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March 2025 **Quarterly Newsletter**

TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

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What is TOPP?

The Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) is a program through the USDA and Nebraska Extension that provides technical assistance and educational opportunities for those looking to transition to an organic

We are working to build a community with other organic farmers and those interested in transitioning to organic. TOPP workshops and field days cover topics including organic production practices, certification, conservation planning, business development, regulations, and marketing. Our mission is to help producers overcome technical, cultural, and financial shifts during and following certification, engage educational and training institutions (including crop advisors and extension agents) on organic workforce training and education and future human capital planning. **Your feedback and participation are essential!**

Nebraska Organic Crop Trends

Exploring USDA NASS for Organic Data

Did you know that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) division of the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) maintains a publicly available database from surveys of agricultural production?

The most recent available NASS survey data is from 2021, and within that data is contained both organic and non-organic ag production statistics. NASS then publishes highlight reports with analysis of various sectors, including organic farming. Published in December of 2022, the following link gives highlights from the 2021 organic survey.

https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2022/2022_Organic_Highlights.pdf

Following are graphs developed using searches for organic crops in Nebraska for just two of many options: Acres Harvested and Sales. There is not data for each crop for each year, but the graphs show available data for corn, soybeans, hay, wheat, and peas (dry edible).

Many factors affect these numbers, such as weather conditions, markets, and much more. While these data only reflect years through 2021, they do show interesting trends.

In terms of Acres Harvested (Figure 1), 2021 shows corn leading with nearly 30,000 acres, followed by hay, wheat, soybean, and peas.

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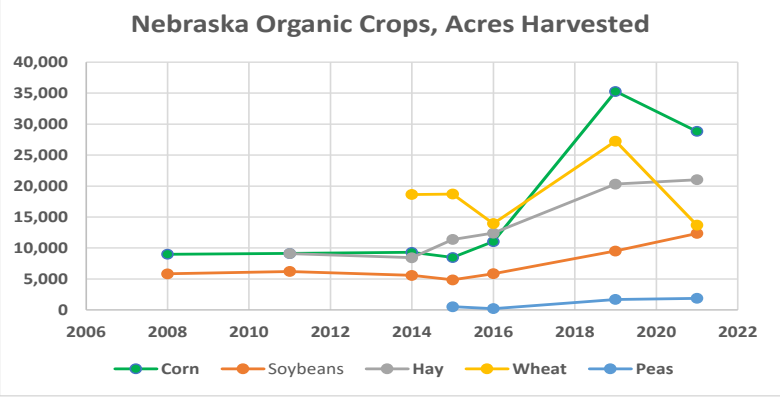


Figure 1. Nebraska Organic Crops, Acres Harvested for corn, soybeans, hay, wheat, and peas (dry edible). Available data is shown between 2008 – 2021.

Nebraska Organic Trends – NASS Data (cont.)

Correspondingly, Figure 2 shows that Nebraska sales of organic corn greatly exceeded other organic crops analyzed, reaching nearly $45,000,000 in 2021. Annual sales totals are affected by the number of acres planted amongst many other factors, including markets and weather.

The NASS database is user-friendly and accessible to the public. These graphs were generated with searches using the 'Quickstats' option and using annual census data.

Explore this database for yourself at: https://quickstats.nass.usda.gov/#CD2FCA98-7574-38ED-AE37-D7AAB4F21BD2

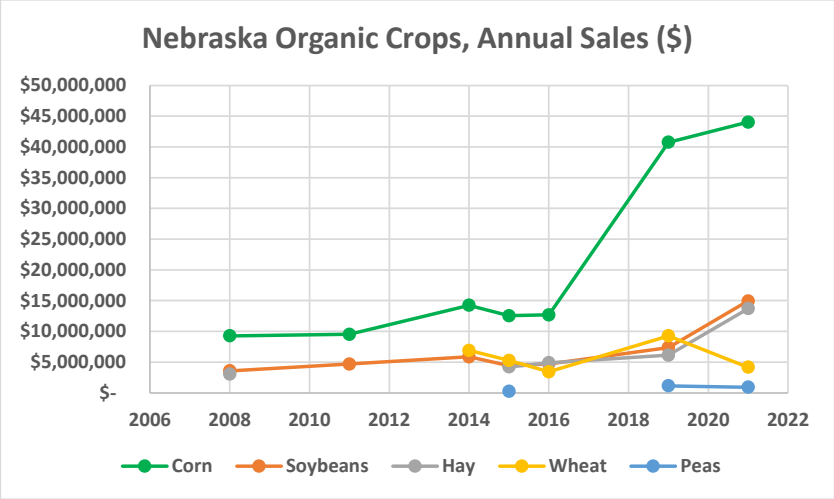


Figure 2. Nebraska Organic Crops, Annual Sales ($) for corn, soybeans, hay, wheat, and peas (dry edible). Available data is shown between 2008 – 2021.

