

TRANSITION TO ORGANIC PRODUCTION

WEBINAR – APRIL 5, 2016

ROBERT KING
Professor, University of Minnesota

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover™



DREW KATZ
Transition Services Coordinator, Oregon Tilth





AGENDA

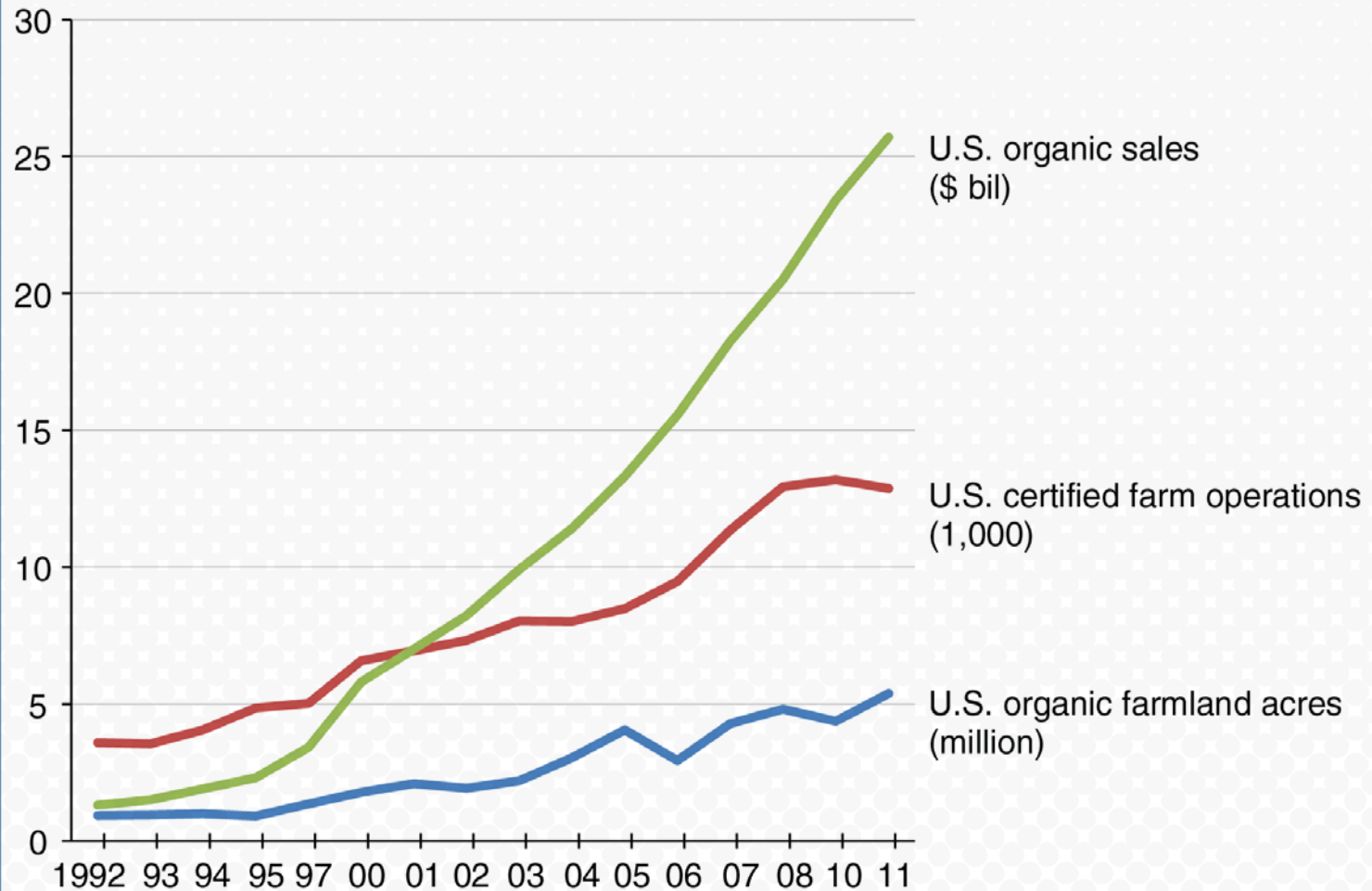
- Introduction
- Transition to Organic
- Transition Profiles
- Transition Resources

Dynamics in the Organic Sector

- Growth in demand for organic food is outpacing supply.
- This creates both problems and opportunities.
- Many farmers are taking a new look at transition.



