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NEWS RELEASE

NRCS announces \$75 million to assist producers transitioning to organic as part of USDA’s Organic Transition Initiative



NASHVILLE, April 10, 2023 – The USDA today announced details around its \$75 million investment in conservation assistance for producers transitioning to organic production. As part of the multi-agency [Organic Transition Initiative \(OTI\)](#), NRCS will dedicate financial and technical assistance to a new organic management standard and partner with new organic technical experts to increase staff capacity and expertise.

The investment, which includes funds from the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, will help build new and better markets and income streams, strengthen local and regional food systems and increase affordable food supply for more Americans, while promoting climate-smart agriculture and ensuring equity for all producers.

“Producers transitioning to organic can count on NRCS for assistance through the process,” said NRCS Chief Terry Cosby. “By strengthening our technical proficiency and providing technical and financial assistance through new tools and practices, we can better support producers through the challenges of organic transition.”

Direct Farmer Assistance

NRCS will dedicate \$70 million to assist producers with a [new organic management standard](#) under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. NRCS will help producers adopt the new organic management standard, which allows flexibility for producers to get the assistance and education

they need such as attending workshops or requesting help from experts or mentors. It supports conservation practices required for organic certification and may provide foregone income reimbursement for dips in production during the transition period. Higher payment rates and other options are available for underserved producers including socially disadvantaged, beginning, veteran, and limited resource farmers and ranchers.

How to Apply

Eligible producers include farmers, ranchers, forest landowners, and other producers beginning or in the process of transitioning to organic certification. NRCS will announce state-specific deadlines later this year, after which producers can apply through NRCS at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

Notice of Funding for Seven New Positions

NRCS will dedicate \$5 million to partner with six organic technical experts through five-year agreements. The organic experts will develop regional networks and support NRCS staff who provide services to USDA customers. These services include hosting hands-on organic training and fielding organic-related staff questions. One organic research position will support this network. NRCS will post a Notice of Funding Opportunity on grants.gov this week, which outlines requirements for proposals from regional organizations and partners.

About the Organic Transition Initiative

These NRCS investments are part of the OTI, a multi-agency \$300 million effort to support organic and transitioning producers. OTI also includes farmer-to-farmer mentoring, direct support for crop insurance, and market development projects.

In addition to NRCS, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and Risk Management Agency are the primary agencies supporting OTI and are closely collaborating on implementation. As part of OTI's cross-agency coordination, NRCS organic specialists will be closely connected with the Agricultural Marketing Service's Transition to Organic Partnership Program regional partners, to align and share resources and best practices.

NRCS and Agricultural Marketing Service's National Organic Program also plan to coordinate data collection activities, to prevent transitioning farmers from having to submit duplicative information as much as possible. Agricultural Marketing Service will also soon announce a funding program to support the creation of new and improved markets for domestically produced organic products and provide critical companion resources to existing and transitioning organic producers.

Risk Management Agency reminds producers interested in the Transitional and Organic Grower Assistance Program, also part of OTI, to visit with their crop insurance agent for more information. Premium benefits for eligible policies will be automatically applied to the producer's billing statement later this year.

Other USDA Organic Assistance

OTI complements [existing assistance for organic producers](#), including [FSA's Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) which helps producers obtain or renew their organic certification.

Risk Management Agency also administers federal crop insurance options, including [Whole Farm Revenue Protection](#) and [Micro Farm](#), which may be good options for organic producers. The National Organic Program is a federal regulatory program, administered by Agricultural Marketing
Helping People Help the Land

Service, that develops and enforces [consistent national standards](#) for organically produced agricultural products sold in the United States.

For more information, visit farmers.gov/organic.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities throughout America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit usda.gov.