

Ohio

Buckeye State leads Midwest organic dairy and vegetable production with major metro market access



MIDWEST
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Ohio ranks 8th nationally with 1,008 certified organic operations and 116,565 certified acres. Ohio's organic sector is anchored by one of the Midwest's strongest organic dairy concentrations in the northeast and east-central regions, where Ohio Amish and plain community farms have been early adopters of organic certification. Strong direct-market infrastructure in Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, combined with Ohio State University's robust organic research programs, make Ohio a leading Midwest organic state with diverse commodity and market strengths.

1,008 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	116,565 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$197M ORGANIC SALES	#9 U.S. ORGANIC RANK
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STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	1,008 (8th nationally)
Certified organic acres	116,565
Organic sales value	\$197 million
Worker employment vs. conventional	+26%
Split operations	51% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand organic grain and feed aggregation infrastructure to supply Ohio's large organic dairy and poultry sectors with locally grown certified organic feed.
- Develop farm-to-institution organic supply chains connecting Ohio producers with Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati school, hospital, and university buyers.
- Build on plain community organic farming expertise by developing Amish and Mennonite farmer networks and mentorship pipelines for organic transition support.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- **Dairy:** Amish-operated certified organic dairy dominates northeast Ohio.
- **Vegetables:** organic market gardens supply Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati.
- **Grains & Soybeans:** Ohio organic grains and soybeans supply Midwest feed mills.
- **Poultry & Eggs:** Ohio is a leading organic egg producer for national retail chains.

BARRIERS

- High conventional grain prices and cash rental rates in central Ohio create economic pressure against organic grain transition in productive Corn Belt areas.
- Organic dairy processor consolidation has created farmgate price volatility for Ohio's dairy farmers, complicating the economics of organic dairy expansion.
- Heavy spring and fall precipitation can complicate organic field management timing, particularly for cover crop establishment and organic grain harvest.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Ohio's combination of a nationally significant organic dairy sector anchored by plain community expertise, three major metro direct markets, and strong university organic research makes it one of the Midwest's most commercially sophisticated and organizationally well-supported organic states.

Resources for Farmers

Ohio organic farmers are supported by the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Ohio State University Extension, the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association, and the Midwest TOPP region. These organizations deliver certification, research, technical assistance, and market development resources across the state.

Ohio Department of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

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

agri.ohio.gov

Ohio State University Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic dairy, vegetable, grain, and poultry production research and extension specialists
- OSU organic systems research and on-farm demonstration programs statewide
- Soil health, cover cropping, and integrated pest management for organic producers
- 88-county extension network with sustainable agriculture specialists across Ohio

cfaes.osu.edu/extension

Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Ohio's primary organic and ecological farming advocacy and education organization
- Annual OEFFA Conference serving 800+ organic farmers and sustainable agriculture stakeholders
- Organic certification cost-share navigation and producer support programs
- Farmer peer learning networks, mentorship, and organic market development resources

oeffa.org

Midwest TOPP (MOSA-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves AR, IL, IN, IA, KY, MI, MN, MO, OH, TN, WI
- Paid organic mentor matching for dairy, grain, vegetable, and poultry operations
- Workshops on organic transition, plain community farm support, and certification
- Market access and food hub connection resources for Ohio organic producers

organictransition.org/region/midwest

DID YOU KNOW? OHIO

Ohio's Amish and plain community farmers have been among the earliest and most successful adopters of certified organic dairy practices in the Midwest, creating a culturally distinctive organic dairy cluster in the state's northeast region. Plain community values of land stewardship, diversified farming, and community self-reliance align naturally with organic production principles, and many Amish and Mennonite farms transitioned to certified organic well before conventional market pressures made it economically compelling. This plain community organic heritage gives Ohio a unique and deep-rooted organic dairy expertise that Midwest TOPP and OEFFA are actively connecting to new generations of organic producers.

KEY SOURCES

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

Ohio Department of Agriculture. Organic Certification Program. ODA, 2023.

Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association. OEFFA Programs. OEFFA, 2023.

Ohio State University Extension. Organic Agriculture Resources. OSU Extension, 2023.