U.S. organic farmland acres, number of operations, and sales, 1992-2011



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service; Natural Foods Merchandiser; and Nutrition Business Journal.

Common Motivations for Transition

- environmental/conservation reasons
- price premiums
- health/safety reasons
- personal satisfaction
- philosophical/ethical reasons



Transition Challenges

- access to capital
- time requirements
- cost and availability of inputs
- access to land
- weed management



Barriers to Transition

- lack of information
 - requirements for certification
 - yields/costs
- market uncertainty
- risk management
- community/culture



ORGANIC



AGENDA

- Introduction
- **Transition to Organic**
- Transition Profiles
- Transition Resources

Organic
Inspector



National Organic Program (NOP)



Transition Timeline (3 years)

Application of a Prohibited Substance

Certification Eligibility Date

Apply for Transitional Certification (optional)

Crops harvested after 3/15 can be sold as certified organic

Year 1

Year 2

Year 3

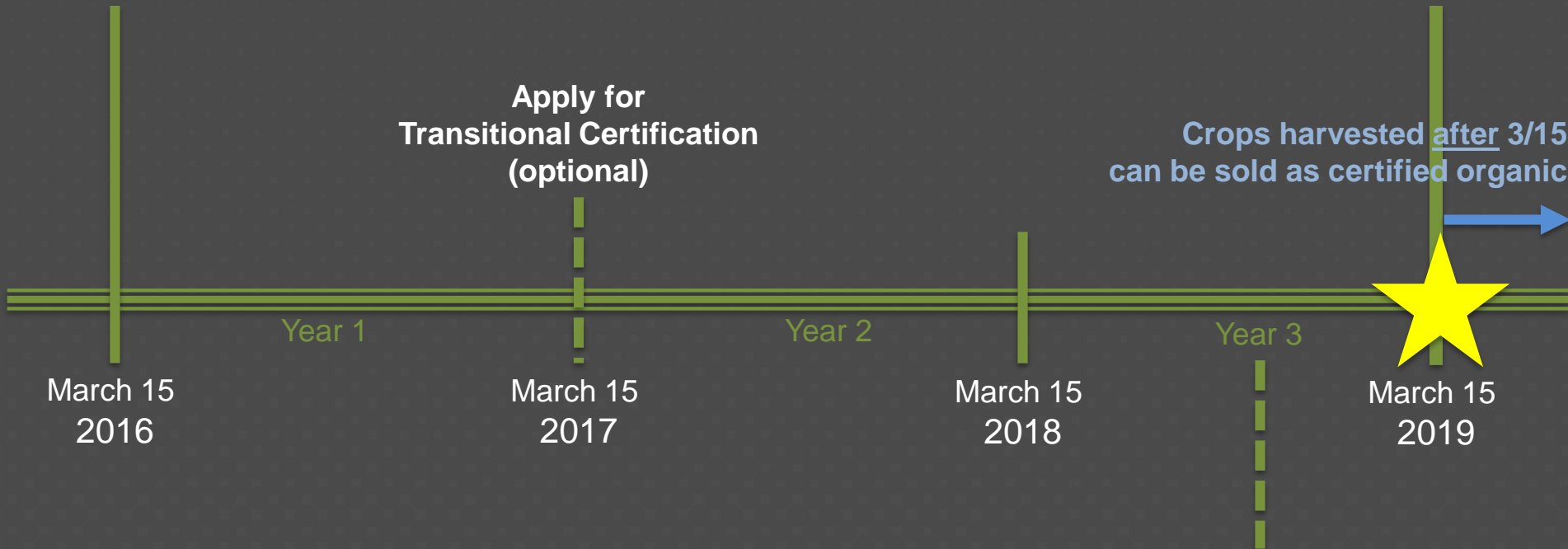
March 15
2016

March 15
2017

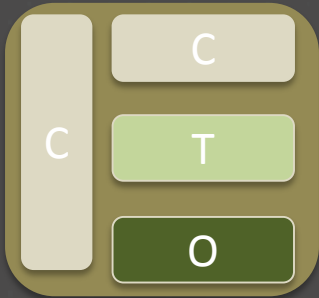
March 15
2018

March 15
2019

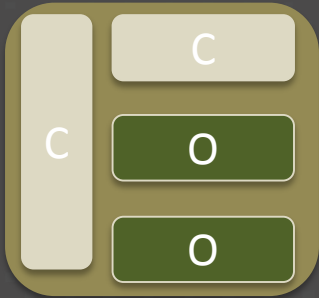
Start certification process 8-12 weeks before eligibility date



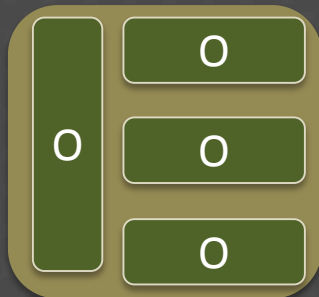
Transition Strategies



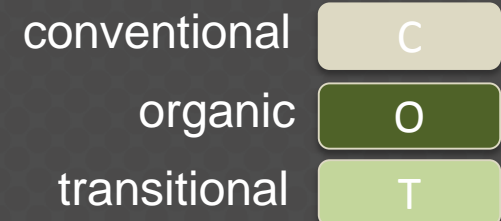
Gradual: transition land one field at a time with the intention of certifying all the land at some point in the future.



Split: Manage some land conventionally and some land organically as a long-term strategy. Often combined with the “gradual” transition strategy but intent is to simultaneously maintain both organic and conventional land.



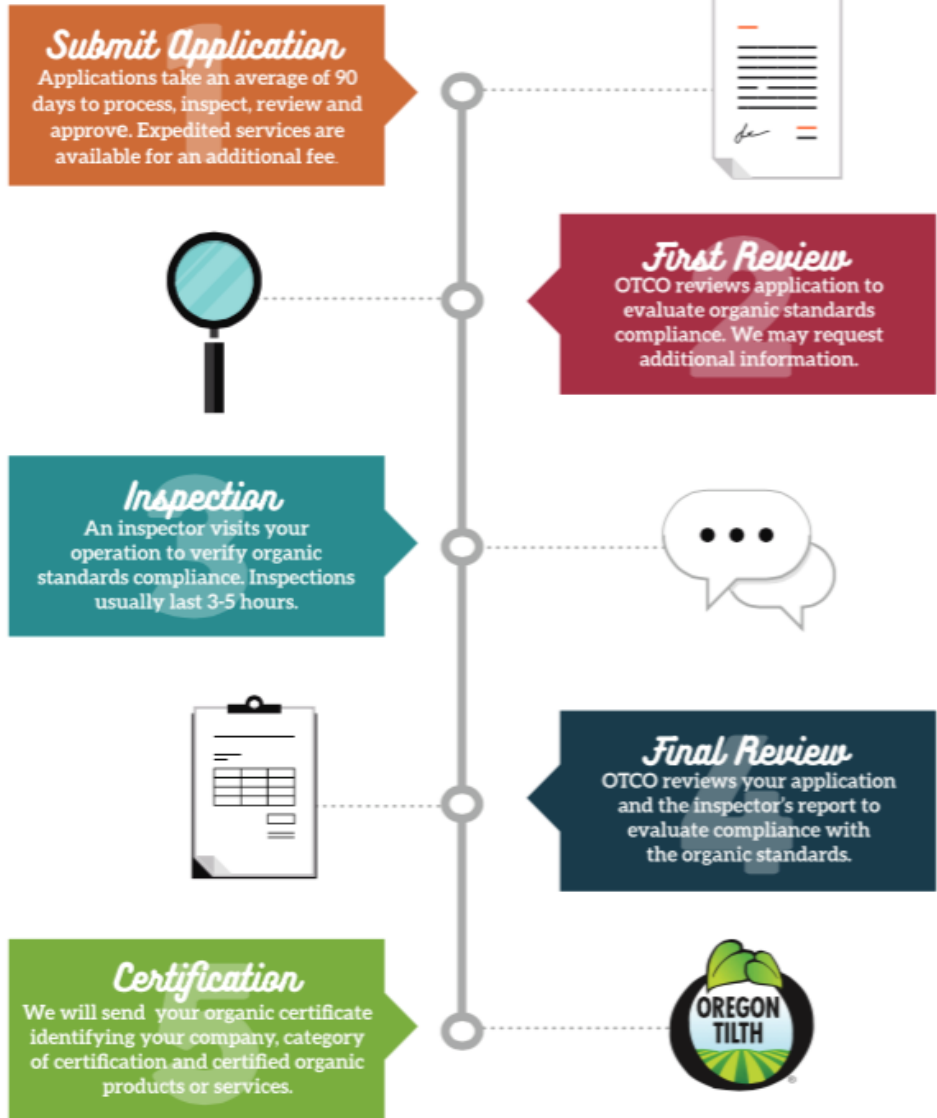
Full: transition all land at once.



