

North Dakota

Prairie giant: top-three nationally in organic certified acres of grain and sunflowers



A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

North Dakota ranks 34th nationally with 155 certified organic operations and 147,455 certified acres. North Dakota is one of the foundational states of the U.S. organic grain supply, with vast certified acreage in organic wheat, sunflowers, corn, soybeans, and flaxseed across the Red River Valley and central plains. The state's well-organized farmer co-op infrastructure and proximity to organic processors in the Upper Midwest create strong market access for producers. The Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society is the state's leading organic farmer network.

155 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	147,455 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$78M ORGANIC SALES	Top 3 U.S. ORGANIC ACREAGE RANK
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STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	155 (34th nationally)
Certified organic acres	147,455
Organic sales value	\$78 million
Worker employment vs. conventional	+16%
Split operations	35% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Capture organic grain value through expanded on-state milling, oil pressing, and ingredient processing rather than exporting raw organic commodities.
- Develop organic sunflower and flaxseed processing capacity to supply the growing functional food and natural ingredient buyer markets.
- Support beginning and transitioning farmers entering organic grain production as North Dakota's farm population ages and land transfers increase.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Wheat:** organic hard red and durum wheat supplies national flour mills.
- ▶ **Sunflowers:** North Dakota is the top U.S. organic sunflower producer.
- ▶ **Soybeans & Corn:** Red River Valley organic grains supply Upper Midwest processors.
- ▶ **Flaxseed:** organic flaxseed with strong omega-3 ingredient market demand.

BARRIERS

- Remote geography and limited organic processing infrastructure mean many organic commodities travel long distances before value is captured.
- Harsh winters, drought variability, and wind erosion risk can destabilize organic grain yields, particularly during the three-year transition period.
- Large conventional farm scale and low land rental markets can make organic transition economics challenging for full-time grain operations.

KEY TAKEAWAY

North Dakota's 1.2 million certified organic acres in wheat, sunflowers, and grain crops make it one of the most important supply states in the U.S. organic food system. On-state processing investment would dramatically increase the economic return of this production base to North Dakota farm families and communities.

Resources for Farmers

North Dakota organic farmers are supported by the North Dakota Department of Agriculture, North Dakota State University Extension, the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society, and the Central Plains TOPP region. These partners deliver certification, technical assistance, research, and market development resources across the state.

North Dakota Department of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- ND Proud branding and marketing support for certified organic products
- NRCS North Dakota: EQIP Organic Initiative and Organic Transition Assistance
- Agricultural development grants for organic processing and value-added infrastructure

nd.gov/ndda

North Dakota State University Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic grain, sunflower, flaxseed, and pulse crop research and extension specialists
- NDSU Carrington Research Extension Center organic systems trials and demonstration
- Soil health, cover cropping, and integrated weed management for organic producers
- Statewide extension agents providing local organic technical assistance in all counties

ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension

Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Primary organic and sustainable farmer organization in the Northern Plains
- Annual NPSAS conference and farm tour connecting organic producers and buyers
- Organic certification guidance and cost-share navigation for new and transitioning producers
- Farmer peer networks and mentorship across North Dakota and neighboring states

npsas.org

Central Plains TOPP (OCIA-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves CO, KS, ND, NE, OK, SD
- Paid organic mentor matching for grain, sunflower, and pulse crop operations
- Workshops on organic grain transition, dryland management, and certification
- Market access and organic buyer connection resources for ND producers

organictransition.org/region/plains

DID YOU KNOW? NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota produces more certified organic sunflowers than any other state in the U.S., making it the national leader in organic sunflower oil, seeds, and specialty ingredient supply. Organic sunflowers thrive on North Dakota's prairies and command substantial premiums over conventional production, making them one of the state's most economically attractive organic rotation crops. With organic snack, oil, and natural food ingredient markets growing consistently, North Dakota sunflower farmers are positioned at the supply end of a reliably premium organic commodity.

KEY SOURCES

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

North Dakota Department of Agriculture. Organic Program. NDDA, 2023.

Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society. NPSAS Programs. NPSAS, 2023.

North Dakota State University Extension. Organic Agriculture Resources. NDSU Extension, 2023.