

Delaware

Delmarva's organic gateway building vegetable and grain supply for the DC-Baltimore-Philadelphia corridor



A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Delaware ranks 42nd nationally with 87 certified organic operations and 3,971 certified acres. Delaware's compact size belies its strategic position at the nexus of three major organic consumer markets: DC, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. With \$2.8M in OREI/ORG funding and University of Delaware Extension's targeted outreach, transitioning conventional grain and vegetable acres on the Delmarva Peninsula is Delaware's highest-return organic growth opportunity.

87 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	3,971 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$2.8M OREI / ORG FUNDING	+19% MORE WORKERS VS. CONVENTIONAL
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STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	87 (42nd nationally)
Certified organic acres	3,971
OREI / ORG funding (cumulative)	\$2.8M
Worker employment vs. conventional	+19%
Split operations	36% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Supply the DC-Baltimore-Philadelphia organic consumer corridor through short, direct supply chains.
- Transition conventional Delmarva grain acres with NRCS EQIP Organic Initiative and Northeast TOPP support.
- Develop organic vegetable supply chains for regional food hubs and Mid-Atlantic institutional buyers.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Vegetables:** organic market gardens supply the DC-Baltimore corridor.
- ▶ **Grains:** Delmarva organic soybeans represent a major transition opportunity.
- ▶ **Nursery & Floriculture:** organic ornamentals serve regional garden retail markets.
- ▶ **Specialty Crops:** organic sweet corn, melons, and cover crop seed produced statewide.

BARRIERS

- Conventional poultry industry dominance creates land competition and nutrient management challenges.
- Small state scale limits farmer network density and organic peer learning infrastructure.
- Multi-state certifier navigation adds administrative complexity for small Delaware operations.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Delaware's greatest organic asset is geography: no U.S. state sits closer to three simultaneous major consumer markets. Transitioning conventional Delmarva grain acres and building vegetable supply chains for DC, Baltimore, and Philadelphia food hubs represent the clearest growth pathway, with Northeast TOPP and UD Extension as the essential support infrastructure.

Resources for Farmers

Delaware organic farmers are supported by the Delaware Department of Agriculture, University of Delaware Extension, Mid-Atlantic NOFA chapters, and Northeast TOPP. Together they help farms navigate certification, access transition funding, and connect to the region's major consumer markets.

Delaware Dept of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- Delaware Agriculture Marketing: connecting farms to regional buyers
- NRCS Delaware: EQIP Organic Initiative and Transition Assistance programs
- Delaware Agricultural Museum and beginning farmer education resources

agriculture.delaware.gov

University of Delaware Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic grain, vegetable, and cover crop production research on Delmarva
- Mid-Atlantic grain transition and soil health specialist programs
- 4-H and Farm Business Management programs for beginning farmers
- Cooperative extension offices in all three Delaware counties

extension.udel.edu

NOFA Delaware / Mid-Atlantic

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Mid-Atlantic chapter connecting Delaware farms to the NOFA network
- Farmer-to-farmer peer learning and organic transition mentorship
- Organic certification guidance and cost-share navigation support
- Regional farm tours and workshops connecting Delmarva producers

nofavt.org

Northeast TOPP (PCO-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, WV, MD, DE
- Paid organic mentor matching for grain, vegetable, and diversified farms
- Workshops on organic grain transition and cover crop integration
- Certification navigation and EQIP Organic Initiative cost-share support

organictransition.org/region/northeast-mid-atlantic

DID YOU KNOW? DELAWARE

Delaware sits within a two-hour drive of more than 15 million organic food consumers across the DC-Baltimore-Philadelphia corridor. Despite this proximity to one of the nation's most lucrative organic consumer markets, Delaware has fewer than 130 certified organic operations. Transitioning even a fraction of the state's 500,000 conventional agricultural acres to organic would create outsized economic returns. University of Delaware Extension and Northeast TOPP are actively supporting this transition, particularly for grain and vegetable operations on the Delmarva Peninsula.

KEY SOURCES

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