Certification Process

A STEP-BY-STEP OVERVIEW OF THE BASICS:

START



FINISH





United States Department of Agriculture

USDA Organic Certification Cost Share Programs

Agricultural Marketing Service

Making Organic Certification Affordable

You're Certified...Now Get Reimbursed!



1 Contact Your
State Agency

2 Submit
Information

3 Get
Reimbursed



USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Learn more about the Organic Certification Cost Share Programs at <http://bit.ly/CostShareGen>

Transition Certification



- **Application, inspection and certification process/fees same as organic certification**
- **Must follow all NOP standards while certified transitional**
- **Cannot market product as organic**

A photograph of a wooden fence in a rural landscape. The fence is made of weathered wood and runs diagonally across the frame. In the background, there are green trees, a grassy field, and a range of mountains under a cloudy sky. The text "Questions so far?" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Questions so far?



AGENDA

- Introduction
- Transition to Organic
- **Transition Profiles**
- Transition Resources

Transition Profiles

Nate and Angie Walter

Production

Dairy

Corn

Alfalfa

Number of Acres

160

Number of Cows

100

Started Transition

2011

First Certified

2013

Transition Strategy

Full



Transition Profiles

Nate and Angie Walter

Production

Dairy

Corn

Alfalfa

Number of Acres

160

Number of Cows

100

Started Transition

2011

First Certified

2013

Transition Strategy

Full

- **Challenges**

- Buying organic feed while still selling milk at the conventional price
- Understanding certification standards and requirements for record keeping

- **Advice**

*Information is knowledge ...
make sure you network.*

Transition Profiles

Vitaly Brukhman

Production

Vegetables

Herbs

Naturally Fermented

Drinks

Sauerkraut

Tomatoes

Pickles

Number of Acres

2

Started Transition

2014

First Certified

Forthcoming

Transition Strategy

Full



Transition Profiles

Vitaly Brukhman

Production

Vegetables

Herbs

Naturally Fermented

Drinks

Sauerkraut

Tomatoes

Pickles

Number of Acres

2

Started Transition

2014

First Certified

Forthcoming

Transition Strategy

Full

- **Challenges**

- Learning about organic and food safety requirements
- Record keeping

- **Most Satisfying**

Doing something good and meaningful by offering tasty organic naturally fermented products

- **Advice**

Explore one's own interests and resources, coming up with at least a general direction [or strategy] and then go full throttle with an individual learning program.

Transition Profiles

Doug Lewis
Agri-Star Farms

Production
Potatoes
Yellow Mustard Seed
Alfalfa
Small Grains

Number of Acres
800

Started Transition
1999

First Certified
2002

Transition Strategy
Gradual



Transition Profiles

Doug Lewis
Agri-Star Farms

Production
Potatoes
Yellow Mustard Seed
Alfalfa
Small Grains

Number of Acres
800

Started Transition
1999

First Certified
2002

Transition Strategy
Gradual

- **Challenges**
 - Weeds
 - Providing adequate fertility
- **Most Satisfying**

Reduction in chemical use in a small rural community where farm workers and residents are regularly exposed to pesticide drift.
- **Advice**

