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# Introduction

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## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The 2019 Certified Organic Survey is a special study conducted by U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and is part of the 2017 Census of Agriculture program. The primary purpose of the survey is to collect value of sales information at the commodity level along with acreage, production, and practices data for a variety of certified organic crop and livestock operations.

The first organic survey was initiated in 2008 to support an emerging organic industry. The 2008 and 2014 organic surveys were conducted as part of the census of agriculture as special studies. These data collection efforts surveyed all known certified, exempt, and transitioning organic operations in the U.S. The 2011, 2015, and 2016 certified organic surveys were conducted in cooperation with the USDA's Risk Management Agency in an effort to expand the number and variety of premium price elections for certified organic crops. The survey in these years were restricted to only certified organic operations in the U.S.

It is important that detailed, unbiased information is available to help determine the economic impact of certified organic production at the national and state levels. Data published from the survey will help provide the industry with a reliable source of timely information to use in justifying research projects and fund requests to benefit producers.

## USES OF SURVEY DATA

The 2019 Organic Survey collected detailed information at the commodity level on acreage, production, and sales for a variety of organic crop and livestock commodities. Information was also collected on marketing and agricultural practices,

crop insurance usage, select production expenses, and acres transitioning into organic production. All data except for the items related to land transitioning into organic production pertain only to certified organic farms.

The data are used to guide industry planning, monitor growth, shape decisions regarding farm policy, research and funding allocations, and other key issues.

Certified organic survey data are used by -

- Farm organizations to petition Congress or state legislatures for funding and support of industry-related programs;
- Government, extension, and university scientists to determine research needs;
- Suppliers to the organic industry to plan production and marketing of new products; and
- USDA agencies, such as RMA, to provide better insurance coverage for certified organic crops through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC).

## AUTHORITY

The census of agriculture is required by law under the "Census of Agriculture Act of 1997," Public Law 105-113 (Title 7, United States Code, Section 2204g). The law authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct surveys deemed necessary to furnish annual or other data on the subjects covered by the census. The 2019 Organic Survey was conducted under the provisions of this section.

## CERTIFIED ORGANIC DEFINITION

According to the National Organic Program (NOP), the USDA's National Organic Standards Board determined a national standard that organic food must be produced without the use of conventional

pesticides, petroleum-based fertilizers, sewage-sludge-based fertilizers, herbicides, genetic engineering (biotechnology), antibiotics, growth hormones, or irradiation. Animals raised on an organic operation must meet animal health and welfare standards, not be fed antibiotics or growth hormones, be fed 100-percent organic feed, and must be provided access to the outdoors. Land must have no prohibited substances applied to it for at least three years before the harvest of an organic crop. The NOP states that all farms, ranches, and handling operations that display the “USDA Organic” seal must be certified organic by the state or by a private agency, accredited by the USDA, to ensure the NOP standards are followed. Farms that follow the National Organic standards and have less than \$5,000 in annual sales can be exempt from certification. The exempt farms may use the term “organic” but may not use the “USDA Organic” seal. The 2019 Organic Survey did not include organic handlers and processors.

## **DATA COMPARABILITY**

The 2019 Organic Survey publishes data from producers that were certified organic and transitioning to organic certification. The weighting methodology for the survey includes weight adjustments for nonresponse and undercoverage.

The 2016 and 2015 Certified Organic Surveys published data from certified organic farms and ranches and included weight adjustments for nonresponse and undercoverage.

The 2014 Organic Survey published data from producers that were certified organic, exempt from certification, and transitioning to organic certification. The weighting methodology for the survey included adjustments for nonresponse, undercoverage, and misclassification.

## **REFERENCE PERIOD**

Crop, livestock and poultry production, production expenses, crop insurance usage, agricultural practices, and marketing practices are measured for January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019.

## **TABLES AND APPENDICES**

Tables indicate data for certified organic farms and ranches at the U.S. and state levels. Tables 1 through 28 contain data only for certified organic farms. Tables 29 through 34 contain data on farms and land transitioning into organic production for both currently certified organic farms and farms transitioning into organic production.

**Appendix A.** Provides information about data collection and data processing activities and discusses the statistical methodology used in conducting and evaluating the survey. Table A provides statistical precision estimates for the number of certified farms, acres, and the total value of sales for the United States and each state.

**Appendix B.** Provides information about the development of the report form. It also contains the definitions of specific terms and phrases used in this publication, including items in the publication tables that carry the note “see text.” It also provides an example of the report form and instruction sheet used to collect the data.

## **RESPONDENT CONFIDENTIALITY**

In keeping with the provisions of Title 7 of the United States Code, no data are published that would disclose information about the operations of an individual farm or ranch. All tabulated data are subjected to an extensive disclosure review prior to publication. Any tabulated item that identifies data reported by a respondent or allows a respondent’s data to be accurately estimated or derived, was suppressed and coded with a ‘D’. However, the number of farms reporting an item is not considered confidential information and is provided even though other information is withheld.

## **SPECIAL STUDIES AND CUSTOM TABULATIONS**

The 2019 Organic Survey data, as well as the 2017 Census of Agriculture Volume 1 Geographic Area Series and related reports, are available on the NASS website at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov).

Custom-designed tabulations may be developed when data are not published elsewhere. These tabulations are developed to individual user specifications on a cost-reimbursable basis and shared with the public. Quick Stats, NASS's online database that allows data users to build customized queries, should be investigated before requesting a custom tabulation.

All NASS publications and custom tabulations are subject to a thorough disclosure review prior to release to prevent the disclosure of any individual respondent data. Requests for custom tabulations can be submitted via the internet from the NASS home page, by mail, or by e-mail to:

DataLab  
National Agricultural Statistics Service  
Room 5305A, Stop 2054  
1400 Independence Ave, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250-2054  
or [Datalab@usda.gov](mailto:Datalab@usda.gov)

## ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

The following abbreviations and symbols are used throughout the tables:

- Represents zero.
- (D) Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual farms.
- (H) Coefficient of variation is greater than or equal to 99.5 percent or the standard error is greater than or equal to 99.95 percent of the mean.
- (L) Coefficient of variation is less than 0.05 percent or the standard error is less than 0.05 percent of the mean.
- (NA) Not available.
- (X) Not applicable.
- (Z) Less than half of the unit shown.
- cwt Hundredweight.
- sq. ft. Square feet.