

Maine

New England's organic frontier: wild blueberries, potatoes, and a pioneering small farm culture



A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Maine ranks 20th nationally with 474 certified organic operations and 70,772 certified acres. Maine punches well above its size in organic agriculture, driven by wild blueberries, potatoes, and a deeply rooted organic farming culture established by MOFGA, the oldest and largest state organic organization in the country. With \$7.4M in OREI/ORG funding and University of Maine Extension, Maine is building on five decades of organic leadership.

474 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	70,772 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$7.4M OREI / ORG FUNDING	+29% MORE WORKERS VS. CONVENTIONAL
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STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	474 (20th nationally)
Certified organic acres	70,772
OREI / ORG funding (cumulative)	\$7.4M
Worker employment vs. conventional	+29%
Split operations	34% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand organic wild blueberry certification to capture the growing functional food and premium antioxidant market.
- Grow organic potato acreage in Aroostook County for the premium retail and natural food channel.
- Supply Portland's nationally recognized farm-to-table food scene with local organic vegetables and heritage grains.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Wild Blueberries:** Maine grows 99% of U.S. wild blueberries; organic is growing.
- ▶ **Potatoes:** Aroostook County organic potatoes command strong retail premiums.
- ▶ **Dairy:** central Maine organic dairy farms serve regional cooperatives.
- ▶ **Vegetables & Grains:** Portland-area organic farms and artisan grain mills supply markets.

BARRIERS

- Short growing season and harsh winters limit crop diversification and extend the transition period's income risk.
- Geographic distance from major markets increases logistics costs for Maine organic producers.
- Wild blueberry organic certification requires specific land management practices that take years to implement.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Maine's organic sector is anchored by MOFGA — the oldest state organic organization in the nation — and by globally unique commodities: wild blueberries and Aroostook potatoes. The opportunity is to scale certification in both while supporting Portland's farm-to-table economy with diversified organic supply.

Resources for Farmers

Maine organic farmers are supported by MOFGA, the Maine Department of Agriculture, University of Maine Extension, and Northeast TOPP. Together they provide the nation's most established state-level organic support ecosystem, anchored by 50 years of MOFGA's farmer community.

MOFGA

FARMER ADVOCACY & CERTIFICATION

- Nation's oldest and largest state organic organization, founded in 1971
- USDA-accredited organic certifier serving Maine and Northeast producers
- Annual Common Ground Country Fair: New England's iconic organic farming event
- Beginning farmer and journey person programs: organic transition mentorship

mofga.org

Maine Dept of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- Maine Grown and Maine Quality Trademark branding for organic producers
- NRCS Maine: EQIP Organic Initiative and Transition Assistance programs
- Beginning Farmer loan programs and agricultural business development resources

maine.gov/dacf

University of Maine Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic wild blueberry, potato, vegetable, and dairy production specialists
- Aroostook County potato research station: organic potato systems field trials
- Soil health, cover crop, and IPM research for Maine's short-season organic farms
- 16-county extension network delivering statewide organic outreach

extension.umaine.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 blueberry, potato, and diversified farms
- Workshops on organic wild blueberry management and short-season production
- Beginning farmer certification and transition planning support

organictransition.org/region/northeast-mid-atlantic

DID YOU KNOW? MAINE

Maine produces 99% of the nation's wild blueberries, and wild blueberries are one of the highest-antioxidant foods ever measured. The global functional food market is driving surging demand for wild blueberries specifically, with organic wild blueberries commanding premium prices for their dual certification appeal. Yet most of Maine's wild blueberry barrens are managed conventionally. MOFGA's certification programs and UMaine Extension's organic blueberry management research are actively working to bring more of Maine's unique wild blueberry acreage into certified organic production.

KEY SOURCES

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Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. "Maine Organic Program." DACF, 2025, maine.gov/dacf.