Midwest Organic Markets Insight - MARCH

The following article was contributed by Will Glazik of the Rodale Institute.

My name is Will Glazik. I'm an organic farmer in Illinois and have been working with the Rodale Institute Consulting Markets Team since last summer. Since this is the time of year when many organic markets decisions are made, I wanted to share an update highlighting some markets insight and observations that I gathered this winter. Keep in mind that these prices are constantly changing, and I am not an economist. Our team strives to maintain up-to-date lists of prices, volumes, and buyer contacts across the country, so please reach out to us with any questions. Here are some of my key observations:

Soybean (feed grade) pricing seems to be holding steady, roughly in the range of $18–$22/bu delivered to feed mills. Poultry feed remains the biggest driver of this market. There is some uncertainty around potential tariff impacts on imported soybean meal, which could increase market opportunities. My current view is that if you can keep weeds out of the beans, they remain a profitable option for 2025. Many of the buyers I speak with are looking for both old crop and new crop contracts.

Soybeans (food-grade) markets appear to have less room for growth. There has been less discussion about food-grade soybeans compared to feed-grade. While there are a few buyers in the market, they don't seem to be accepting many, if any, new contracts.

Corn markets took a hit a few years ago, and while the market appears to be stabilizing, prices remain in the $6.50–$7 FOB range in the Midwest, with some outliers. A significant portion of organic corn goes to poultry feed. There seems to be an adequate supply of starch in the market, with good crop yields in both corn and winter wheat. The spread of bird flu across the country has led to reduced demand in affected areas. As an organic farmer, I currently believe that reducing production costs for corn while accepting lower yields but aiming for better margins might be a better strategy than focusing on maximizing corn production.

Soft red winter wheat markets appear to be making a slight comeback. After the extremely low wheat prices this summer, many farmers sold organic wheat into the conventional market. This has put some demand back into organic wheat, and I'm hearing prices similar to those of corn.

Oats in the northern Midwest are experiencing growth. Milling oats (38# or heavier) are trading around $6.50, and millers seem eager to buy. A new oat mill is expected to open within the year in Albert Lea, MN, with certified organic processing capacity, which could further support demand.

Specialty grains are seeing minor interest from buyers. If you're farming west of the Mississippi and north of I-80, barley is selling for about $10, and peas are emerging as a substitute for soybean meal. Interest in sunflowers is also increasing, both for oil and meal, although I haven't heard specific prices. One feed mill in Illinois mentioned receiving requests for organic, corn- and soy-free feed. While this is currently a niche market, it could present an opportunity for specialty crops.

Buckwheat and rye are gaining popularity as cover crops. While the bulk market for rye remains limited, many farmers have had success selling organic rye as a cover crop to their conventional neighbors.

CONNECT WITH US

If you're a producer looking for deeper markets access guidance, organic crop rotation support, or to get connected with buyers, contact Rodale Institute's Consulting Markets Team at Markets@rodaleinstitute.org or Will at will.glazik@rodaleinstitute.org (309-824-7467)

2025 Organic Situation Report

The USDA Economic Research Service published the 2025 Organic Situation Report in February, giving valuable information about the state of organic domestically and globally. Excerpts below highlight trends prior to the most recent US federal election and could help guide organic producers facing changes in federal policy in 2025. The entire report is available here: https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/_laserfiche/publications/110884/EIB-281.pdf?v=28697

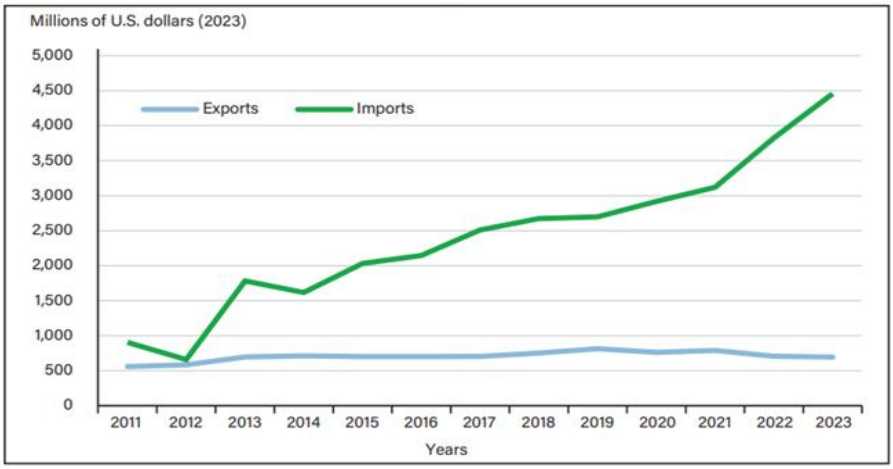
- Organic agriculture is an important agricultural sector, experiencing substantial growth in sales for the past two decades. In 2023, total organic retail sales were $69.7 billion. Despite continued interest in organic products, domestic acreage devoted to organic commodities declined in recent years. This report analyzes current trends in domestic and global organic production, U.S. Department of Agriculture initiatives to remove barriers to transition, imports and exports, price premiums relative to conventional commodities, and value of retail sales. The report also includes a discussion on regenerative agriculture—a term not regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture—which, similarly to organic agriculture, is concerned with improvements in soil health.

