

**Talking Points**  
**Support of Full Funding for Organic Research**  
**to Expedite the Transition to Organic Agriculture**

- The Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative is USDA's premier competitive grants program that funds highly critical research important to the improvement of organic farming systems, including conservation benefits as recognized in the 2008 Farm Bill.
- The 2008 Farm Bill funding increase for OREI (from \$15 million to \$78 million) is a hard-won and much needed boost to organic ag research.
- Funding for the USDA competitive grants program for organic agriculture has historically been woefully inadequate to meet research demands; between 2004-2006, the USDA was only able to fund 29 out of 210, or less than 15% of fundable proposals submitted.
- While the organic share of the retail food market is currently about 4%, federal support for organic ag research still lags well behind as a share of total resources— total USDA spending for organic ag research and education was just over 1% of all USDA R&E spending in FY2007.
- The increase in the 2008 Farm Bill still falls short of a fair share for organic research and education, but it is a strong down payment towards achieving that goal, and any erosion of the Farm Bill funding amount would be a significant step backwards.
- Organic ag research is crucial in giving farmers the tools and information they need to address production challenges, improve farming systems, and ultimately meet the growing consumer demand for organic products.
- Please ensure that the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative remains funded at \$18 million in the FY09 Budget.