



## **Organic Agriculture in Wisconsin: 2009 Status Report**

**Prepared by the UW-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural  
Systems and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and  
Consumer Protection**

**Authors: Kelliann Blazek, Erin Silva, Laura Paine and Thomas Atwell**

**February, 2010**

This report is a joint effort of:

The **Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems** (CIAS) is a research center for sustainable agriculture in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison. CIAS fosters multidisciplinary inquiry and supports a range of research, curriculum and program development projects. It brings together university faculty, farmers, policy makers and others to study relationships between farming practices, farm profitability, the environment and rural vitality. For more information, visit [www.cias.wisc.edu](http://www.cias.wisc.edu) or call 608-262-5200.

The **Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection** (DATCP) works to make Wisconsin a world leader in agriculture, food safety and consumer protection. DATCP is responsible for food safety, animal and plant health, protecting water and soil, and monitoring fair and safe business practices. The DATCP Organic Agriculture Program is housed in the Division of Agricultural Development and provides individual technical assistance and consulting to organic farmers and those wishing to begin farming organically, as well as to businesses processing organic products. For more information, visit [datcp.state.wi.us](http://datcp.state.wi.us) or call 608-224-5120.

Media contact: Cris Carusi, CIAS: [cecarusi@wisc.edu](mailto:cecarusi@wisc.edu) or 608-262-8018

Authors: Kelliann Blazek, Erin Silva, Laura Paine and Thomas Atwell

Contributors: James Baerwolf, Harriet Behar, David Bruce, Irwin Goldman, Tom Kriegl, Jerry McGeorge, Kiera Mulvey, Rod Nilsestuen and Michael Schulist

Kelliann Blazek, Wisconsin DATCP, coordinated the survey of certification agencies. Many thanks to Midwest Organic Services Association, Global Organic Alliance, Oregon Tilth, Nature's International Certification Services, Quality Assurance International, Organic Crop Improvement Association and OneCert for providing us data.

Edited by Cris Carusi, CIAS. Publication design and layout by Ruth McNair, CIAS. Photos by CIAS unless noted otherwise.

Editorial review provided by Harriet Behar, Eileen Culleen, Mark Kopecky, Mike Noltner and Bob Wills.

This report is printed on recycled paper. It is also available online at [www.cias.wisc.edu](http://www.cias.wisc.edu).

# Organic Agriculture in Wisconsin: 2009 Status Report

Kelliann Blazek, Erin Silva, Laura Paine and Thomas Atwell

## Table of contents

Foreword .....	ii
Statement by the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council .....	iii
Executive summary .....	v
Organic production in Wisconsin .....	1
Wisconsin's organic cost-share program .....	10
Organic agriculture and the economic downturn .....	11
How the economic downturn has affected dairy .....	12
Grain markets are shifting .....	15
Organic produce—two perspectives .....	16
Consumer demand as experienced by food co-ops.....	18
Appendix A: The Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council .....	19
Appendix B: Active UW-Madison organic research .....	21
Appendix C: Resources and organizations .....	24

---

## Foreword

We are pleased to share with you this report on the status of organic agriculture in Wisconsin. As you will read in the following pages, Wisconsin's organic agricultural industries—like virtually all sectors of agriculture—have felt the effects of the recession in our national economy. Yet despite the difficult economy, there is considerable reason for both pride and optimism for this important sector of our state's agricultural industry. The accomplishments of this industry have been landmark, placing Wisconsin in a position of national prominence for the breadth and quality of its organic products. We have strong evidence to believe that there is even greater potential for our state's organic growers and producers.

One reason for optimism is that organic agriculture continues to be one of the strongest performing sectors of the agricultural industry, both in Wisconsin and throughout the United States. Nationally, more than \$24.6 billion of organic products were sold in 2008, a 17 percent increase from the previous year. According to a study by the Organic Trade Association, nearly three-quarters of American families now purchase at least some organic products, and the largest chunk of these consumers (32 percent) began buying organic products only within the past two years. It is reasonable to expect that consumers will continue to demand more organic products and an increasing diversity of organic selections in the decades ahead.

