

# U.S. organic production value up 13 percent

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

A new National Agricultural Statistics Service survey found that the nation's 12,818 certified organic farms sold \$6.2 billion in organic products in 2015, up 13 percent from the previous year.

Leading the way was California, whose \$2.4 billion in sales last year was up \$205 million from 2014 and accounted for nearly 39 percent of the national total.

Washington was second in the nation with \$626 million in sales in 2015, while Oregon was fourth with \$269 million. Organic sales in those states increased from \$515 million and \$237 million, respectively, two years ago, according to NASS.

Pennsylvania was third in organic sales at \$332 million.

Idaho registered \$85 million in organic sales in 2015, up 29 percent from \$66 million the previous year, the agency's annual surveys showed.

"Certainly the growth is driven by consumer pressure for organic" products, said Kelly Damewood, policy director for the Santa Cruz-based California Certified Organic Farmers, an organic certification organization.

Consumers seek organic products to make their diets healthier and to benefit the environment, as organic growers can use only approved materials and are required to maintain soil health and account for biodiversity, Damewood said.

"It's really a whole system approach that has so many benefits," she said, adding that organic farms set "the gold standard for a holistic approach to food production."

When buying organic foods from local producers, people get a sense that they're



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Margaret Jensen, co-owner of Good Work Organic Farm in Round Mountain, Calif., weighs a watermelon for a customer at a farmers' market Sept. 24 in Redding, Calif. Organic production in California continues to grow and accounts for nearly 39 percent of U.S. organic production, according to a national survey.

helping their own communities, said Margaret Jensen, co-owner of Good Work Organic Farm in Round Mountain, Calif.

"There's a general sense that organic is healthier," Jensen said, "and the greater availability of organic is making it a more normal, easier choice for people."

Milk topped all organic sales at \$1.2 billion. It was followed by organic eggs

at \$732 million. Combined, they represented 31 percent of all organic sales, according to NASS. Egg sales were up 74.5 percent over the previous year.

Other top sellers were organic broiler chickens (\$420 million), apples (\$302 million) and lettuce (\$262 million).

The selection of certified organic products sold by U.S. farms last year was diverse, with livestock and poultry products leading the way with \$1.9 billion in sales, according to NASS. In all, \$1.4 billion in vegetables and \$1.2 billion in fruits, tree nuts and berries were sold by organic producers nationwide last year, the survey found.

The total U.S. livestock and crop production in 2015 was \$379.2 billion, according to NASS. Organic production represented 1.6 percent of that.

The organic industry shows a potential to keep growing, as existing producers are transitioning 151,000 acres nationally to organic production, the agency reported.

Oregon and Washington saw growth in the value of their organic goods despite declines in organic acreage. Washington went from 73,841 certified acres in 2014 to 71,781 last year, while Oregon saw a drop from 204,186 acres to 175,675 over the same period, according to NASS.

# Oregon Tilth helps fund OSU organic Extension position

By **ERIC MORTENSON**  
Capital Press

In a move that highlights the growing influence of organic agriculture in the state, the Oregon nonprofit that issues USDA certification will help fund an organic Extension program at Oregon State University.

In academic circles, at least, the decision is significant. Oregon Tilth will provide \$100,000 over four years to a new organic program within OSU's Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems. The contribution matches OSU's support for the program. A Dutch company, Vitalis Organic Seeds, also plans to provide financial support. Details of the company's involvement were not immediately available.

Oregon State professors say multiple campus researchers are involved in organic crop trials or other projects, but the work is largely the result of individual professors pursuing their own interests. Conferring program status on organic work will bring all that research under the same umbrella, said Garry Stephenson, director of OSU's small farms center.

"It also a recognition that some kinds of research need to be more specialized," Stephenson said. "We have a lot of disciplines that are production-system neutral, but when it comes to other areas we need

people who are more specialized in what are called biological approaches."

Oregon Tilth Executive Director Chris Schreiner said the non-profit's investment in the OSU program is a statement about the rising impact of organic agriculture.

"I think it absolutely is," Schreiner said. "We wanted to send a message to the OSU administration that the organic sector wants and values an organic Extension program."

The investment means Oregon Tilth "puts some skin in the game," he said, and it may encourage involvement by for-profit businesses such as Vitalis.

The investment is recognition by organic producers that "land-grant universities, and Extension programs and Extension agents are really seen as a credible, valued source of expertise," Schreiner said.

With demand for organic products outstripping supply, Oregon Tilth and other organizations are focused on helping more farmers transition to organic production and recognize the importance of a partnership with a land-grant university, he said.

Oregon Tilth, which has been around since 1979 and like OSU is based on Corvallis, has been informally involved and has provided funding to the university since 2009. The group certifies organic producers for the USDA.

## LEGAL

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) will hold its regular quarterly meeting on Thursday, October 20, 2016, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Monarch Hotel & Conference Center, 2566 SE 93rd Avenue, Portland/Clackamas 97015. The meeting agenda covers SWCC reports, advisor reports, Soil and Water Conservation District programs and funding, Agriculture Water Quality Management Program updates, and other agenda items.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you need special accommodations to participate in this meeting, please contact Sandi Hiatt at (503) 986-4704, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

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## LEGAL

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# Attorney fees denied in Josephine County GMO lawsuit

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
Capital Press

GRANTS PASS, Ore. — Supporters of a prohibition against genetically engineered crops in Oregon's Josephine County won't have to pay the attorney fees of farmers who defeated the ordinance.

Josephine County Circuit Judge Pat Wolke has held that such an award isn't warranted in this case.

Voters approved Josephine County's ban in 2014, but earlier this year, Wolke struck it down at the urging of Robert and Shelley Ann White, who wanted to grow biotech sugar beets.

The couple then sought to recover \$29,200 from an organic company, Siskiyou Seeds, and a nonprofit, Oregonians for Safe Farms and Families, that had intervened to defend the ordinance.

The intervenors had relied on several arguments that lacked an "objectively reasonable basis" and thus should compensate the Whites for dragging out the legal proceedings, said John DiLorenzo, the plaintiffs' attorney.

"All we want is compensation for time that we had to waste," he said during oral arguments in August.

For example, the intervenor's attorneys claimed that a state law pre-empting local governments from regulating

genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, was unconstitutional, DiLorenzo said.

However, they cited no legal precedent from Oregon to support this theory, and instead pointed to case law from Ohio, he said.

Attorneys for the intervenors said the issue of local GMO bans is a novel legal issue in Oregon and they should not be punished for presenting good faith defenses of the ordinance.

Wolke ultimately sided with the intervenors, noting that attorneys routinely counter lawsuits with multiple defense theories that may not end up proving plausible.



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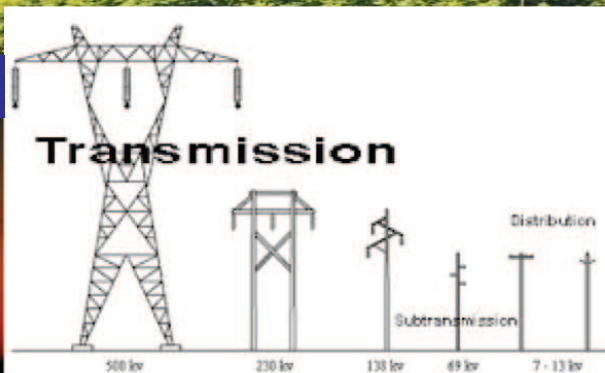


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