

August 14, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition & Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition & Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway  
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture  
1305 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

CC Farm Bill Conference Committee

Dear Chairman Roberts, Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Stabenow, and Ranking Member Peterson:

On behalf of our millions of members, supporters, or customers, the 168 undersigned organizations and companies are writing to urge the Farm Bill Conference Committee to support and advance organic agriculture in the United States by maintaining all provisions that support organic and conservation agriculture from the House and Senate bills in the final Farm Bill and removing all language that undermines the organic standards and the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB).

Organic farming is a bright spot in the U.S. rural economy. Data show that organic farms are 35 percent more profitable than the average farm and that rural counties with a high level of organic farms and businesses have higher household incomes and reduced poverty rates by as much as 1.35 percent, even more than major anti-poverty programs.<sup>1,2</sup> Domestically, the organic sector is home to over 26,000 certified organic family farms and businesses.<sup>3</sup>

A growing body of research demonstrates that organic farming systems provide an impressive range of conservation benefits. Organic farms support 50 percent more pollinator species, sequester carbon in the soil, and deliver greater resilience in the face of climate-related weather impacts like drought and floods by improving soil structure and soil water-holding capacity.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kantor, Sylvia. 2015. Organic agriculture more profitable to farmers. *Washington State University Insider*. June 1. <https://news.wsu.edu/2015/06/01/organic-agriculture-more-profitable-to-farmers/>

<sup>2</sup> Organic Trade Association. Organic Hotspots. <https://www.ota.com/hotspots>

<sup>3</sup> USDA Organic Integrity Database. <https://organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity/>

<sup>4</sup> University of Oxford. Organic farms support more species. 2014. February 4 <http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2014-02-04-organic-farms-support-more-species>

<sup>5</sup> The Organic Center. Breakthrough study shows organic cuts agriculture's contribution to climate change. 2017. September 11. <https://www.organic-center.org/humicrelease/>

<sup>6</sup> Ferris, Robert. 2014. Organic farming more drought resistant. CNBC. December 9. <https://www.cnbc.com/2014/12/09/rough-resistant-report.html>

Research also shows that organic food and farming reduce human exposure to toxic pesticides for consumers, farmers, farmworkers, and rural communities.<sup>7</sup>

The number of organic consumers is steadily growing. Data shows that over 80 percent of U.S. households buy organic food, and the demographics of organic buyers matches the diversity of the American population.<sup>8</sup> Organic remains the fastest-growing sector of the food industry — while the overall food market experiences a stagnant 0.6 percent growth rate, organic sales grew 8.4 percent from 2016 to 2017.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, domestic production is not keeping up with this booming consumer demand. The U.S. accounts for 44 percent of global organic sales, but just four percent of global farmland under organic production.<sup>10</sup> Approximately 25 percent of organic corn and 75 percent of organic soybeans used in the country are imported.<sup>11</sup> U.S. farmers are losing out on the chance to feed Americans' growing appetite for organic food.

At a time when so many farmers and rural communities across America are struggling, we need more policy support for organic agriculture. The undersigned organizations and companies urge the Farm Bill Conference Committee to maintain all positive provisions for organic and conservation agriculture from the House and Senate bills in the final Farm Bill and remove all language that changes the authorities and composition of the NOSB.

**First and foremost, we urge you to oppose any changes that would undermine the National Organic Standards Board in the Farm Bill.** Consumer confidence in the integrity of the USDA organic seal is a key driving factor in the exponential growth in the organic sector. Making changes to the authorities or composition of the NOSB could harm the integrity of the organic program, undermine consumer trust in the organic label, and severely damage the reputation of the industry as a whole. [House bill section 9006 (b),(c),(d) and Senate bill section 10104 (e)].

We also urge you to maintain key elements of the House and Senate Farm Bills that support organic and conservation agriculture, including the following:

**Provide mandatory funding of \$11.5 million annually for the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) and keep the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program intact.** These programs encourage small and mid-size farmers to transition to organic and help farmers afford organic certification. (Senate bill Section 10105);

**Increase funding for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) to \$50 million by fiscal year 2022 and beyond,** thus achieving permanent baseline funding status. Organic and non-organic farmers alike benefit from this research. For example, cover cropping is standard practice on organic farms but has been widely adopted by non-organic farms as well (Senate bill Section 7210);

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<sup>7</sup> Bradman, A., et al., Effect of organic diet intervention on pesticide exposures in young children living in low-income urban and agricultural communities. *Environ Health Perspectives*. 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Organic Trade Association. Organic looks like America, shows new survey. <https://ota.com/news/press-releases/17972>

<sup>9</sup> Organic Trade Association. Robust organic sectors stays on upward climb, posts new record in U.S. sales. <https://www.ota.com/news/press-releases/19681>