Wisconsin is already well-equipped to serve this growing market. The state currently has 1,443 organic farms—more than any other Midwestern state and second behind only California—that create \$80.6 million in farm gate sales. Wisconsin leads the nation in organic dairy operations, yet our organic industry is remarkably diverse, ranking among the top five states for organic corn, soybeans, oats, barley, rye and hay production and in the top ten for organically grown vegetables and flowers. These data are a credit to the effort and innovation of the many farmers, entrepreneurs, researchers and community leaders who have helped build and support Wisconsin's network of organic operations. They also challenge us to continue to innovate and expand to stay ahead of the many competitors who envy our market position.

Governor Doyle recognizes that organic agriculture represents a critical piece of Wisconsin's agricultural portfolio. In organizing the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council, he created a means for organic farmers and businesses to work together with state and federal agencies to support the industry. Organic farms contribute to the state's agricultural diversity—one of the hallmark strengths of our agricultural economy—and benefit the environment. With the collaboration of our state agencies and the outstanding research, teaching and outreach of the UW System, we have all the tools we need to maintain and expand our competitive advantages in this area.

We offer our thanks to the men and women who have worked the lands in pursuit of the ideals of organic agriculture. Your effort, vision and passion have allowed this industry to endure the current economic recession and helped position Wisconsin for a bright agricultural future.

Sincerely,



Rod Nilsestuen  
Secretary  
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,  
Trade and Consumer Protection



Irwin Goldman  
Interim Dean and Director  
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences  
University of Wisconsin - Madison

---

## Statement by the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council

The strength of Wisconsin agriculture has always been its diversity, and organic agriculture in Wisconsin mirrors this strength. From organic cranberries to organic greenhouse production of fall and winter crops, organic fresh market produce and processed vegetables, and our traditional strengths in organic dairy, poultry and beef, Wisconsin is a leader in U.S. organic production. Our entrepreneurial spirit is evidenced by large companies grossing hundreds of millions of dollars in organic sales, part-time farmers selling fresh produce throughout the Wisconsin growing season, and everything in between. Many processors in our state benefit from turning raw organic commodities into shelf-stable or market-ready products, such as turning milk into cheese or corn into chips.

While organic farmers and processors are not immune to the recent economic downturn experienced by all facets of agriculture and our economy as a whole, organics has held its position as an area where all sizes of operations can find opportunities to meet a loyal consumer demand. Organic producers, with their systems-based, low-input approaches to farming, are well-equipped to weather lower prices.

State and Federal initiatives and programs have positively impacted organic farmers in the Upper Midwest. Wisconsin farmers submitted 346 applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), representing more than 10 percent of the total applications submitted across the country, and more applications than any other state. Many of Wisconsin's organic farmers also received contracts from the NRCS under the Conservation Stewardship Program as well as dollars to aid them in the development of NRCS Conservation Activity Plans for the Transition to Organic Production.

Inside these pages, you will find the story of the continued growth of organic agriculture in Wisconsin, as well as expanded integration of organic agriculture throughout Wisconsin's educational system (Appendix B, page 21). Several research stations around our state have organic research plots, and a few campuses within the University of Wisconsin system teach organic production agriculture. The Wisconsin Technical College System and UW-Extension are involved in teaching organic farming, offering both conventional and organic farmers information on the many ways organic agriculture can produce acceptable yields (Appendix C, page 24).

State support for organic agriculture continues to grow. In 2006, Wisconsin Secretary of Agriculture Rod Nilsestuen appointed a permanent Organic Advisory Council (Appendix A, page 19). This council consists of stakeholders in the organic community including farmers, processors, researchers, educators and consumers. It facilitates interaction between state agencies and the organic community, and provides timely comments on issues of concern. Educating consumers about organics, helping farmers transition to organic production and improve existing organic farms, and enhancing organic agricultural infrastructure are all goals of this council. Meeting dates and locations are posted at [www.organic.wisc.edu](http://www.organic.wisc.edu). All are welcome to attend.