- The latest USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service Organic Survey conducted in 2021 reported a 10.9-percent decline in organic acres relative to 2019, driven by a drop in pasture and rangeland.

- Globally, organic acreage is increasing: As U.S. organic acreage declined, so has its rank as a top global producer. The United States was ranked ninth for organically managed land in 2022, down from third in 2016.

- In 2023, the organic retail market experienced a third year of decreased inflation-adjusted sales. Despite the drop, inflation-adjusted sales are higher than the prepandemic level. Some farmers have looked to alternative-to-organic labels to certify and market their products. Regenerative agriculture is an approach to farming, ranching, forestry, and aquaculture that seeks to create measurable enhancements to the health and quality of soil or other natural resources using diverse practices. Unlike organic, regenerative does not fall under the purview of USDA. The Regenerative Organic Certification label requires producers seeking certification to be USDA Organic certified. However, other regenerative labels do not require producers to be certified organic and do not include all USDA Organic standards within their practices.

Inflation-adjusted U.S. exports and imports of organic products, 2011-2023



Note: U.S. dollars are adjusted for inflation to 2023 dollars based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics'(BLS) Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using USDA, Foreign Agricultural Service, Global Agricultural Trade System data and BLS CPI-U data.

Red clover broadcast seeded onto snow, March 2025.

UNL Graduate Student Establishes New Study: *Corn growing in living mulch of red clover*

UNL graduate student Lovely Zamord has established a new study that will investigate weed suppression, soil health and performance of corn growing in a red clover living mulch. In March, Zamord planted red clover in plots on East Campus. Three different types of corn – sweet corn, quality protein maize (food grade corn with higher protein content), and field corn – will be planted in the clover and managed organically**. Attend our Grow Local Field Day on June 24, 2025** to see the plots and chat with us about this exciting project.

Upcoming events...

What's going on in Nebraska or in the region for organic farming?

Right: Roller crimping cereal rye at the field day in June 2024, ENREEC, Ithaca, NE

Exploring Organic Transition Cohort – Online. Are you considering transitioning to organic farming? Join us fora free learning opportunity designed to help you navigate the organic certification process with confidence. Gain insights from organic experts and experienced farmers, resources for livestock producers, specialty crop farmers, and landowners, guidance on organic certification, marketing, and business planning, and a supportive community of fellow producers. Hosted by Center for Rural Affairs. Cost is FREE. **Start Date**: Monday, March 31 | Time: 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. **Where:** Online for four sessions, plus one in-person farm visit (location TBD). Miss a session? Recordings will be available for viewing anytime. Click here to register. Questions/assistance with registering: Contact Jenna Sutterfield at jennas@cfra.org or 531.335.1840

Roller Crimper Field Day. May 22 from 9.30 to 11.30 am. Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center, 1071 County Rd G, Ithaca, NE Interested in learning about roller crimping as a way to mechanically terminate cover crops without tillage? Join us for this demonstration of roller crimpers in action, see a variety of small grain cover crops, and network with other farmers and educators. Hosted by Katja Koehler-Cole, Nebraska Extension, kkoehlercole2@unl.edu

Grow Local Field Day. June 24. Time TBA. Includes tour of organic clover-corn relay plots. UNL East Campus, Lincoln, NE. Hosted by Sam Wortman and Christian Stephenson, rstephenson9@unl.edu

Annual Transition to Organic Farming Conference, December 2, 2025, Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center, 1071 County Rd G, Ithaca, NE. Hosted by Katja Koehler-Cole, kkoehlercole2@unl.edu

For up-to-date information on current events and other resources, visit our website: https://cropwatch.unl.edu/organic/

THANK YOU to our sponsors:

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This newsletter is brought to you thanks to the contributions of the Nebraska TOPP team:

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