

Nebraska

Cornhusker State builds organic grain and beef sector on fertile plains and grasslands



A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Nebraska ranks 22nd nationally with 356 certified organic operations and 261,210 certified acres. Nebraska's organic sector is anchored by grain production in the eastern Corn Belt and expanding organic beef and rangeland operations on the Sandhills and western plains. The state's position as a national beef production leader creates a natural platform for certified organic grass-fed beef development. The Center for Rural Affairs and Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society champion organic farming through policy advocacy and farmer networking.

356 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	261,210 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$86M ORGANIC SALES	Top 15 U.S. ORGANIC STATE
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STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	356 (22nd nationally)
Certified organic acres	261,210
Organic sales value	\$86 million
Worker employment vs. conventional	+21%
Split operations	43% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand organic grain aggregation and storage infrastructure to supply regional organic feed mills and reduce export of raw organic grain commodities.
- Develop certified organic grass-fed beef supply chains leveraging Nebraska's Sandhills rangelands and national beef production infrastructure.
- Build organic market connections between eastern Nebraska organic vegetable producers and Omaha and Lincoln metro direct-market consumer demand.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Corn & Soybeans:** eastern Nebraska organic corn and soy supply regional feed mills.
- ▶ **Beef Cattle:** Nebraska Sandhills support certified organic and grass-fed beef.
- ▶ **Wheat & Small Grains:** western Nebraska organic winter wheat for regional flour millers.
- ▶ **Vegetables:** organic vegetable farms near Omaha and Lincoln serve co-ops.

BARRIERS

- Conventional commodity infrastructure and high cash rental rates in the Corn Belt create economic barriers to organic grain transition.
- Limited organic processing capacity in the state means organic grain and beef producers often must transport product to out-of-state facilities.
- Drought and weather variability on the western plains and Sandhills create yield risk during the organic transition period.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Nebraska's combination of productive Corn Belt grain ground, vast Sandhills rangeland for organic beef, and growing metro direct-market demand gives its organic sector a strong multi-commodity foundation for sustained expansion.

Resources for Farmers

Nebraska organic farmers are supported by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, University of Nebraska Extension, the Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, and the Central Plains TOPP region. These organizations deliver certification, technical assistance, market development, and farmer advocacy resources statewide.

Nebraska Department of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- Nebraska Proud branding and marketing support for certified organic products
- NRCS Nebraska: EQIP Organic Initiative and Organic Transition Assistance programs
- Nebraska Agricultural Development grants for organic processing and market projects

nda.nebraska.gov

University of Nebraska Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic grain, beef, and vegetable production research and extension specialists
- UNL Center for Agricultural Profitability organic enterprise budget and transition resources
- Soil health, cover cropping, and integrated pest management for organic producers
- 93-county extension network delivering local organic technical assistance statewide

extension.unl.edu

Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Nebraska's primary sustainable and organic farmer advocacy and education organization
- Annual Practical Farmers of the Plains conference and farm tour programs
- Organic certification guidance and cost-share navigation for new applicants
- Farmer peer learning networks and organic mentorship for beginning producers

nebraskaorganic.org

Central Plains TOPP (OCIA-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves CO, KS, ND, NE, OK, SD
- Paid organic mentor matching for grain, beef, and vegetable operations
- Workshops on organic transition, Corn Belt grain management, and certification
- Market access and organic buyer connection resources for Nebraska producers

organictransition.org/region/plains

DID YOU KNOW? NEBRASKA

Nebraska's Sandhills region, covering 20,000 square miles of natural grassland, is one of the most ecologically intact rangelands in North America and a natural fit for certified organic grass-fed beef production. The Sandhills' native prairie grasses, low input history, and extensive grazing tradition position Nebraska ranchers for organic beef certification with relatively lower transition complexity compared to cropland operations. With premium organic and grass-fed beef markets growing nationally, Nebraska's rangeland heritage is an underutilized organic economic asset.

KEY SOURCES

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

Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Organic Agriculture Program. NDA, 2023.

Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society. Organic Programs. NSAS, 2023.

University of Nebraska Extension. Organic and Sustainable Agriculture. UNL Extension, 2023.