On behalf of the thousands of organic consumers and farmers here in Wisconsin, we present *Organic Agriculture in Wisconsin: 2009 Status Report*. Join us in celebrating the continued success of organic agriculture in our great state.



Harriet Behar  
Midwest Organic and Sustainable  
Education Service  
Organic Advisory Council Member



Jerry McGeorge  
Organic Valley  
Organic Advisory Council Member



---

## Executive summary

**While growth in the organic industry has slowed, U.S. consumers are not giving up on organic food.** Organic sales, which expanded at a rate of 20 percent per year from the early 1990s through 2007, likely experienced negative growth in 2009. But 31 percent of U.S. families bought more organic food in 2009 than in 2008.

**Wisconsin is a top-ranked state in organic agriculture.** Since 2002, Wisconsin has ranked second only to California for the total number of organic farms in the United States. The 2007 Census of Agriculture found that Wisconsin had 1,443 certified and uncertified organic farms. In 2009, the USDA National Organic Program listed 1,026 certified organic farms in Wisconsin.

**Our state leads the nation in organic dairy and livestock production.** Wisconsin is the top-ranked state for number of organic livestock and poultry farms. We are the top-ranked state for number of organic dairy farms and rank second for number of organic beef farms. In 2007, Wisconsin's organic dairy sales reached \$57.6 million.

**Wisconsin is also a top-ranked state in organic crop production.** We rank second only to California for the number of organic farms raising all plant commodities including grain, fruit, vegetables, berries, hay and nursery/greenhouse crops. Wisconsin's organic crop sales reached \$16.7 million in 2007.

**Wisconsin's organic cost-share program has helped farmers manage organic certification costs.** In 2009, 43 percent of the state's certified organic farms received cost-share payments, which paid up to 75 percent of their certification costs up to \$750, from this federally funded program.

**2009 was a challenging year for the entire American economy, including the organic dairy industry.** In response to flattened consumer demand for their products, organic dairy businesses in Wisconsin stopped adding farmers, reduced the prices paid to farmers for the first time in years, and set quotas for their farms. Most Wisconsin organic dairy farmers who were paid organic prices prior to 2009 experienced less of a pay cut this year than that experienced by non-organic dairy farmers.

**Overall, the organic grain market softened in 2009.** Markets for organic corn and wheat weakened this year, but the organic soybean market strengthened. The market for organic small grains other than wheat remained stable.

**Despite the economic downturn, organic produce sales remained strong.** In 2009, the Organic Valley Produce Program grew from 120 to 176 farmers, 157 of whom are in Wisconsin. In 2009, the 35 organic farms endorsed by the



---

Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition sold 5,900 shares of food—primarily produce—which represents a 69 percent increase over 2007.

**The number of people joining organic food cooperatives continues to climb.** The Willy Street Co-op in Madison had 16,000 owners and exceeded sales projections by \$1.5 million in 2009. Outpost Natural Foods in Milwaukee had 14,000 owners and People's Food Co-op in La Crosse had 3,938 owners by the end of 2009.

**Despite the recession, the outlook for Wisconsin's organic industry is positive.** Wisconsin organic dairy farms with favorable financial performance in 2009 are likely to perform well in 2010. The coming year could bring an upswing in the market for organic feed grains, due to weather-related crop issues in 2009.



