

Advancing Regional Organic Markets

A FARMER'S TOOLKIT



WEST/SOUTHWEST
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

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Today's Organic Market Opportunities

Organic demand in the U.S. keeps climbing, and it's outpacing the rest of the food market by a wide margin. Shoppers are spending more than \$76 billion annually on organic products, and they're seeking far more than fruits and vegetables. Top selling organic products at retail include produce, dairy, beverages, packaged goods, and value-added foods. Grains, livestock products, and value-added goods are all in demand, and often imported.

That gap between what buyers want and what U.S. farms produce is creating opportunity for transitioning operations to step in, diversify, and earn stronger margins in markets that are actively seeking new suppliers.

To help you assess opportunities as you plan for long-term, resilient organic growth, here's a peek at the national and regional demand trends, supply gaps, and tips to work effectively with buyers.

WHAT'S DRIVING GROWTH

Clean Ingredients Demand for simple, recognizable ingredients

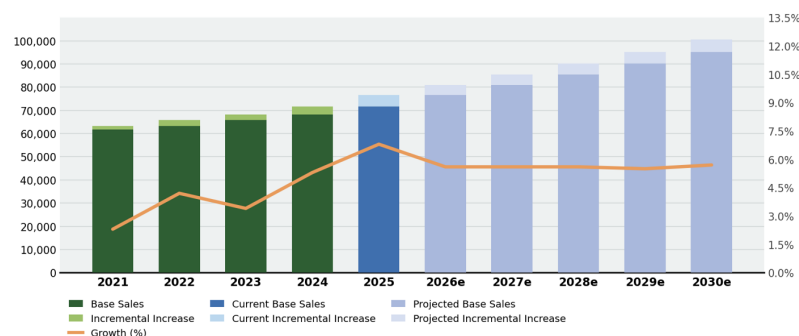
Shrinking Price Gap Organic pricing is more competitive with conventional

Health Trends GLP-1–driven eating habits are increasing demand for cleaner foods

Generational Shift Millennials and Gen Z prioritize sustainability, local foods, and global flavors

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FIGURE 1.2. Total U.S. Organic Sales and Growth, 2021–2030e



Organic Market Snapshot

- \$76.6 billion in U.S. organic sales (2025), growing at 6.8% year-over-year
- Organic sales outpace the total food market by nearly 2x
- Organic sales are projected to exceed \$100 billion by 2030

SEGMENT	GROWTH	KEY TRENDS	IMPLICATIONS FOR GROWERS
Meat, Poultry, Seafood	22.5%	Organic beef up +44.3% — now the #1 segment	High-opportunity segment for U.S. livestock producers. Demand for certified organic meat is outpacing domestic supply, opening doors for ranchers to transition and certify. This growth is also opening doors for grain producers and feed processors to support the growing organic beef sector.
Dairy and Eggs	12.8%	Organic eggs +22.4%; yogurt +16.6%	Strong upside for diversified farms. Requires certified feed supply — a call to expand U.S. organic grain production.
Snacks & Candy	7.30%	Better-for-you; dried beans rising	Opportunity for value-added and dry edible bean growers. Demand for clean, plant-based snacks and dried beans (up 13.6%) supports diversified field-crop and processing partners.
Beverages	7.20%	Functional drinks; dairy-alt +18.2%	Growth in value-added processing. Organic fruit and botanical growers can tap into beverage markets with the right processing partners.

Fast-Growing Organic Categories

Animal products, textiles and beverages offer potential for organic growers, particularly those willing to supply feed, diversify or add value.



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Demand for organic products continues to grow, and every region has a different mix of strengths and gaps that matter for farms moving into organic.



The West Organic Advantage

A Practical Guide for Farmers & Producers

The West anchors the U.S. organic economy — driven by **California's** unmatched scale and strengthened by the climate diversity and adaptive innovation of **Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and Hawaii**. Together, these states represent the largest and most influential organic region in the country, producing more than a quarter of national organic acreage and over half of all organic sales. From orchard crops and leafy greens to desert-grown grains and regenerative livestock systems, the West demonstrates how scale, climate adaptation, and innovation can work in tandem to define the future of organic agriculture.

A Region Defined by Scale, Diversity & Climate Innovation

Organic agriculture in the West benefits from vast acreage, unparalleled crop diversity, and a robust infrastructure ecosystem that connects farms to both domestic and global markets. California remains the cornerstone — with **1.84 million organic acres** and over **\$14 billion** in annual organic sales — while Arizona, Nevada, and Utah contribute nearly **600,000 additional acres** across forage, grains, and winter vegetables. Hawaii brings a unique tropical dimension rooted in regenerative practices and culturally significant crops.

Producers across the region benefit from:

- **Exceptional climate range**, enabling year-round production across coastal, alpine, and desert environments
- **Diverse production systems**, from fruit and vegetable powerhouses to expanding dairy, grain, and forage sectors
- **Strong infrastructure**, including cold-chain networks, processing hubs, export facilities, and climate-resilient irrigation technologies
- **Leadership in regenerative agriculture**, water conservation, and circular nutrient systems
- **A global and national market presence**, supplying 70% of the nation's organic fruits and vegetables

These strengths make the West a critical engine for both organic supply and the future of climate-adapted production.

