

New Mexico

Land of Enchantment grows organic chiles, heritage grains, and rangeland beef under high desert sun



WEST/SOUTHWEST
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

New Mexico ranks 41st nationally with 102 certified organic operations and 40,721 certified acres. New Mexico's organic sector is deeply tied to the state's agricultural heritage: ancient chile varieties, heritage grains, and acequia-irrigated diversified farms in the Rio Grande Valley coexist with expanding rangeland organic beef operations and growing direct-market produce farms near Albuquerque and Santa Fe. The state's unique cultural agricultural traditions and the New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association provide a strong foundation for organic market development.

102 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	40,721 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$29M ORGANIC SALES	Growing SECTOR TRAJECTORY
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STATE PROFILE AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	102 (41st nationally)
Certified organic acres	40,721
Organic sales value	\$29 million
Worker employment vs. conventional	+25%
Split operations	47% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop certified organic Hatch chile as a nationally branded premium organic specialty crop with protected geographic identity and premium buyer access.
- Expand organic rangeland beef certification and direct-to-consumer marketing leveraging New Mexico's vast and historically low-input rangelands.
- Support acequia farming community transition to certified organic status, preserving agricultural heritage while accessing premium organic market channels.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Chile Peppers:** Hatch green and red organic chiles supply premium food markets.
- ▶ **Beef Cattle:** organic beef on New Mexico's vast rangelands for premium buyers.
- ▶ **Vegetables & Heritage Crops:** acequia-irrigated heirloom vegetables and heritage crops.
- ▶ **Pecans:** organic pecan orchards along the Rio Grande supply premium buyers.

BARRIERS

- Severe water scarcity and drought conditions in New Mexico's arid climate create ongoing production risk, particularly during the three-year organic transition period.
- Limited organic processing and cold storage infrastructure in rural areas constrains perishable organic crop market access for small producers.
- Small farm size and geographic remoteness increase per-unit organic production and distribution costs relative to larger or better-located operations.

KEY TAKEAWAY

New Mexico's organic heritage, from acequia-irrigated Rio Grande farms to rangeland cattle and iconic Hatch chiles, gives its organic sector deep cultural authenticity and unique premium market positioning that no other state can replicate.

Resources for Farmers

New Mexico organic farmers are supported by the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, New Mexico State University Extension, the New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association, and the Southwest TOPP region. These organizations deliver certification, technical assistance, and market connection resources across the state's diverse agricultural landscape.

New Mexico Department of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- New Mexico True branding program supporting certified organic product promotion
- NRCS New Mexico: EQIP Organic Initiative and Organic Transition Assistance
- Specialty crop and acequia community agricultural development grant programs

nmda.nmsu.edu

New Mexico State University Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic chile, pecan, vegetable, and rangeland beef research and extension specialists
- NMSU organic dryland and irrigated farming systems research and demonstration programs
- Water conservation, soil health, and arid-climate organic management resources
- 33-county extension network delivering local organic technical assistance statewide

aces.nmsu.edu

New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Statewide network of farmers markets providing direct-market access for organic producers
- Organic producer outreach, education, and market certification support programs
- Farm-to-restaurant and farm-to-institution connection services in Albuquerque and Santa Fe
- Farmer peer learning and organic market development resources statewide

nmfma.org

Southwest TOPP (CCOF-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves AZ, CA, HI, NM, NV, TX, UT
- Paid organic mentor matching for chile, vegetable, beef, and pecan operations
- Workshops on organic transition, arid-climate management, and water conservation
- Market access and specialty food buyer connections for NM organic producers

organictransition.org/region/west-southwest

DID YOU KNOW? NEW MEXICO

The Hatch Valley of New Mexico, famous worldwide for its unique chile flavor profile, is home to a growing cluster of certified organic chile producers supplying national specialty food brands and premium restaurant buyers. The Hatch chile's distinct terroir, like wine grapes in a famous appellation, creates a product that cannot be authentically replicated elsewhere. Certified organic Hatch chiles command exceptional price premiums and growing national recognition as a premium specialty ingredient. NMSU Extension's chile breeding and agronomy programs and Southwest TOPP's organic mentor network are actively supporting producers in transitioning Hatch acreage to certified organic.

KEY SOURCES

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

New Mexico Department of Agriculture. Organic Program. NMDA, 2023.

New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association. NMFMA Programs. NMFMA, 2023.

New Mexico State University Extension. Organic Agriculture Resources. NMSU Extension, 2023.