## Organic Agriculture in Wisconsin: 2009 Status Report

Kelliann Blazek, Erin Silva, Laura Paine and Thomas Atwell

### Organic production in Wisconsin

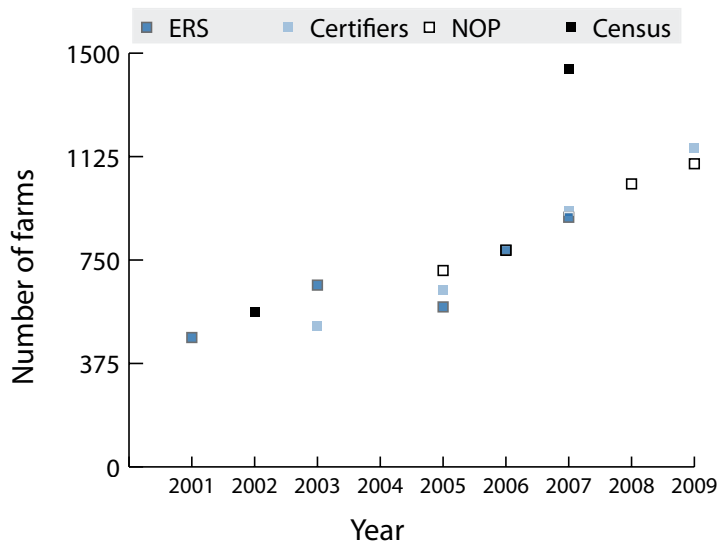
Wisconsin continues to be a national leader in the organic marketplace. The 2007 Census of Agriculture found that Wisconsin had 1,443 organic farms, second only to California. The census data includes USDA certified organic producers, organic producers exempt from certification (those grossing less than \$5,000 annually from organic sales), producers transitioning to organic production and non-certified producers who indicated organic production on their 2007 Census of Agriculture forms.

In 2009, the National Organic Program listed 1,026 certified organic farms in Wisconsin. In



the fall of 2009, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) conducted a survey of seven agencies that certify most organic farms in the state.<sup>1</sup> These agencies reported that, in 2009, they certified 1,155 organic Wisconsin farms. This represents a 24 percent increase from a 2007

survey of five certification agencies. Figure 1 illustrates this steady rise in the number of Wisconsin's certified operations from the initiation of the National Organic Program in 2002.

