



National Organic Coalition

2007 Farm Bill Recommendations

1. Organic Certification Cost Share Reauthorization

For many organic producers and handlers, the annual cost of organic certification is burdensome. The current program to help defray these costs should be reauthorized and updated to reflect increased costs and funding needs.

- Mandatory funding of \$25 million for the 5-year life of the Farm Bill
- Increase annual cost-share eligibility from \$500 to \$750 per operation
- Standardize reporting requirements for USDA and States to allow for better program analysis

2. Conservation Security Program

The Conservation Security Program was authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill to provide on-going financial assistance to reward farmers for implementation of conservation practices on their farms. However, the program has been significantly curtailed by spending limitations imposed through the annual appropriations process. In addition, changes need to be made to make it easier for organic producers to participate in the program.

- Support full funding as a national “entitlement” program, with mandatory funding, to be available in all watersheds
- Create easy “crosswalk” between organic certification and CSP, so that a producer’s certified organic farm plan can also provide eligibility for higher tiers of CSP benefits.

3. Organic Conversion Assistance

The process for farmers to convert to organic takes three years. During this conversion process, farmers incur the higher costs associated with organic production but do not receive the higher price premiums that come with final organic certification. In addition, financial assistance is needed for nonprofit organizations around the country to provide technical assistance to farmers in the organic transition process.

- Create a National Organic Conversion and Stewardship Incentives Program within the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide financial assistance to farmers for the adoption of advanced conservation practices as part of the process of converting to organic production, with mandatory funding of \$50 million annually
- Half of the funding provided for the Organic Conversion Program should be used for technical and education assistance
- Authorize the creation of a National Organic Technical Committee to provide advice to NRCS on the implementation of the Organic Conversion Program

4. Seeds and Breeds for the 21st Century

In recent decades, public resources for classical plant and animal breeding have dwindled, while resources have shifted toward genomics and biotechnology, with a focus on a limited set of major crops and breeds. This shift has significantly curtailed the public access to plant and animal germplasm, and limited the diversity of seed variety and animal breed development. This problem is particularly acute for organic and sustainable farmers, who seek access to germplasm well suited to their unique cropping systems and their local environment. Without renewed funding in this arena, the public capacity for plant and animal breeding will disappear.

- Amend the National Research Initiative (NRI) to list “classical plant and animal breeding” as one of the priorities for competitive research grants, and modify term limitations for NRI research grants to reflect longer-term nature of breeding programs.
- Reauthorize the ARS National Genetic Resource Program and increase support for the collection, preservation and evaluation of germplasm collections. Direct ARS to accelerate long-term research in this arena.