<sup>10</sup> FiBL. 2017. The World of Organic Agriculture 2017. February 9. <https://www.fibl.org/fileadmin/documents/en/news/2017/mr-world-organic-agriculture-2017-english.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Demko, Iryna et al. 2017. U.S. Organic Trade Data: 2011 – 2016. A report for Organic Trade Association. [https://ota.com/sites/default/files/indexed\\_files/OTATradeReport\\_10-30-2017.pdf](https://ota.com/sites/default/files/indexed_files/OTATradeReport_10-30-2017.pdf)

**Fully fund the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**, the nation's largest conservation program by acreage and a critically important program that supports organic farmers. CSP is the only Farm Bill program focused on advancing conservation systems to comprehensively protect natural resources, including soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat (as detailed in the Senate bill);

**Create a new allocation within CSP to allocate funds to each State to “support organic production and transition to organic”** (Senate bill Section 2204);

**Increase payment limits under the Organic Initiative within the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP OI)**, to **\$160,000 over the 5-years** to ensure equal opportunity for organic farmers to participate in this key conservation program (Senate bill Section 2303);

**Amend the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** to make it easier for landowners with CRP contracts to start the 3-year organic transition process prior to the expiration of their CRP contract to be eligible for certification when the contract expires (House bill Section 2206(b)(1)(B));

**Support public plant and animal breeding programs** by amending the National Genetic Resources Advisory Committee (NGRAC) to require the advisory committee to do an assessment of needs related to public cultivar development and to make recommendations to the Secretary regarding funding gaps. In addition, require the Secretary to designate four seats on the NGRAC for members with public cultivar and animal breed development expertise and require the USDA to develop a national strategic germplasm and cultivar collection assessment and utilization plan. (Senate bill Sections 7205 and 7206). We also urge conferees to include additional provisions in the final bill to require USDA to use existing competitive grant research programs to expend at least \$50 million annually on public cultivar and breed development activities, and to establish a Coordinator position within the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to oversee these activities;

**Create a level playing field for U.S. organic family farms** by increasing funding for the National Organic Program, providing funding to improve import data tracking, and creating better mechanisms to ensure that all organic imports comply with U.S. standards. This should include \$5 million in one-time mandatory funding for improving import data tracking systems, detailed language about circumstances that should trigger expedited investigations with regard to organic import fraud, a clear plan for inter-agency coordination to ensure full collaboration between USDA and relevant border and customs agencies, and authority for the National Organic Program to perform more frequent accreditation reviews of satellite offices of organic certifiers operating in countries with higher risk of fraudulent activity. (Senate bill Section 10104 (a),(b),(c),(d),(f),(g),(h),(i) and House bill Section 9006(a),(e),(f),(g),(h));

**Provide \$5 million in one-time mandatory Farm Bill funding for the Organic Data Initiative** to ensure consistent and reliable data about production and sales trends. (Senate bill Section 10103 and House bill Section 9006(i); and

**Include Risk Management Program Reforms** that clarify that sustainable and organic practices should be considered “good farming practices” (Senate bill Section 11107); require continuing education for crop insurance agents to ensure they understand sustainable and organic farming practices; and add a new provision to continue Whole Farm Revenue Protection established in the 2014 Farm Bill and recognize the change in farm revenue after a farm has transitioned to organic. Eliminate the 30% cap on increased production value under the expansion provision.

We also urge you to protect critical organic programs that lack baseline funding if a short-term extension to the Farm Bill is necessary.

Organic farmers and businesses depend on consumer trust in the organic seal and support from the programs outlined above. We urge you to uphold the integrity of the organic standard by opposing any changes that would undermine the National Organic Standards Board and to maintain the above provisions from the House and Senate Farm Bills in order to grow the American organic sector.

Thank you,

Friends of the Earth	National
Accredited Certifiers Association	National
Alliance for Natural Health USA	National
Beyond Pesticides	National
Blue River Organic Seeds	National
Center for Biological Diversity	National
Center for Environmental Health	National
Center for Food Safety	National
Consumer Federation of America	National
Consumers Union	National
Endangered Species Coalition	National
Fair World Project	National
Family Farm Defenders	National
Farm Aid	National
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance	National
Farmworker Justice	National
Food & Water Watch	National
Food Animal Concerns Trust	National
Grow Ahead	National
HEAL Food Alliance	National
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Association	National
National Organic Coalition	National
Natural Grocers	National
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance	National
OneCert, Inc.	National
Organic Consumers Association	National
Organic & Natural Health Association	National
Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing	National
Organic Seed Alliance	National
Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA)	National
Pesticide Action Network	National
Rachel Carson Council	National
Rural Coalition	National
Sierra Club	National
Wild Farm Alliance	National
Nature's Path Foods Inc.	British Columbia
Dietrick Institute for Applied Insect Ecology	California