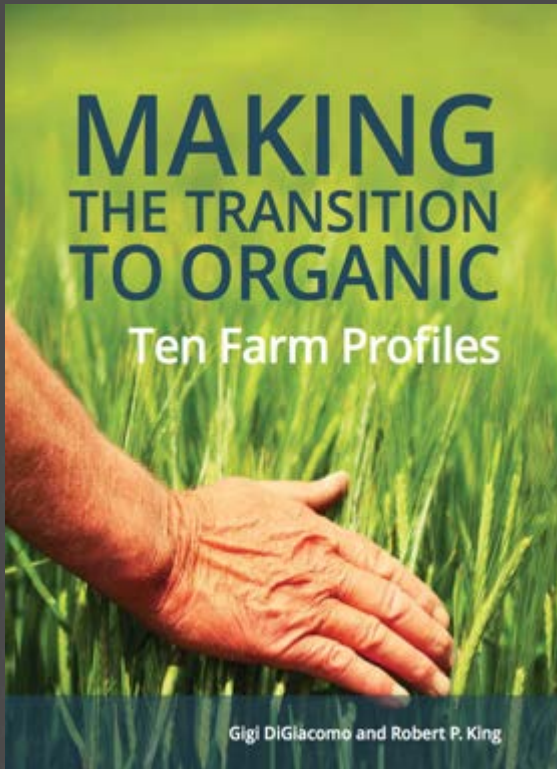
It is critical to understand weed science.



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Making the Transition to Organic - Profiles



[Making the Transition to Organic: Ten Farm Profiles](#) features livestock, field crop, and vegetable producers who, during 2012-2015, were in the process of transitioning or who had been recently certified organic. Each profile addresses organic transition strategies (full transition, gradual transition, immediate transition, and split transition), challenges encountered, and outcomes deemed "most satisfying." Download the publication using the link above or contact MISA for a print copy of the publication: 612-625-8235 or misamail@umn.edu.

<http://eorganic.info/toolsfortransition/reports>

Quick Start Guide – Transition to Organic



Transition to Organic Network (TON)

Nation-wide network of food system stakeholders that share a common interest in transitional and organic agriculture and connect via a listserv

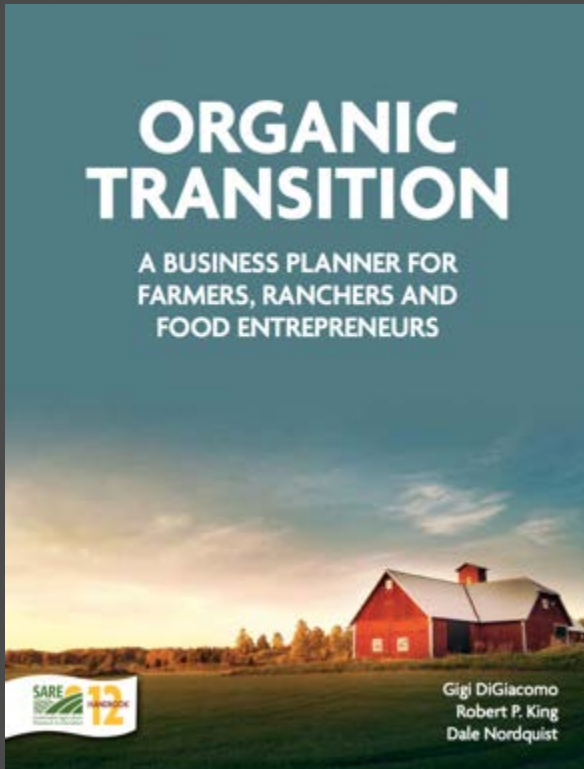


- Exchange questions and resources
- Stay informed about educational opportunities and assistance programs
- Network and develop relationships

