

Pennsylvania

Keystone State organic powerhouse: top-ten nationally in dairy, vegetables, and grain



A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Pennsylvania ranks 3rd nationally with 1,664 certified organic operations and 116,451 certified acres.

Pennsylvania's organic sector is one of the most commercially mature in the nation, anchored by Lancaster County's extraordinary concentration of plain community organic dairy farms, intensive organic vegetable production serving Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and a growing organic grain and malt sector. The Pennsylvania Certified Organic program, Rodale Institute in Kutztown, and Penn State Extension provide a world-class technical, certification, and research infrastructure for the state's organic community.

1,664 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	116,451 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$246M ORGANIC SALES	#7 U.S. ORGANIC RANK
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STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	1,664 (3rd nationally)
Certified organic acres	116,451
Organic sales value	\$246 million
Worker employment vs. conventional	+28%
Split operations	53% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand organic grain and malt barley production to supply Pennsylvania's rapidly growing craft beverage and artisan food sectors with certified Pennsylvania-grown ingredients.
- Develop farm-to-institution organic supply chains connecting Lancaster County and southeastern PA organic producers with Philadelphia school, hospital, and university buyers.
- Leverage Rodale Institute's national credibility to attract organic research investment and farmer education programs that position PA as the national center of organic innovation.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Dairy:** Lancaster County hosts the nation's highest organic dairy density.
- ▶ **Vegetables & Fruits:** organic farms serve Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Mid-Atlantic markets.
- ▶ **Grains & Malt:** central PA organic grain for regional mills and craft breweries.
- ▶ **Poultry & Eggs:** Pennsylvania is a leading organic egg producer for national retail.

BARRIERS

- High land values in southeastern Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia metro region limit farmland access for beginning organic producers.
- Organic dairy processor consolidation and farmgate price volatility create economic uncertainty for Pennsylvania's extensive plain community organic dairy sector.
- Labor availability and cost for harvest-intensive organic vegetable and fruit operations near Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are ongoing constraints.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Pennsylvania's combination of a nationally significant organic dairy sector anchored by Lancaster County plain community expertise, proximity to the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh metro markets, and the world-renowned Rodale Institute make it one of the most important organic states in the nation both economically and intellectually.

Resources for Farmers

Pennsylvania organic farmers are supported by the PA Department of Agriculture, Penn State Extension, Pennsylvania Certified Organic, the Rodale Institute, and the Northeast TOPP region. Together they deliver a comprehensive ecosystem of certification, research, technical assistance, and market development resources.

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- Pennsylvania Preferred branding program supporting certified organic product promotion
- NRCS Pennsylvania: EQIP Organic Initiative, RCPP, and Organic Transition Assistance
- State agricultural development grants for organic market infrastructure and processing

agriculture.pa.gov

Penn State Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic dairy, vegetable, grain, fruit, and poultry research and extension specialists
- Penn State organic systems research and on-farm demonstration programs statewide
- Soil health, cover cropping, and integrated pest management for organic producers
- 67-county extension network delivering local organic technical assistance across PA

extension.psu.edu

Rodale Institute

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- World-renowned organic research institution based in Kutztown, Pennsylvania
- Farmer Training Program: year-long residential organic farming apprenticeship
- Longest-running U.S. side-by-side organic vs. conventional farming systems trial
- National organic advocacy, research publication, and farmer education programs

rodaleinstitute.org

Northeast TOPP (PCO-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT (PA producers can access resources)
- Paid organic mentor matching for dairy, vegetable, grain, and fruit operations
- Workshops on organic transition, Northeast pest management, and certification
- Market access and Mid-Atlantic food hub connections for Pennsylvania organic producers

organictransition.org/region/northeast-mid-atlantic

DID YOU KNOW? PENNSYLVANIA

The Rodale Institute in Kutztown, Pennsylvania has been running the longest side-by-side comparison of organic and conventional farming systems in the United States since 1981, providing the scientific foundation for organic agriculture nationally. Rodale's Farming Systems Trial has produced decades of peer-reviewed research demonstrating that organic farming systems match or exceed conventional yields in the long run while building soil health, reducing input costs, and sequestering carbon. This research base, combined with Rodale's Farmer Training Program and Pennsylvania's extraordinary plain community organic dairy heritage, makes Pennsylvania the intellectual and practical capital of U.S. organic agriculture.

KEY SOURCES

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

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Organic Certification Program. PDA, 2023.

Rodale Institute. Annual Report and Farming Systems Trial. Rodale Institute, 2023.

Penn State Extension. Organic Agriculture Programs. Penn State, 2023.