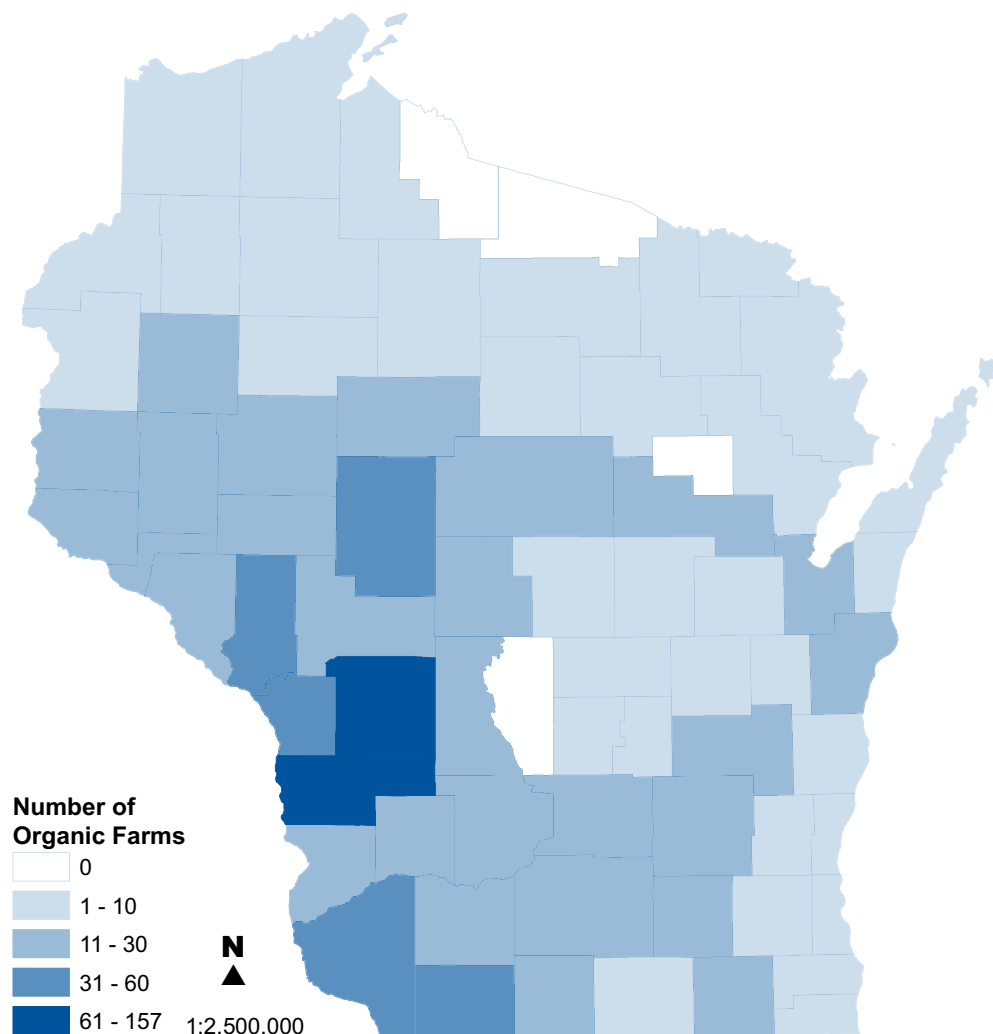


**Figure 1. Estimates of the number of organic farms in Wisconsin, 2001-2009.**

Source: USDA Economic Research Service; USDA National Organic Program; USDA National Ag Census; and CIAS and Wisconsin DATCP certifier surveys

Organic agriculture continues to be focused in the southwestern region of Wisconsin, although growth in the industry is widespread throughout the state. Vernon County, where Organic Valley is located, has the most certified farms (157). Monroe County, which has the second highest number of certified organic farms (64), has fewer than

<sup>1</sup> The certification agencies participating in this survey included Midwest Organic Services Association, Global Organic Alliance, Oregon Tilth, Nature's International Certification Services, Quality Assurance International, Organic Crop Improvement Association and OneCert.



**Figure 2. Distribution of certified organic farms in Wisconsin.**

Farm locations geocoded from addresses provided by a 2009 Wisconsin DATCP survey of seven organic certifiers. Map by Larry Cutforth.