Email: drew@tilth.org

<http://goo.gl/forms/iTPJTpeiSa>

The Organic Transition Planner



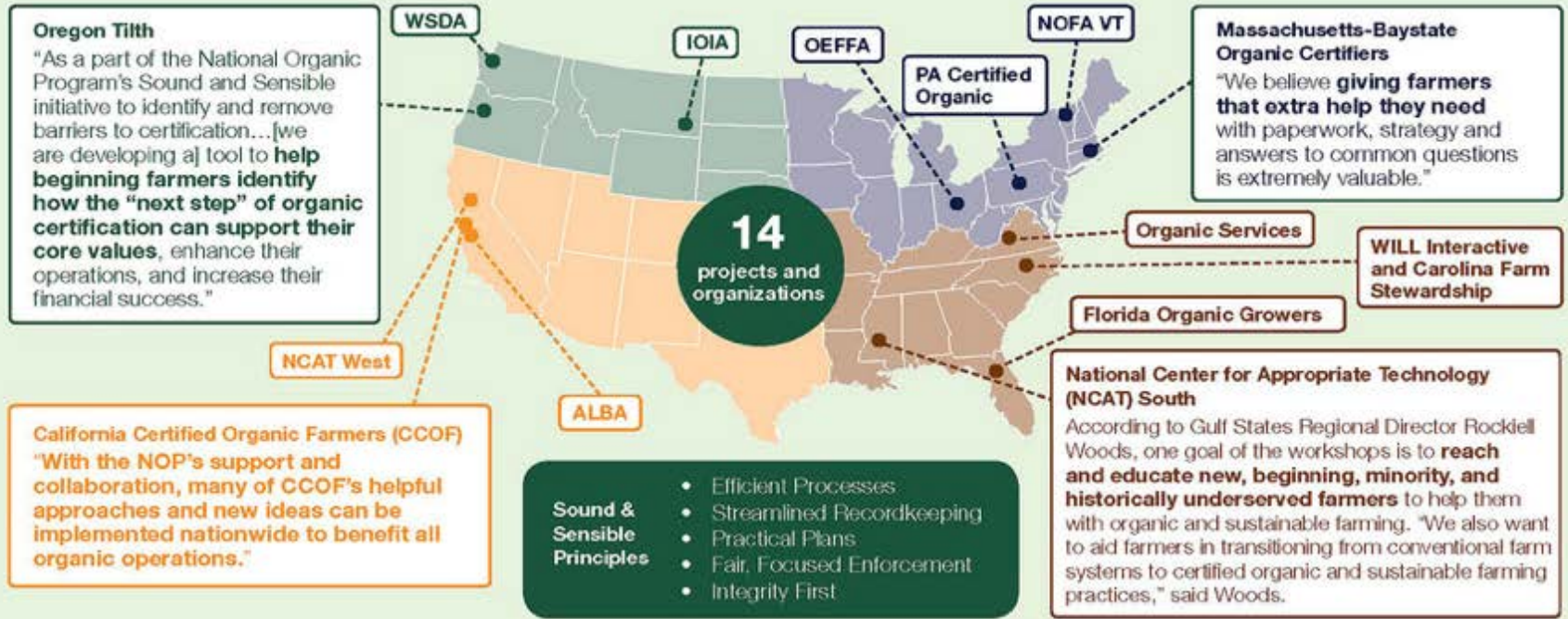
[Organic Transition: A Business Planner for Farmers, Ranchers and Food Entrepreneurs](#) is a decision-making tool designed to assist with the development of actionable production, marketing, human resource and finance strategies when considering the switch to organic. The Organic Transition Planner includes worksheets as well as three business plans developed by transitioning dairy, row crop, and vegetable farmers. Download a copy for free using the link above or contact USDA SARE for a print copy of the publication (\$16): (301) 779-1007.

<http://eorganic.info/toolsfortransition/reports>



Sound & Sensible

In 2014, the National Organic Program's (NOP) Sound and Sensible initiative funded 14 year-long projects across the United States aimed at making organic certification more accessible, attainable, and affordable while maintaining high standards, ensuring compliance, and protecting organic integrity. Project leads worked directly with organic farmers and businesses to identify and remove barriers to certification, streamline the certification and recordkeeping process, and conduct education and outreach.



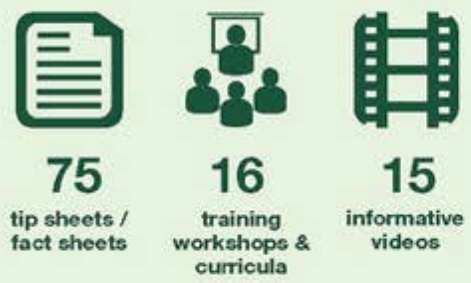
44 public-facing products

The Sound and Sensible projects have resulted in a trove of valuable tools, guides, and training materials. These resources will benefit the broader organic community, including the nearly 20,000 certified organic producers and processing facilities across the United States. Many of the projects focused on outreach to underserved communities, such as non-native English speakers and Plain/Amish communities, about the benefits of organic certification.

