

# U.S. organic food, fiber sales booming

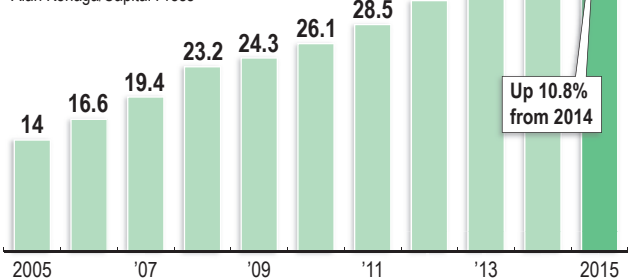
By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

## U.S. annual organic sales

(Billions of dollars)

Source: Organic Trade Association, 2016 Organic Industry Survey

Carol Ryan Dumas and Alan Kenaga/Capital Press



U.S. organic product sales jumped nearly 11 percent in 2015, setting records along the way.

Total sales of organic food and non-food products reached \$43.3 billion, with organic food sales claiming about 92 percent of all receipts at \$39.7 billion, according to the Organic Trade Association.

Those food sales were up 10.6 percent year over year, outperforming the 3 percent growth in conventional food sales and claiming nearly 5 percent of all food sold in the U.S.

At \$3.6 billion, organic non-food sales were up 12.8 percent, led by organic fiber and organic supplements, eclipsing the 2.8 growth in primarily conventional comparable products.

Total organic sales in 2015 marked the fourth-consecutive year of double-digit growth, adding \$4.2 billion in sales over 2014. Those sales represent a 209 percent growth since 2005, when sales totaled \$14 billion.

“Despite all of the challenges, the organic industry saw its largest dollar growth to date and the industry rallied together, investing in infrastructure, education and systems to endure that it will continue to be the most meaningful farm-to-fork — and fiber — system,” said Laura Batcha, OTA executive director.

Growing consumer interest in organic products stems from a desire for transparency in the supply chain and to know where food comes from, she said.

“At the shelf, this translates to consumers seeking clean labels with simple ingredient lists,” OTA stated in its executive summary of its 2016 Organic Industry Survey, which won’t be available until June.

“Farm-fresh foods — produce and dairy — are driving the market. Together, they account for more than half of total organic food sales,” Batcha said.

Produce continued to lead organic food sales in 2015 with receipts of \$14.4 billion for all fruits and vegetables, including \$13 billion in fresh produce, and a sales increase of 10.6 percent. Almost 13 percent of produce sold in the U.S. is organic, OTA reported. “Produce has always been

and continues to be a gateway to organic. It is easy for shoppers to make the connection between agricultural practices used in the field and the fresh fruit or vegetables they bite into,” OTA stated.

Dairy followed with \$6 billion in sales, an increase of more than 10 percent year over year.

Even with impressive growth in those sectors, they weren’t the fastest growing organic food sector, according to the latest survey.

The fresh juices and beverages category grew by 33.5 percent. Organic eggs were just behind with a 32 percent growth, and organic condiments as a whole marked an 18.5 percent growth, OTA reported.

“Organic is a bright spot in agriculture and the economy of America. Our success will continue to be built on a solid foundation of stakeholder engagement, transparency and

meaningful organic standards that consumers trust in,” Batcha said.

While 2015 held significant growth for organic sales and access to organic products continued to grow at the retail level, the industry continued to struggle to meet demand. Dairy and grains were two areas where growth could have been even more robust if more supply had been available, OTA reported.

But the industry did collaborate to make headway in addressing the supply challenge, developing infrastructure and advocating for policy to advance the sector.

“There is an industry-wide understanding of the need to build a secure supply chain that can support demand. This goes hand-in-hand with securing more organic acreage, developing programs to help farmers transition to organic and encouraging new farmers to farm organically,” OTA stated.

OTA made progress this past year in an organic checkoff for research and promotion, crop insurance modifications and amendments to the Federal Milk Marketing Order system to address the needs of the organic industry.

In addition, it created an organic fiber council and several food companies formed the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration to address challenges in expanding the supply of organic grain in the U.S.

## State offers up to \$750 rebate for organic certification costs

By ERIC MORTENSON  
Capital Press

With demand for organic products continuing to accelerate, the Oregon Department of Agriculture is stepping in to help growers, processors and handlers meet the cost of USDA certification this year.