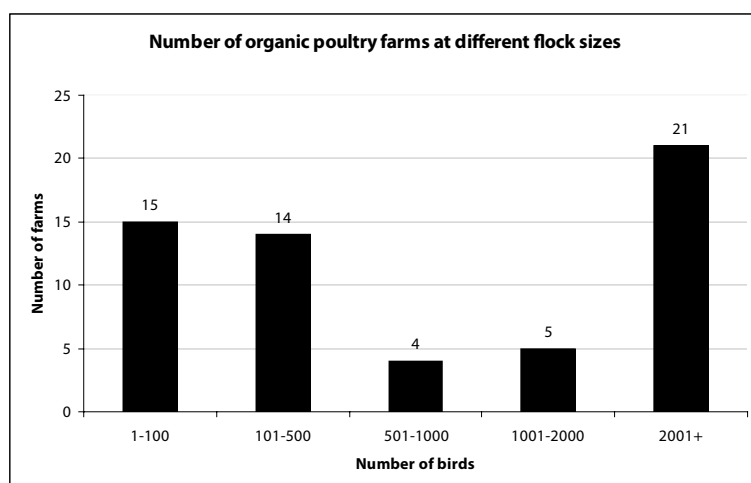
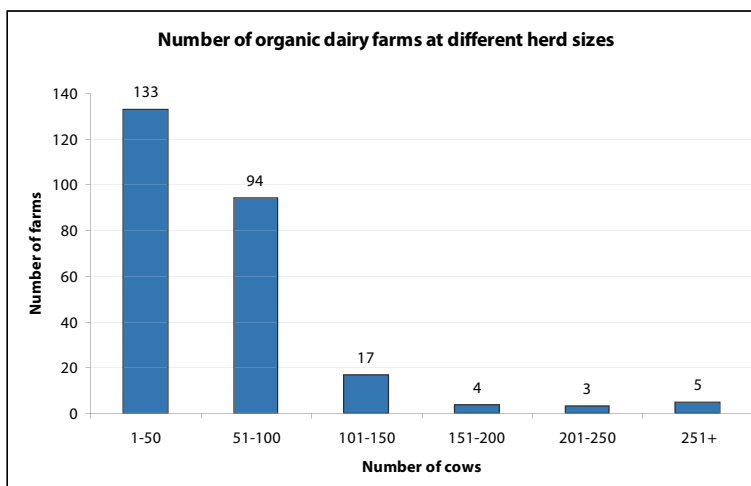
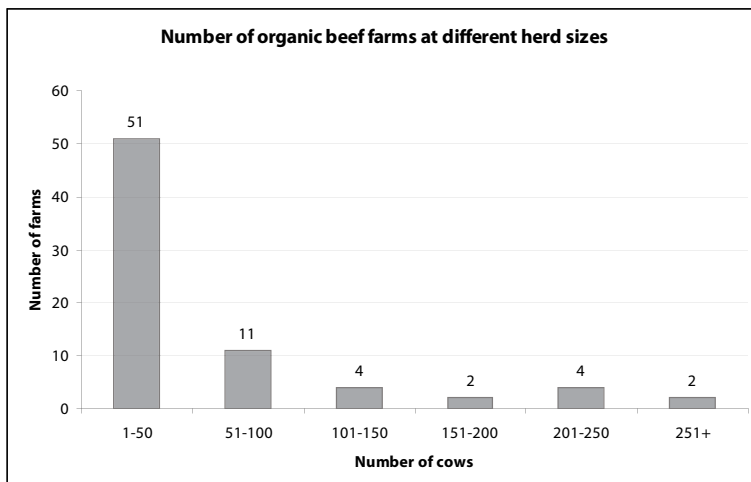
half the certified farms found in Vernon County. Figure 2 shows the distribution of Wisconsin's certified organic farms by county, based on the 2009 survey of certification agencies.

### **Portrait of organic agriculture in Wisconsin**

Data collected through a survey returned by farms participating in Wisconsin's organic cost-share program present a more detailed picture of the organic landscape in Wisconsin. In 2009, 498 farms participated in the cost-share program

administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), representing 43 percent of organic farms in the state. Although these data do not include every certified organic farm in the state, they do represent a diverse cross-section of the industry, encompassing livestock, dairy, crop and vegetable farms.

Wisconsin's organic agriculture industry is diverse both in terms of products raised and farm



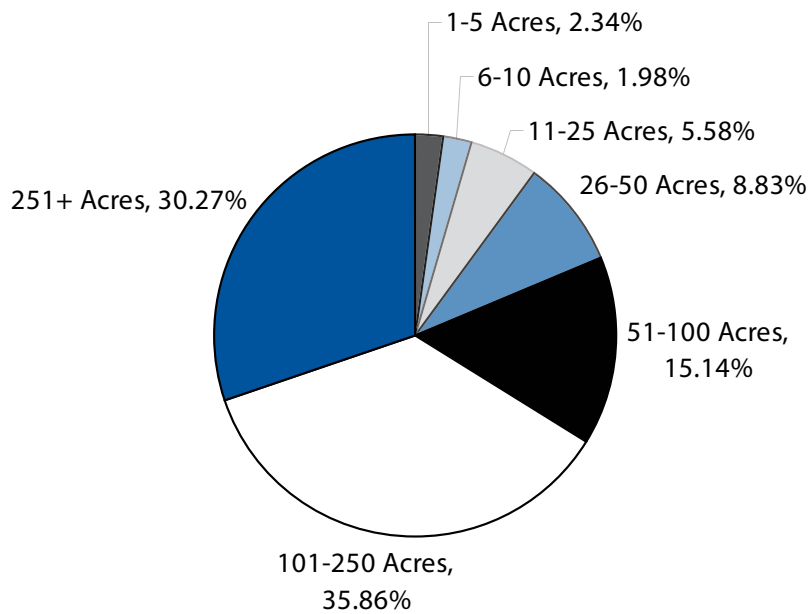
**Figure 3. Number of organic dairy, beef and poultry farms by herd/flock size**