Product Topic Areas



Types of Products



Acronym Definitions ALBA - Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association; IOIA - International Organic Inspectors Association; NOFA VT - Northeast Organic Farmers Association Vermont; OEFFA - Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association; PA - Pennsylvania; WSDA - Washington State Department of Agriculture

Materials Databases



Organic Materials Review Institute

<http://www.omri.org/>

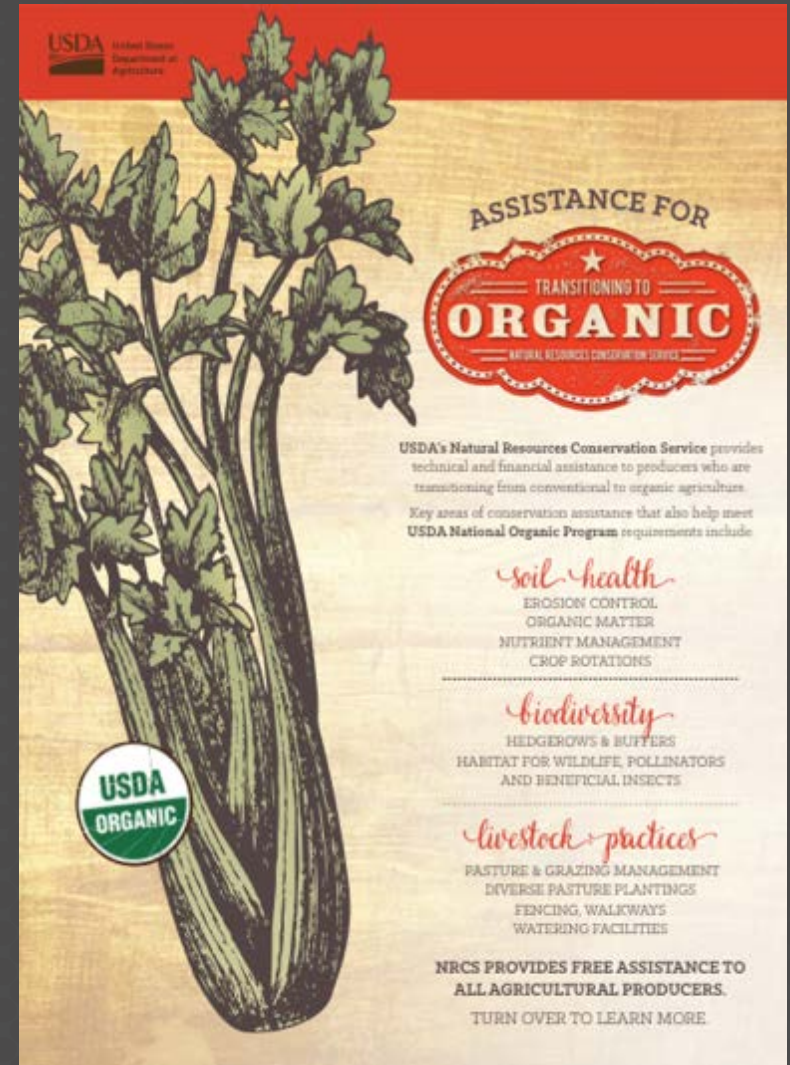
WSDA Material List

<http://agr.wa.gov/foodanimal/organic/materialslists.aspx>



Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

- Financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices and planning to address resource concerns.
- Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) 138
- Organic EQIP: maximum of \$20,000 (per fiscal year) and no more than \$80,000 over a rolling six year
- Project Examples
 - Establish buffer zones
 - Improve irrigation efficiency
 - Plant cover crops
 - Compost infrastructure
 - Riparian restoration
 - ...and more



THANK YOU!

ROBERT KING
Professor, University of Minnesota
rking@umn.edu



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Transition Services Coordinator, Oregon Tilth
Drew@tilth.org



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture



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