

Southern California

LA basin citrus, avocados, and urban farms serve the world's most lucrative organic market



WEST/SOUTHWEST
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Southern California is home to approximately 2,710 certified organic operations and 659,000 certified acres — representing roughly half of California's 5,465 total certified operations, which rank 1st nationally. Southern California's organic sector spans Ventura County's organic strawberry and citrus fields, San Diego County's organic avocado orchards, the Coachella and Imperial Valleys' organic winter vegetable production, and an expanding urban and peri-urban organic farm scene serving LA's extraordinary organic consumer economy. Los Angeles is the largest organic food market in the United States by sales volume, creating unmatched demand depth for Southern California organic producers. California's 5,465 total certified operations rank 1st nationally; Southern California's approximately 2,710 operations account for roughly half of the state's total.

~2,710	~659,000	\$900M+	#1
CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	CERTIFIED ACRES	ORGANIC SALES (CA)	U.S. ORGANIC STATE

STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations (S. CA region)	~2,710 (part of CA's #1 national rank)
Certified organic acres (S. CA)	~659,000
Organic avocado production	Leading U.S. region
Worker employment vs. conventional	+30%
Split operations	56% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand organic avocado acreage in San Diego County to meet rapidly growing national and international demand for certified organic California avocados.
- Develop urban organic farming and direct-to-consumer supply chains in the Los Angeles basin to serve the nation's largest organic consumer market more efficiently.
- Leverage California's organic winter vegetable advantage in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys to supply national organic retailers during the out-of-season gap.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Avocados:** San Diego and Ventura Counties supply national organic avocados.
- ▶ **Citrus:** Ventura County organic citrus for national fresh and juice markets.
- ▶ **Strawberries & Berries:** coastal organic berries supply LA and national retail chains.
- ▶ **Winter Vegetables:** Coachella Valley supplies organic winter vegetables nationally.

BARRIERS

- Extreme land costs in coastal Southern California create prohibitive farmland access barriers for beginning organic producers and expanding organic operations.
- Water scarcity and ongoing drought conditions across Southern California's irrigated organic production areas create increasing production risk and regulatory uncertainty.
- Urban encroachment on farmland is an ongoing and accelerating threat to the long-term viability of Southern California's organic farm base.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Southern California's organic sector is defined by world-class organic commodity production in avocados, citrus, and berries serving the nation's largest organic consumer market in Los Angeles, making it the highest-value organic geography in the United States.

Resources for Farmers

Southern California organic farmers are supported by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, UC Cooperative Extension, California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), and the Southwest TOPP region. These organizations deliver certification, research, technical assistance, and market development resources across the Southern California agricultural landscape.

California Department of Food and Agriculture

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- CDFA Organic Program: largest state organic regulatory program in the nation
- NRCS California: EQIP Organic Initiative, RCPP, and Organic Transition Assistance
- California Specialty Crop Block Grants for organic avocado, citrus, and berry markets

cdfa.ca.gov/organic

UC Cooperative Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic avocado, citrus, strawberry, and vegetable research and extension specialists
- UC Riverside, UC Davis, and UC Santa Barbara organic systems research programs
- Water use efficiency, soil health, and integrated pest management for organic producers
- 58-county extension network delivering local organic technical assistance across CA

ucanr.edu

CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers)

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Founded 1973: nation's oldest and largest organic certification organization
- CCOF certifies 3,000+ California operations including major SoCal avocado and citrus farms
- Annual conference, organic policy advocacy, and farmer peer network statewide
- Market development and supply chain connection resources for Southern CA producers

ccof.org

Southwest TOPP (CCOF-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves AZ, CA, HI, NM, NV, TX, UT
- Paid organic mentor matching for avocado, citrus, berry, and vegetable operations
- Workshops on organic transition, Southern CA pest management, and certification
- Market access and LA metro food hub connections for Southern CA organic producers

organictransition.org/region/west-southwest

DID YOU KNOW? SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles is the largest organic food retail market in the United States by sales volume, with Southern Californians spending more on organic food per capita than consumers in virtually any other major U.S. metro area. This extraordinary concentration of organic purchasing power within reach of Southern California's avocado orchards, citrus groves, and coastal berry farms creates the most favorable farm-to-market conditions for organic producers anywhere in the world. UC Cooperative Extension's organic research and CCOF's certification and advocacy programs are the backbone of the system that connects Southern California's organic farmers to this unmatched market.

KEY SOURCES

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

California Department of Food and Agriculture. Organic Program. CDFA, 2023.

California Certified Organic Farmers. CCOF Annual Report. CCOF, 2023.

UC Cooperative Extension. Organic Agriculture Research and Extension. UCANR, 2023.