Source: Wisconsin DATCP organic cost share program data, 2008

size. Based on the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, Wisconsin ranks in the top five states for number of organic dairy, beef, poultry and organic livestock, crop and vegetable and melon farms. Dairy remains the predominant organic industry in the state. The DATCP cost-share data provides details about the diverse sizes of the participating organic farms. Eighty-eight percent of Wisconsin's certified organic dairy farms that participate in the cost share program have 100 or fewer dairy cows; about half of these farms operate with 50 or fewer cows (Figure 3). In comparison, 81 percent of all dairy farms in Wisconsin have fewer than 100 dairy cows and 41 percent have fewer than 50 dairy cows.<sup>2</sup>

Organic beef farms paint a similar picture. Eighty-four percent of Wisconsin's organic beef farms in the cost share program maintain 100 or fewer cows and 69 percent have 50 or fewer cows. In comparison, 98 percent of all beef farms in Wisconsin have fewer than 100 beef cows and 93 percent have fewer than 50 beef cows. Participating organic poultry operations span a greater range of sizes, from fewer than 100 birds (25 percent) to larger operations with 2,000 birds or more (36 percent).

<sup>2</sup> USDA National Ag Census 2007.

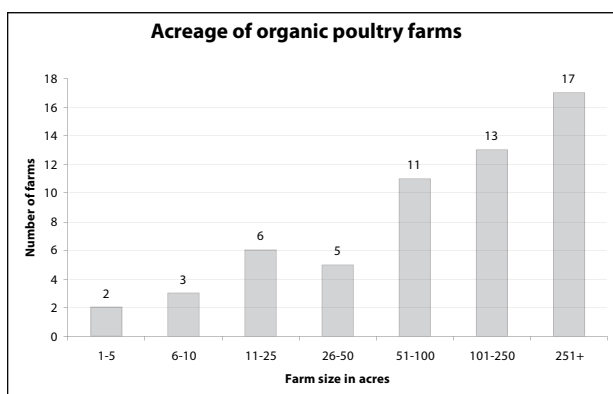
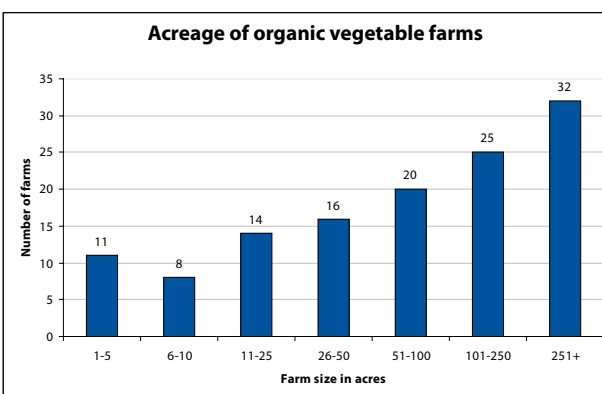
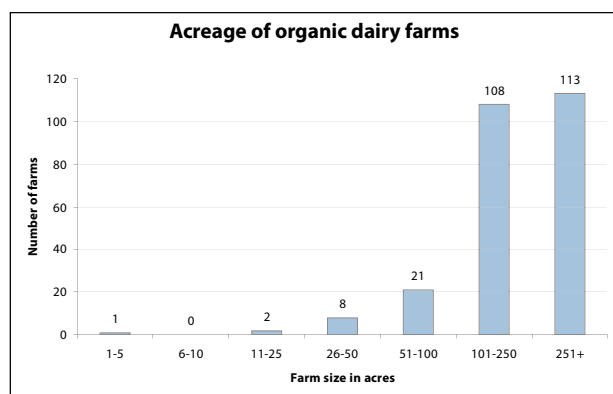
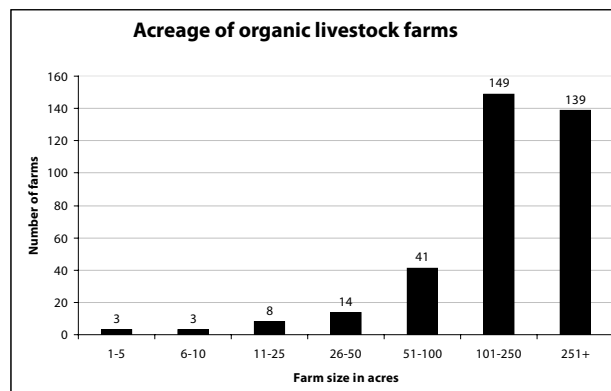
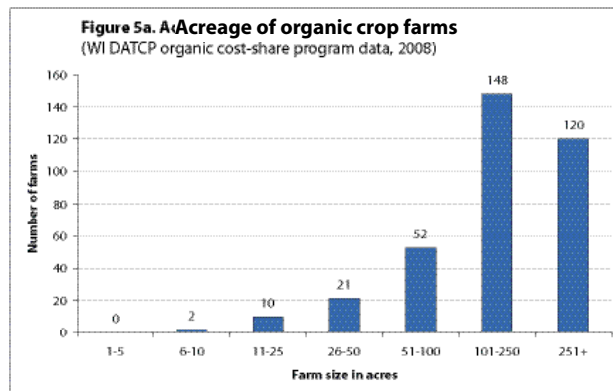


