

Massachusetts

New England's most concentrated organic consumer market surrounded by premium vegetable, dairy, and orchard farms



**NORTHEAST/
MID-ATLANTIC**
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Massachusetts ranks 25th nationally with 317 certified organic operations and 4,082 certified acres.

Massachusetts combines one of the nation's highest concentrations of organic consumers with a vibrant small-farm network that has pioneered organic production since the 1970s. With \$6.2M in OREI/ORG funding and UMass Extension's applied research, the state's organic sector is constrained not by demand but by land availability and farm scale.

317 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	4,082 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$6.2M OREI / ORG FUNDING	+32% MORE WORKERS VS. CONVENTIONAL
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STATE PROFILE AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	317 (25th nationally)
Certified organic acres	4,082
OREI / ORG FUNDING (cumulative)	\$6.2M
Worker employment vs. conventional	+32%
Split operations	37% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Leverage Boston and Cambridge's dense organic consumer base to build premium direct market supply chains.
- Expand organic cranberry production on South Shore bogs for the premium juice and dried fruit markets.
- Grow organic dairy and farmstead cheese for the Pioneer Valley's strong farm-to-table and specialty food market.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Vegetables:** organic farms supply Boston, Cambridge, and Pioneer Valley markets.
- ▶ **Dairy & Cheese:** Pioneer Valley organic dairy supplies regional cooperatives.
- ▶ **Fruit & Cranberries:** organic cranberries lead Massachusetts premium retail channels.
- ▶ **Greenhouse & Nursery:** organic transplants serve the region's strong CSA sector.

BARRIERS

- Extremely high land values near metro Boston create severe barriers for new entrant organic farms.
- Small farm scale limits the economics of organic grain and feed self-sufficiency for livestock operations.
- Short New England growing season compresses production windows and limits crop diversification options.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Massachusetts organic farms earn premium prices because they are embedded in one of the nation's most sophisticated organic consumer markets. The state's central challenge is land access: without active farmland preservation and affordable access programs, the next generation of organic producers will be priced out of the Boston orbit entirely.

Resources for Farmers

Massachusetts organic farmers are supported by NOFA-Mass, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, UMass Extension, and Northeast TOPP. Together they deliver farmer advocacy, certification cost-share, applied research, and mentorship to sustain and grow the state's organic sector.

NOFA-Mass

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Massachusetts chapter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association since 1982
- Annual NOFA-Mass Summer Conference: New England's premier organic farming event
- Farmer-to-farmer mentorship and organic transition peer learning networks
- Organic certification guidance and cost-share navigation support

nofamass.org

MA Dept of Agricultural Resources

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- Massachusetts Grown branding for state-produced organic products
- Agricultural Preservation Restriction program: farmland access for organic producers
- NRCS Massachusetts: EQIP Organic Initiative and Transition Assistance programs

mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-agricultural-resources

UMass Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic vegetable, fruit, dairy, and cranberry production specialists
- Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment: organic systems research hub
- Soil health, IPM, and season extension research for Northeast organic farms
- Beginning farmer programs and organic transition planning support

extension.umass.edu

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 vegetable, dairy, and diversified farms
- Workshops on organic vegetable production and Northeast dairy transition
- Beginning farmer certification navigation and land access support

organictransition.org/region/northeast-mid-atlantic

DID YOU KNOW? MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts has one of the highest per-capita organic food expenditures in the nation, driven by Boston's concentration of university students, research professionals, and high-income households. The Boston metro area is consistently ranked among the top five U.S. organic food markets. Yet Massachusetts farms supply only a small fraction of local organic demand, with most organic food shipped from California, the Midwest, and overseas. NOFA-Mass and UMass Extension are actively working to close that gap by supporting both new entrant farmers and established farms considering organic transition.

KEY SOURCES

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

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