transitions Research Program supports the development and implementation of research, extension and higher education programs to improve the competitiveness of organic producers, as well as those who are adopting organic practices. We support a funding level of \$9 million, an increase of \$1,500,000 over FY23.

Organic Certification Cost-Share Program, \$4 million. The Organic Certification Cost-Share Program provides cost share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the National Organic Program. Although operations are authorized to receive up to 75 percent of their certification costs paid during the program year, not to exceed \$750 per certification scope, this amount was reduced to 50%, not to exceed \$500, in FY2020 due to funding constraints in the program. We support an additional \$4 million in discretionary funding for this program, to allow certification reimbursements to again be provided at 75% of costs.



Organic Production and Market Data Initiative, \$1 million. USDA provides domestic and international price reporting, economic analyses, census data, and other information on organic production and marketing. This information is critical to understand the needs and growth of the organic industry. Therefore, we support \$1 million for organic data funding at the Agricultural Marketing Service and continued funding for organic reporting at the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, \$60 million. The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program is USDA's premier research program for sustainable agriculture research. SARE is divided into four different regions that operate as separate entities and run grant programs for their states. Although not solely tied to organic production, SARE research has supported farmers, ranchers, researchers and educators who are improving the sustainability of U.S. agriculture, including organic producers. We support \$60 million in FY24 for SARE, as requested in the President's budget.

The Organic Produce Association also supports the funding announced last year by USDA for the new Organic Transition Initiative, and the work being undertaken by the Agricultural Marketing Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Risk Management Agency to support the efforts of producers transitioning to organic production.

USDA organic programs have provided results far exceeding the federal investment made. We appreciate your commitment to an inclusive and growing organic industry, and we look forward to working with you as you write the FY24 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

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Chairman
Organic Produce Association

