

Michigan

Great Lakes State leads in organic blueberries, dairy, and diverse specialty crops



MIDWEST
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Michigan ranks 14th nationally with 785 certified organic operations and 159,396 certified acres. Michigan's fruit belt along Lake Michigan's eastern shore is one of the densest concentrations of organic tree fruit and blueberry production in the country. The state pairs this specialty crop strength with robust organic dairy in the Lower Peninsula and strong direct-market infrastructure anchored by Detroit's Eastern Market and a statewide network of farmers markets and food co-ops.

785 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	159,396 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$272M ORGANIC SALES	#9 U.S. ORGANIC SALES RANK
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STATE PROFILE AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	785 (14th nationally)
Certified organic acres	159,396
Organic sales value	\$272 million
Worker employment vs. conventional	+28%
Split operations	52% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand organic blueberry and tree fruit processing capacity to capture more value from the Great Lakes fruit belt harvest.
- Grow organic dairy supply chain infrastructure to meet rising Midwest and national demand for organic milk and dairy products.
- Connect southeast Michigan urban consumers with regional organic producers through food hub and direct-market channel development.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Blueberries:** Michigan is the top U.S. organic blueberry state; ideal climate.
- ▶ **Tree Fruit:** organic apples, cherries, and peaches from the fruit belt.
- ▶ **Dairy:** over 150 certified organic dairy farms supply regional processors.
- ▶ **Vegetables:** organic vegetable farms serve Eastern Market and a dense CSA base.

BARRIERS

- High land values in the Lake Michigan fruit belt create barriers to entry for beginning organic fruit producers.
- Organic dairy processing bottlenecks limit on-farm value capture and can constrain price premiums for new organic dairy entrants.
- Cold winters and short growing seasons limit vegetable production windows, requiring high tunnel and season-extension investment.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Michigan's combination of the nation's top organic blueberry belt, a strong organic dairy sector, and major urban direct markets makes it one of the Midwest's most complete and commercially sophisticated organic states.

Resources for Farmers

Michigan organic farmers are supported by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Michigan State University Extension, the Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance, and the Great Lakes Midwest TOPP region. Together they deliver certification, technical assistance, research, and market access across the state's diverse agriculture.

Michigan Dept of Agriculture and Rural Dev.

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- Michigan Cottage Food Law and value-added processing support for organic producers
- NRCS Michigan: EQIP Organic Initiative, RCPP, and Transition Assistance programs
- Michigan Agricultural Development grants for organic market and infrastructure projects

michigan.gov/mdard

Michigan State University Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic blueberry, tree fruit, vegetable, and dairy production specialists statewide
- MSU Organic Farming Research program and on-farm organic systems trials
- Soil health, integrated pest management, and cover crop support for organic transition
- County extension agents across all 83 Michigan counties providing local organic support

canr.msu.edu/organic

Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Michigan's primary organic producer advocacy and networking organization
- Annual Michigan Organic Conference connecting producers, researchers, and buyers
- Organic certification cost-share navigation and new entrant support
- Farmer-to-farmer peer learning and organic market development programs

moffa.net

Midwest TOPP (MOSA-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves AR, IL, IN, IA, KY, MI, MN, MO, OH, TN, WI
- Paid organic mentor matching for blueberry, fruit, dairy, and vegetable operations
- Workshops on organic transition economics, market access, and certification
- Supply chain development for Michigan organic producers entering retail and wholesale

organictransition.org/region/midwest

DID YOU KNOW? MICHIGAN

Michigan produces more organic blueberries than any other state in the U.S., with the Lake Michigan shoreline's sandy soils and lake-moderated climate creating near-perfect growing conditions. The same geography that made southwest Michigan the nation's conventional blueberry capital has proven equally exceptional for organic production, with dozens of certified organic operations supplying national retailers, local food co-ops, and direct-to-consumer channels. MSU Extension's organic blueberry research program and MOFFA's producer networks have been central to building this organic fruit belt into a national model.

KEY SOURCES

USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2022 Census of Agriculture. USDA NASS, 2024.

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Michigan Organic Program. MDARD, 2023.

Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance. MOFFA Annual Report. MOFFA, 2023.

Michigan State University Extension. Organic Agriculture Programs. MSU Extension, 2023.