

Arizona

The nation's winter produce hub and a proving ground for water-resilient organic systems



Arizona ranks 26th nationally with 313 certified organic operations and 37,482 certified acres. With 296 certified operations spanning desert vegetables, dryland grains, and emerging cooperatives, Arizona organic farms hire 738% more workers than conventional operations.

313 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	37,482 CERTIFIED ACRES	90% HOUSEHOLDS BUY ORGANIC	+738% MORE WORKERS VS. CONVENTIONAL
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STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	313 (26th nationally)
Certified organic acres	37,482
Household organic adoption	90%
Worker employment vs. conventional	+738%
Split operations	50% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand water-efficient organic systems and controlled environment agriculture in arid zones.
- Grow regional aggregation and food hub capacity through Sun Produce Cooperative.
- Strengthen Indigenous and Sonoran-adapted organic production traditions and seed sovereignty.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Lettuce:** Yuma provides a major share of the national organic supply.
- ▶ **Broccoli:** cool-season vegetable for national distribution, Nov-April.
- ▶ **Celery:** specialty winter vegetable; concentrated organic production.
- ▶ **Citrus, dates & herbs:** CEA herbs and dates are emerging high-value organic categories.

BARRIERS

- Water scarcity and Colorado River allocation cuts pressure irrigated organic systems.
- Labor constraints and cross-border workforce dependencies create operational risk.
- Limited in-state processing and cold storage outside the Yuma corridor.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Arizona's organic sector punches above its weight: a critical national winter produce supplier with the country's strongest worker-employment economics, and growing food hub infrastructure anchored by ASU's TOPP program.

Resources for Farmers

Arizona's organic ecosystem is anchored by ASU's Swette Center, the Arizona Department of Agriculture, University of Arizona Extension, and Sun Produce Cooperative. Together they provide transition mentorship, certification support, and market access across the state.

Southwest TOPP (CCOF-led)

MENTORSHIP & TRANSITION SUPPORT

- Serves AZ, CA, HI, NM, NV, TX, and UT
- One-on-one technical assistance for organic systems planning
- Workshops on water-efficient organic production practices
- Connect transitioning farmers to organic buyers and markets

organictransition.org/region/west-southwest

AZ Dept of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: up to \$750/yr per scope
- Arizona Grown branding for state-produced organics
- USDA NOP certification authorization and oversight
- Food safety and handling program resources

agriculture.az.gov

U of AZ Cooperative Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic vegetable and specialty crop production research
- Water-use efficiency trials for organic desert farming
- County offices in Yuma, Maricopa, Pima, and beyond
- IPM and pesticide-free resources for organic certification

extension.arizona.edu

Sun Produce Cooperative

AGGREGATION, DISTRIBUTION & MARKET ACCESS

- Farmer-owned cooperative for Arizona organic produce
- Aggregates and distributes to regional organic buyers
- Supports small and mid-size farms with market access
- Collective bargaining for better prices and contracts

sunproducecoop.org

DID YOU KNOW? ARIZONA

Through the West/Southwest TOPP region (CCOF-led), transitioning Arizona farmers are paired with experienced organic mentors, with ASU's Swette Center a key state partner. The program supports Arizona organic farms that already hire 738% more workers than conventional counterparts, helping to grow a high-value, labor-intensive supply chain anchoring the state's winter vegetable economy. Arizona's 90% household organic purchasing rate reflects an exceptionally strong consumer base for locally grown certified products.

KEY SOURCES

Organic Trade Association. "Arizona Organic Profile." OTA State Advocacy, 2025, ota.com.

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