STATE	CERTIFIED OPERATIONS (2026)	CERTIFIED ACRES (2026)	TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES	NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS
Arizona	313	37,482	Lettuce, broccoli, celery	Key U.S. winter produce hub; organic farms hire 7x more workers than conventional
California	5,465	1,840,000	Avocados, citrus, rice, wine grapes	Ranks 1st in the nation in certified operations; serves the largest U.S. organic retail market
Hawaii	104	100,185	Lettuce, macadamias, coffee	Over 100,000 certified organic acres; export crops and food security focus
Nevada	125	411,523	Hay, eggs, barley	5th in U.S. for organic acres; expanding feed and rangeland systems
Utah	196	137,922	Eggs, wheat, milk	55% split operations; growing organic grain and dairy clusters

What the Region Produces — and Where It's Headed

California: The Epicenter of Organic Fruits, Vegetables & Dairy

California dominates U.S. organic specialty crop production — including berries, citrus, leafy greens, nuts, and orchard crops — while supporting major dairy, poultry, and vegetable systems. Its mature infrastructure, favorable climate, and diversified enterprises enable seamless supply to both domestic and export markets.

Arizona & Nevada: Desert Innovation Meets Forage Expansion

These states are redefining organic agriculture in arid landscapes through water-efficient irrigation, regenerative grain rotations, and expanding organic hay and forage systems. Arizona's winter vegetables fill national supply gaps, while Nevada's vast rangelands offer large-scale potential for organic livestock feed.

Utah: Growing Dairy, Grain & Regenerative Systems

Utah's organic sector blends grain, dairy, and mixed livestock systems with climate-smart innovation. High-mountain environments support rotational diversity, while producers increasingly adopt regenerative practices to build soil resilience and feed self-sufficiency.

Regional Challenges — and Producer-Led Solutions

While the West is the nation's most influential organic region, it also faces some of its most complex challenges:

- **Water scarcity and drought pressure**, requiring innovative irrigation and groundwater management
- **Labor shortages**, especially in high-value specialty crop sectors
- **Processing and feed gaps**, particularly for dairy, livestock, and forage systems outside of California
- **Land and operational costs**, which challenge producer profitability and expansion

Producers and regional partners are leading solutions that include:

- **Investing in local processing and composting infrastructure**, reducing dependence on out-of-region facilities
- **Scaling feed and forage production** in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah to strengthen livestock systems
- **Advancing water-efficient practices**, including drip irrigation, deficit irrigation, and drought-adapted crop rotations
- **Adopting regenerative systems** that improve soil health and reduce input dependence
- **Expanding cold-chain capacity** to support diversified fruit and vegetable distribution

These strategies reinforce resilience, competitiveness, and long-term regional sustainability.

Looking Ahead: The West as the Epicenter of U.S. Organic Growth

With national organic sales surpassing **\$76.6 billion**, the West remains central to future expansion — combining unmatched production volume with leadership in climate adaptation. California's scale, paired with the emerging feed and forage capacity of Arizona, Nevada, and Utah, ensures the region's ongoing relevance to national food security. Hawai'i adds unique value through tropical systems, Indigenous agricultural knowledge, and export opportunities.

Across the region, producers are shaping the next generation of organic supply by:

- Leading climate-adapted fruit, vegetable, dairy, and livestock systems
- Expanding feed and rotational grain production for regional self-sufficiency
- Driving national composting, soil health, and regenerative research
- Strengthening both regional and global organic market resilience

Whether producing specialty crops for export, scaling desert grains, or advancing regenerative dairy systems, West-region farmers are at the forefront of building a resilient, climate-smart, and economically powerful organic future.

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH BUYERS

*"Do your homework. Go to the store and do research.
Come in with your eyes wide open."*

— Kenny, Natural Foods Retail Buyer

*"It doesn't do any good to grow it, if you don't know where
you're going to sell it."*

— Steve, Certified Organic Orchard

What Do Buyers Want?

Buyers value clear communication, dependable follow-through, and partners who understand their pricing, timing, and operational constraints.

They care about the farms behind their products and appreciate growers who are transparent, collaborative, and invested in long-term relationships.

Finding and Connecting with Prospective Buyers

Attend Conferences, Trade Shows & Field Days

Events bring together retailers, distributors, chefs, and foodservice buyers looking for new suppliers.

Ask Neighbors & Fellow Producers

Farmers often know who pays well, communicates clearly, and buys consistently.

Use Directories & Market Databases

Directories, including the Organic Integrity Database help you find buyers by category, product type, or region.

Review Buyer Websites for Vendor Requirements

Many buyers provide clear instructions about:

- Packaging, labeling, and certification requirements
- Insurance and transportation expectations
- Instructions for submitting new products or samples

Reach Out Directly

A short, targeted email or call is expected—and welcomed

Work With Your Local Food Hub or Distributor

Food hubs and regional aggregators often buy from small and mid-sized farms and already have strong relationships with retailers and institutions.

**You can find additional resources
and support at the links below.**

markets@rodaleinstitute.org
organictransition.org/region/national
<https://rodaleinstitute.org/education/resources/>



Grocery Buyers

It can take as long as a full year to get into the larger, national retail chains while independent retailers may be able to bring in new vendors/farmers within days.

Distributor/Wholesale Buyers

These buyers need transportation solutions that keep their trucks full. If you know of other certified organic farmers in your region, let the buyers know there is more than one reason to send a truck your way.

Institutional Buyers - School Districts and Foodservice

School districts we interviewed want organic root vegetables and correctly sized fruit, especially apples, oranges, and berries for the entire school year. Schools also often buy B grade fruit and vegetables.

Grain Buyers - Feed & Food

Ask the buyer for crop specifics before buying seed or planting. Some require particular varieties and some even offer seed programs/bulk buying opportunities for growers.

Fiber and Seed Buyers

If you grow cotton, participating in a Cotton Co-operative will greatly enhance your ability to sell your crop. If you grow seed, know all legal requirements in advance and save yourself from future headaches.

Dairy / Whole Milk Buyers

Transportation and product quality are watchwords for these buyers. Ask about bonuses for quality or volume improvements.