

Virginia

Old Dominion organic strength spans Shenandoah Valley grains, Chesapeake produce, and DC metro demand



A FARMER'S TOOLKIT
State Module | August 2026

Virginia ranks 24th nationally with 333 certified organic operations and 21,658 certified acres. Virginia's organic sector benefits from exceptional market depth generated by the Northern Virginia and Washington DC metro corridor, one of the wealthiest and most highly educated consumer markets in the nation. The Shenandoah Valley and Piedmont host organic grain, dairy, and livestock operations, while the Eastern Shore and tidewater regions support organic vegetable and seafood-adjacent farming. The Virginia Association for Biological Farming and Virginia Cooperative Extension provide strong technical and organizational support statewide.

333 CERTIFIED OPERATIONS	21,658 CERTIFIED ACRES	\$98M ORGANIC SALES	Top 15 U.S. ORGANIC STATE
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STATE PROFILE

AT A GLANCE

Certified operations	333 (24th nationally)
Certified organic acres	21,658
Organic sales value	\$98 million
Worker employment vs. conventional	+27%
Split operations	52% of farms

OPPORTUNITIES & BARRIERS

OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop farm-to-institution organic supply chains connecting Virginia organic producers with Northern Virginia and DC school districts, hospitals, and federal institutions.
- Expand organic grain and flour milling capacity in the Shenandoah Valley to supply Mid-Atlantic artisan bakers and natural food retailers with Virginia-grown organic grain.
- Grow organic agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales near DC and Richmond metro areas to capture maximum value from Virginia's dense and affluent consumer base.

TOP ORGANIC COMMODITIES

- ▶ **Grains & Wheat:** Shenandoah Valley organic grains supply regional flour mills.
- ▶ **Dairy & Beef:** Valley and Piedmont organic dairy and beef supply DC area markets.
- ▶ **Vegetables & Fruits:** organic vegetable and fruit farms supply Northern Virginia markets.
- ▶ **Poultry:** organic pastured poultry serves Northern VA and DC premium buyers.

BARRIERS

- High land values near Northern Virginia and the DC metro create significant entry barriers for beginning organic producers seeking market-adjacent farmland.
- Conventional poultry integrator contracts in the Valley limit the land available for organic poultry transition and independent organic producer market access.
- Heat, humidity, and disease pressure in summer months require intensive organic pest and disease management that adds to production costs.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Virginia's proximity to the Washington DC and Northern Virginia metro, one of the nation's wealthiest and highest organic-spending consumer markets, combined with Shenandoah Valley grain and livestock heritage, creates exceptional organic production and market conditions across the state.

Resources for Farmers

Virginia organic farmers are supported by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Virginia Association for Biological Farming, and the Northeast TOPP region. Together they deliver certification, technical assistance, research, and market development resources statewide.

Virginia Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Services

STATE AGENCY PROGRAMS

- Organic Certification Cost Share: federal pass-through, up to \$750/yr
- Virginia's Finest and Virginia Grown branding for certified organic product promotion
- NRCS Virginia: EQIP Organic Initiative, RCPP, and Organic Transition Assistance
- Agricultural development grants for organic market infrastructure and value-added processing

vdacs.virginia.gov

Virginia Cooperative Extension

RESEARCH, EXTENSION & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Organic grain, dairy, beef, poultry, vegetable, and fruit research and extension specialists
- Virginia Tech organic systems research and on-farm demonstration programs statewide
- Soil health, cover crops, and integrated pest management for organic transition
- 107-county extension network delivering local organic technical assistance across VA

ext.vt.edu

Virginia Association for Biological Farming

FARMER ADVOCACY & PEER LEARNING

- Virginia's primary organic and biological farming advocacy and education organization
- Annual VABF Organic World Conference and farm tour programs
- Organic certification cost-share navigation and producer support programs
- Farmer peer learning networks, mentorship, and market development statewide

vabf.org

Northeast TOPP (PCO-led)

MENTORSHIP & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Serves CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT (VA producers access Mid-Atlantic resources)
- Paid organic mentor matching for grain, dairy, beef, and vegetable operations
- Workshops on organic transition, Mid-Atlantic pest management, and certification
- Market access and DC metro food hub connections for Virginia organic producers

organictransition.org/region/northeast-mid-atlantic

DID YOU KNOW? VIRGINIA

The Washington DC metropolitan area, including Northern Virginia, has one of the highest household incomes and organic food spending rates of any metro market in the United States. With over 6 million consumers in the DC-Northern Virginia metro area, and among the highest rates of organic food purchasing per household in the nation, Virginia organic producers within two hours of DC have access to extraordinary market depth. Virginia Cooperative Extension's organic research programs and VABF's farmer network help producers develop the direct-market and wholesale relationships that fully capture this premium geographic advantage.

KEY SOURCES

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

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Organic Program. VDACS, 2023.

Virginia Association for Biological Farming. VABF Programs. VABF, 2023.

Virginia Cooperative Extension. Organic Agriculture Resources. VCE, 2023.