Edible East Bay magazine	California
Rincon-Vitova Insectaries	California
Double M Dairy LLC	California
Dr. Bronner's	California
Straus Family Creamery	California
Catalyst Miami	Florida
Farmworker Association of Florida	Florida
Florida Immigrant Coalition	Florida
Florida School of Holistic Living	Florida
Friends of Broward Detainees	Florida
Friends of Miami-Dade Detainees	Florida
Gainesville Interfaith Alliance for Immigrant Justice	Florida
Hispanic Federation	Florida
Latin-American Coalition	Florida
Organize Florida	Florida
SEIU Florida Public Services Union	Florida
The Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc.	Florida
WeCount!	Florida
Central Florida Bread for the World	Florida
Lady Moon Farms, Inc.	Florida, Georgia, Pennsylvania
Kanalani Ohana Farm	Hawaii
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America	Illinois
Edible Indy	Indiana
Buckhaven Ridge Farm	Iowa
Driver Farms Ltd	Iowa
Eco Lips, Inc	Iowa
FarmTable Procurement and Delivery	Iowa
Garden on Garden	Iowa
Green Vale Farm	Iowa
Hidden Acres Organic	Iowa
Iowa Organic Association	Iowa
Lee Weers	Iowa
Lenz Organic Farm	Iowa
Lubke's Organic Acres	Iowa
Lyn Farm	Iowa
Midwest Organics	Iowa
Okoboji Organics	Iowa
Red Barn Organic	Iowa
Red Leaf Farms, LLC	Iowa
Redeemed Farms, LLC	Iowa
Reinert Farms Inc.	Iowa
Stonebridge Ltd	Iowa
Thorland Organics, LLC	Iowa
Tigner Consulting	Iowa
Narrow Gate Farm	Iowa
Orchard On Sand Road	Iowa

Cottonwood Creek Farms	Kansas
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association	Maine
Portland Food Co-op	Maine
Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore	Maryland
Butterfly Brigade	Maryland
Central Maryland Beekeepers Association	Maryland
Fair Farms	Maryland
Maryland Pesticide Education Network	Maryland
Maryland Ornithological Society	Maryland
Equal Exchange Inc	Massachusetts
Leverett Village Co-operative	Massachusetts
Northeast Organic Farming Association - Interstate Council	Massachusetts
Northeast Organic Farming Association of MA	Massachusetts
Wild Oats Market	Massachusetts
CoWorkr	Michigan
Dream Acres Farm	Michigan
Ecology Center	Michigan
Edible Grande Traverse	Michigan
Field & Fire LLC	Michigan
Gardening 365	Michigan
Happy Homestead Farm	Michigan
Local Food Alliance of Northern Michigan	Michigan
Making Shade Farms	Michigan
Marilla Field & Flora	Michigan
Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance	Michigan
Michigan State University Extension	Michigan
Michigan Young Farmer Coalition	Michigan
New Bee Apiaries, LLC	Michigan
Perich Advertising and Design	Michigan
Photonic Legal PLC	Michigan
Skinny Farm	Michigan
Skinny Farm Co-op	Michigan
Sleeping Bear Press	Michigan
Songbird Farm	Michigan
Tamarack Camps Farber Farm	Michigan
Edible Michiana	Michigan, Indiana
Old Mill Honey Company	Minnesota
Albert Lea Seed	Minnesota
Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture	Minnesota
Sustâne Natural Fertilizer Inc	Minnesota
International Organic Inspectors Association	Montana
Nature's Path Foods Inc.	British Columbia
Organic Aronia Farm	Nebraska
OPINS Coop	Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas

New England Farmers Union	New England
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group	New England
Neighboring Food Co-op Association	New England, New York
Northeast Organic Farming Association of NH	New Hampshire
GMO Free NJ	New Jersey
Northeast Organic Farming Association of NJ	New Jersey
Cuatro Puertas	New Mexico
Church Women United in New York State	New York
DRUM: Desis Rising Up and Moving	New York
Global Justice Ecology Project	New York
Green Beacon Coalition	New York
Hudson Valley Biofuel	New York
LaBella Associates	New York
Made Safe	New York
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York	New York
Partnership for Community Development	New York
Regional Farm and Food Project	New York
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association	North and South Carolina
Nuestro Centro	North Carolina
Levin Family Foundation	Ohio
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association	Ohio
Shagbark Seed & Mill	Ohio
Three Springs Farm	Oklahoma
Oregon Tilth	Oregon
Ridgeline Meadows Farm	Oregon
Beyond Toxics	Oregon
BJE Poultry	Pennsylvania
Kovar Organic Equipment	Pennsylvania
Comunidades Unidas en una Voz	Tennessee
Sustainable Food Center	Texas
Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association	Texas
Hunger Mountain Cooperative	Vermont
Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op	Vermont
Northeast Organic Farming Association of VT	Vermont
Diane's Market Kitchen LLC	Washington
PCC Community Markets	Washington
Dammen Organic Farms	Wisconsin
Edible Door	Wisconsin
FairShare CSA Coalition	Wisconsin
MOSA Certified Organic	Wisconsin
MOSES (Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service)	Wisconsin