

Regional Organic Specialists: An expanded agreement with NRCS



Who are we?



The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) support for organic farms and their conservation needs is part of the Organic Transition Initiative (OTI).

NRCS expanded their 14 year-long partnership with Oregon Tilth to establish six Organic Specialists who hold joint positions with NRCS and organic partners, including:

Oregon Tilth, Marbleseed, California Certified Organic Farmers Foundation (CCOF), Organic Agronomy Training Service (OATS), and the Organic Trade Association (OTA).



West Region



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West Region

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Nevada Organic Acreage

- A recent search of the Organic Integrity Database, revealed 119 operations and 410,742 certified organic acres.
- Total Organic Acreage in 2023: 233,459 acres (includes, non-field, pasture and rangeland (211,230), and total field crops)
Source: Table A2- [Organic Situation Report](#), 2023 Argus-reported organic harvested acreage by state)
- According to 2021 data from [OFRF](#) (Organic Farming Research Foundation), there are 43 organic operations with top organic commodities of hay, barley, and eggs worth \$62 million in sales.
- 85% of Nevadans purchase organic products above the national average.

What is our goal?

The Organic Specialist agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will increase conservation planning and implementation on organic and transitioning-to-organic farms to address resource concerns.

Why are we here?

- According to the [2021 Agricultural Statistics Service \(ASS\) Organic Survey](#), there was a loss in organic acreage of 10.9% relative to 2019, driven by pasture and rangeland.
- In 2022, USDA announced \$300 million for the Organic Transition Initiative which includes programs by RMA, NRCS, and AMS.
- In 2023, USDA NRCS created the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Transition Initiative which resulted in 112 program contracts for 15,700 acres.



What are our overall objectives?

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- Developing knowledge within NRCS about organic systems and their unique needs.
 - Instilling comfort and confidence in NRCS staff working with organic farmers.
 - Supporting the certification of more Technical Service Providers (TSPs) to work with organic farmers.
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What are our overall objectives?

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- Building more relationships between the organic community and NRCS.
 - Building awareness within the organic community regarding opportunities for support from NRCS programs.
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What are some specific activities we are working on?



At least 24 training sessions provided each year throughout the the country driven by NRCS state and staff requests:

- Working Effectively with Organic Producers (WEWOP)
 - Organic 101
 - ICPS 823: Organic Management
 - CPA 138/DIA 140 and the Organic System Plan (OSP)
 - Technical Service Providers (TSPs) - host regional TSP trainings and conduct outreach to prospective TSPs
 - Organic pest, nutrient, livestock, and pasture management
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What are some specific activities we are working on?



- Ensure that every state has a designated NRCS Organic Champion. Organic specialists organize a formal meeting space to share organic resources and updates as well as provide frequent presentations and/or guest speakers on specific topics. Organic Champions have the opportunity to share challenges, opportunities, and feedback for all things organic.
 - First Wednesday of the month, 11 am-12 pm PST
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What are some specific activities we are working on?

- Work on Implementation Requirements (IRs) and guides that are critical to organic production.
- Develop resources on ICPS 823: Organic Management.
- Distribute research materials from Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) and university contacts to NRCS.



What are some specific activities we are working on?



Coordination and outreach with Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP).

- Mentorship Program - connects producers transitioning with experienced organic producers who serve as mentors.
 - Technical Assistance - workshops, field days, events, educational resources, advising.
 - Community Building - organize conferences, workshops, field days, events.
 - Workforce Training and Development - targeted training and education for organic workforce.
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What are some specific activities we are working on?

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- Provide bi-weekly national organic office hours for NRCS staff from 12-1 pm PST. An informal space for NRCS staff to bring any questions, challenges, feedback with organic.
 - Seek out opportunities for NRCS to have a presence at organic conferences and host workshops for organic and transitioning-to-organic producers.
 - Conduct outreach to State Technical Advisory Committees and help facilitate organic representation on these committees.
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Questions?

- Have a question about working with organic producers or organic regulations?
- Interested in getting involved in organic conferences, workshops, or events?
- Interested in conducting outreach to organic producers or helping organic producers make connections with NRCS?

Contact us!

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