The department will reimburse up to 75 percent of certification expenses — up to \$750 — incurred between Oct. 1, 2015, and Sept. 30, 2016.

Approximately 770 organic producers and handlers are potentially eligible, the department said in a news release. The idea is to help them meet growing consumer demand for organic products, which shows no sign of slowing.

Application for the reimbursement is online at <http://go.usa.gov/cuePJ>. Reimbursements will be on a first-come, first-served basis until the money is gone. All applications must be received by Oct. 31, 2016.

To be eligible, applicants must be an organic operation in Oregon that paid fees to become newly certified or to renew certification. They also must possess current USDA certification; operations with suspended

or revoked certifications are ineligible for reimbursement.

According to USDA, the number of U.S. certified organic operations grew by nearly 12 percent from 2014 to 2016, and has increased nearly 300 percent since the USDA began counting organic certifications in 2002.

As of April 2016, there were 21,781 certified organic operations in the U.S. and 31,160 worldwide. The retail market for organic products is more than \$39 billion in the U.S. and \$75 billion worldwide, according to the USDA’s Agriculture Marketing Service.

Retailers are well aware of the demand. In April, the Seattle Times newspaper reported that retail giant Costco was seeking to lock in access to organic products by helping a producer buy 1,200 acres in Mexico. The company also bought beef cattle and contracted with owners of organic pastures to raise them in Nebraska.

The USDA maintains a website with market and pricing information on about 250 organic products, [www.usda.gov/organic](http://www.usda.gov/organic). The department allocated \$11.5 million in 2015 to help producers, handlers and processors with certification costs.

# Protesters demand justice for Idaho rancher killed by deputies

Citizens say months-long ISP investigation is a disservice to family

By SEAN ELLIS  
Capital Press

BOISE — A rally to demand justice for Jack Yantis, the Adams County rancher who was shot and killed by sheriff’s deputies last year, was held in front of the Idaho attorney general’s office on May 20.

The attorney general’s office in March was handed the results of a months-long Idaho State Police investigation into the Nov. 1 shooting and is acting as special prosecutor in the case.

Protesters said the investigation has lasted too long and demanded the attorney general make a determination on whether the two Adams County sheriff’s deputies involved in the shooting will be charged.

“It shouldn’t take this



Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Supporters of Jack Yantis, the Council, Idaho, rancher shot and killed by sheriff’s deputies in November, demand justice for him May 20 in front of the Idaho attorney general’s office in the state Capitol.

long. My goodness, it’s been over six months,” said Melba rancher Steve Colson.

Yantis, a Council area rancher, was shot and killed by the deputies after he ar-

rived at the scene where one of his bulls had been hit and injured by a car. He was asked by the dispatcher to go there.

Jordan Valley resident Michael McLaughlin, who has

organized the Facebook page, “Justice for Jack,” said the Yantis family deserves closure and the investigation has taken too long.

“Two hundred days lat-

er, the whole family still doesn’t have closure,” he said. “Something’s wrong with that.”

The 12 protesters, a mix of Adams County and Boise area residents, stood in front of the attorney general’s office with signs and stickers demanding justice and resolution.

The attorney general released a statement in response to the rally that encouraged people to be patient until the office thoroughly reviews the results of the state police investigation.

“In order to achieve justice, my office is fulfilling its prosecutorial duty to conduct a thorough, deliberate and careful review of all the evidence that has been gathered in this complex case,” Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden stated in the release.

Wasden said the case is a high priority for his office, “but we only get one chance to achieve justice for everyone involved, including Mr. Yantis. For that reason, I have not imposed any arbitrary time lines that could lead to a rush in judgment.”

In a May 19 letter to Adams County commissioners, Wasden said the state police investigation was thorough, comprehensive and complex and he has instructed his investigators and prosecutors to be equally as thorough.

“It is important for you and for the people of Adams County to understand this process takes considerable time,” Wasden stated.

Colson, a former police officer, said he was stunned to learn that Yantis had been killed after responding to the scene where one of his bulls had been injured.

“The wife deserves to know ... why in the hell her husband was killed for doing what he was supposed to do,” he said. “The whole thing just does not make sense.”

Council resident Rebecca Barrow, who organized the protest rally, said it was held “to let the attorney general know that we haven’t forgotten Jack was killed 200 days ago and we’re asking him to put Jack’s case first. ... The family deserves to know what he’s going to decide.”

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