

Minnesota

10th nationally for operations, anchored by milk, corn, and soybeans



MIDWEST
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Minnesota ranks 10th nationally with 852 certified organic operations and 217,315 certified acres. State farms hire 25% more workers than conventional counterparts. With \$16.5M in OREI/ORG funding and deep cooperative infrastructure, Minnesota sits at the crossroads of organic dairy demand and the national feed grain shortage.

852 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	217,315 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$16.5M OREI / ORG FUNDING	+25% MORE WORKERS VS. CONVENTIONAL
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STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	852 (10th nationally)
Certified organic acres	217,315
OREI / ORG funding (cumulative)	\$16.5M
Worker employment vs. conventional	+25%
Split operations	51% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Scale organic grain production to address the national feed grain shortage and reduce import dependence.
- Leverage cooperative infrastructure and the networks of the Land Stewardship Project, Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, Renewing the Countryside, and other sustainability NGOs to expand organic dairy.
- Expand organic vegetable supply across the 11-county Twin Cities metro by building on The Good Acre food hub's infrastructure and its relationships with Hmong and other immigrant farmers, paired with added technical-assistance capacity.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Milk:** co-op infrastructure anchors regional and national supply chains.
- ▶ **Corn:** primary organic feed crop for growing domestic demand.
- ▶ **Soybeans:** strong premiums; 75-80% of U.S. organic soy is imported.
- ▶ **Specialty crops & vegetables:** Twin Cities farms serve food co-ops and CSA channels.

BARRIERS

- GMO pollen and herbicide drift from conventional neighbors threaten organic grain certification and cause crop damage during the 3-year transition.
- Transition-period cash flow is often negative for dairy operations, which must buy in organic feed while still selling milk at conventional prices.
- Thin market liquidity and price discovery for organic small grains can leave that crop revenue-neutral or negative for growers.
- The expansion of mega-dairies in greater Minnesota (e.g., Riverview) intensifies consolidation pressure on the pasture-based organic dairy model.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Minnesota's 10th-place ranking, deep dairy co-op infrastructure, and \$16.5M in OREI/ORG investment position it as a strategic Midwest organic anchor. Feed grain expansion is the single largest near-term opportunity in the state.

Resources for Farmers

Minnesota's organic farmers are backed by an unusually deep bench of support: farmer-led nonprofits such as the Land Stewardship Project, the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, and Renewing the Countryside; the University of Minnesota's Extension and its Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA); the Minnesota Department of Agriculture; and Midwest TOPP. Together they cover the full path from transition and certification through funding, technical assistance, and market access.

Land Stewardship Project

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Leading sustainable and organic farmer advocacy organization in MN
- Farmer-to-farmer peer learning and organic transition support
- Farmland access and beginning farmer programs
- Policy advocacy for organic agriculture statewide and nationally

landstewardshipproject.org

Minnesota Dept of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- MDA Organic Advisory Task Force for state policy input
- Minnesota Grown branding for state-produced organic products
- Beginning Farmer Tax Credit and farmland access resources

mda.state.mn.us

University of Minnesota Extension & MISA

RESEARCH, TEACHING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic grain, dairy, and vegetable production specialists
- FINBIN farm-financial benchmarks for evaluating organic and transition economics (finbin.umn.edu)
- 11 UMN courses spanning organic livestock, crops, food systems, and marketing
- Annual Minnesota Organic Conference (co-hosted with MDA)

extension.umn.edu

Midwest TOPP (MOSA-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves AR, IL, IN, IA, KY, MI, MN, MO, OH, TN, WI
- Paid organic mentor matching for transitioning farms
- Workshops on grain, dairy, and vegetable organic systems
- Marbleseed Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship Program in MN

organictransition.org/region/midwest

DID YOU KNOW? MINNESOTA

Minnesota's 51% split-operation rate means half of all certified farms already manage both organic and conventional fields simultaneously. That makes Minnesota one of the Midwest's largest ready-to-transition pools. TOPP mentorship and EQIP Organic Initiative cost-share make the economics of full conversion compelling for this cohort. Minnesota's \$16.5M in OREI/ORG funding has built one of the nation's strongest organic agronomy knowledge bases to support them.

KEY SOURCES

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

Organic Trade Association. "Organic Industry Survey." OTA Market Report, 2025, ota.com.

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Minnesota Department of Agriculture. "Minnesota Organic Program." MDA, 2025, mda.state.mn.us.