

Kansas

The wheat belt's organic transition opportunity: vast dryland grain acres and growing Plains beef demand



A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Kansas ranks 32nd nationally with 190 certified organic operations and 96,452 certified acres. Kansas's organic sector punches above its operation count with large-acre dryland grain farms. The state's wheat and grain heritage translates naturally to organic systems where weed control and soil health management align with certified practices. With \$6.3M in OREI/ORG funding and Kansas State Extension's statewide network, the Central Plains organic grain opportunity in Kansas is substantial.

190 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	96,452 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$6.3M OREI / ORG FUNDING	+18% MORE WORKERS VS. CONVENTIONAL
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STATE PROFILE AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	190 (32nd nationally)
Certified organic acres	96,452
OREI / ORG funding (cumulative)	\$6.3M
Worker employment vs. conventional	+18%
Split operations	44% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Transition dryland wheat and grain acres to organic to supply the premium food-grade organic milling market.
- Expand organic beef production on native Kansas pastures to meet national demand for grass-fed organic beef.
- Supply the Central Plains organic livestock sector with in-state organic grain, reducing feed import costs.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Wheat:** organic hard red winter wheat commands strong milling premiums.
- ▶ **Sorghum & Corn:** organic grain sorghum and corn supply Central Plains markets.
- ▶ **Cattle & Beef:** organic grass-fed beef on Kansas pastures for premium markets.
- ▶ **Soybeans:** eastern Kansas organic soybeans help close the national feed gap.

BARRIERS

- Extreme weather variability including drought, hail, and late spring freezes creates yield risk during transition.
- Distance from major consumer markets limits direct marketing and raises supply chain logistics costs.
- Limited local organic grain processing and elevator infrastructure for aggregating small volumes.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Kansas's wheat belt heritage, large farm scale, and grass-fed beef production capacity create a natural alignment with organic systems. Central Plains TOPP mentorship and Kansas State Extension's organic research are closing the knowledge and risk gap for dryland grain farmers weighing organic transition.

Resources for Farmers

Kansas organic farmers are supported by the Kansas Department of Agriculture, Kansas State Research and Extension, the Kansas Rural Center, and Central Plains TOPP. Together they deliver state certification support, applied organic research, farmer advocacy, and mentor matching.

Kansas Dept of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- From the Land of Kansas branding program for state-produced organic products
- NRCS Kansas: EQIP Organic Initiative and Transition Assistance programs
- Beginning Farmer resources and agricultural development loan programs

agriculture.ks.gov

K-State Research and Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic wheat, grain sorghum, soybean, and beef production specialists
- Dryland and irrigated organic systems research at multiple KSU Research Centers
- Soil health, no-till, and integrated weed management research for organic systems
- 105-county extension network delivering statewide organic outreach

ksre.ksu.edu

Kansas Rural Center

FARMER ADVOCACY & SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

- Kansas's leading sustainable and organic agriculture advocacy organization
- Organic and sustainable farmer education and policy advocacy programs
- Annual sustainable agriculture conference and farm tour network
- Beginning farmer programs and organic market development support

kansasruralcenter.org

Central Plains TOPP (OCIA-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves CO, KS, NE, ND, OK, SD, and WY
- Paid organic mentor matching for dryland grain, sorghum, and beef farms
- Workshops on organic wheat and grain sorghum transition and weed management
- Market access support for organic grain and grass-fed beef supply chains

organictransition.org/region/plains

DID YOU KNOW? KANSAS

Kansas produces more wheat than any other state, and organic hard red winter wheat sells at a premium of 100% or more above conventional wheat prices. The premium economics for organic wheat are compelling: at \$12-14 per bushel versus \$6-7 conventional, a Kansas dryland wheat farmer transitioning 500 acres could double gross revenue per acre. The three-year transition period is the primary barrier, but Central Plains TOPP mentorship and KSU Extension's organic wheat production guides are making the agronomics and transition financing more accessible for Plains grain farmers.

KEY SOURCES

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

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