

ORGANIC COMMODITIES, SPECIALTY CROPS AND LIVESTOCK MARKETS IN THE CAROLINAS

RESOURCE GUIDE: MARCH 2025

This Resource Guide outlines best practices and considerations for navigating organic markets for organic commodities and livestock markets.

As demand for organic products continues to rise, understanding the unique dynamics of these markets is essential for growers looking to maximize their opportunities and profitability. Whether you're new to organic farming or looking to refine your approach, this resource serves as a companion on your journey towards successful market navigation for organic commodity and livestock markets.

The National Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) supports transitioning and organic farmers with Market resources including Buyer/Seller discovery events to facilitate meaningful connections between organic sellers and buyers and Market Development Workshops. The key takeaways and resources in this guide emerged from the Organic Markets Outlook Panel at the Organic Commodities & Livestock Conference which took place in March 2025. To learn more and find events near you, visit:

www.organictransition.org/region/national/events.



EVENT RECAP:

This organic market session featured a panel of industry professionals discussing the market outlook for pastured livestock, specialty crops, and row crop farmers in the

Carolinas. This interactive panel featured Kellee James from Argus Media, Jennifer Curtis from Firsthand Foods and Taylor Holenbeck from Happy Dirt. Breakout sessions followed to dive deeper into topics of market development.

Key Takeaways/Best Practices

NEW TO THE ORGANIC MARKET?

- In wholesale, farmers should focus on specializing in marketing a core set of items rather than trying to grow and market everything.
- Farmers should get to know buyers early, ideally before planting or as they plan out their crops. Establishing these relationships well in advance allow farmers to align their production with buyer needs.
- New farmers should start small and grow slowly, focusing on manageable scales to gain experience and refine their operations before expanding. This approach allows for learning.
- Reach out to other organic farmers in your region to learn more about their markets experiences and buyers to understand their needs.

MARKET TRENDS & GENERAL TAKEAWAYS

- The U.S. Organic Food Market is \$60 billion and still growing. More than 82% of U.S. households stock organic food in their kitchens. It is one of the fastest growing sectors in U.S. Agriculture ([Precendence Research](#)).
- Half of all organic feed demand is driven by the dairy sector, highlighting the importance of feed access. Regionally, the cost of organic feed can be high. While organic animal protein sales are growing, the growth is concentrated in chicken. Meanwhile, organic dairy is just beginning to rebound after years of depressed sales due to the pandemic and rise of plant-based milk (Argus Media Presentation).
- The U.S. is becoming self-sufficient in producing organic corn and other grains (except soybeans), meaning domestic production is growing and meeting more of the demand each year. As a result, the U.S. is relying less on imported corn (Argus Media Presentation).
- Panelists noted that organic certification is strongly associated with “good for you” foods, as consumers tend to view organic products as healthier. This consumer perception is a key reason why consumers often reach for organic products, viewing certification as a trusted indicator of quality and values they support (Argus Media Presentation).
- When purchasing organic products, consumers typically buy at grocery stores, but there is a significant opportunity to expand organic sales outside of grocery stores (Argus Media Presentation).
- Panelists noted that organic livestock is seeing slow growth, but demand is increasing in direct-to-consumer channels as consumers seek transparency and local sourcing.

PRICING TIPS

- Review the [USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Pricing Report](#).

- Know your production costs. You can't control the market, but you can control some of your costs. Farmers should call buyers and other farmers to gauge pricing.
- Consider lowering your price when you need to move more volume of a certain crop and make up for it with another product.

ORGANIC RESOURCE LISTS:

- [Wholesale Success Guide](#)
- [Organic Integrity Database](#)
- [Find.Organic](#)
- [Happy Dirt Powerpoint – Growing for Organic Wholesalers](#)
- [Argus Media – Organic Grain Markets Overview](#)
- [Meat Suite](#)
- [NCDA Marketing](#)
- [Organic Grain Hub](#)
- [Organic Market Development Grant Recipients](#)
- [The Organic & Non-GMO Sourcebook](#)
- [“Understanding Processor and End-User Grain Needs” Artisan Grain Collaborative](#)

*Please note that some buyer information included in these listings may be outdated.

Rodale Institute does not manage these lists and can support with navigating these clearinghouses, vetting lists, and connecting producers directly to buyer contacts in our network.

CONNECT WITH US

If you're a producer looking for deeper markets access guidance, organic crop rotation support, or to get connected with buyers, contact [Rodale Institute's Consulting Markets Team](#): **Email:** Markets@RodaleInstitute.org **Phone:** [\(610\) 683-1416](tel:(610)683-1416)