**Figure 4. Percentage of farms in different size categories**

Source: Wisconsin DATCP organic cost share program data, 2008

Wisconsin's organic farms operate on both large and small acreages, although over 80 percent have 51 acres or more (Figure 4). The majority (76 percent) of organic crop farms producing corn, soybeans and small grains have 100 or more acres of farmable land (Figure 5). Similarly, organic livestock and dairy farms tend to fall in the range of 100 or more acres. Organic vegetable farms tend to be more diverse in size,

with 15 percent of these operations having 10 or fewer acres. On the other end of the spectrum, 25 percent of Wisconsin's organic vegetable farms operate 251 or more acres, and there is a fairly even distribution of farm sizes between these endpoints. Organic poultry farms also tend to operate a wide range of acreages, ranging from smaller farms of less than 25 acres to larger farms of 251 or more acres.



**Figure 5. Acreage of organic farms by product raised**

Source: Wisconsin DATCP organic cost share program data, 2008

---

### **Wisconsin's national standings**

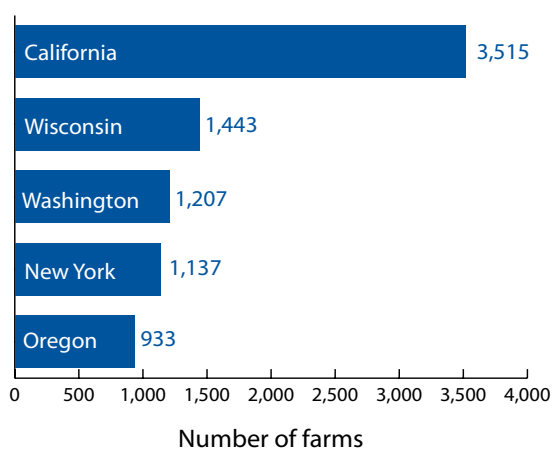
Wisconsin has ranked second in the United States for total number of organic farms since the inception of the National Organic Program in 2002, with California in the lead (Figure 6). Based on data from the 2007 Census of Agriculture, California has 17 percent of the nation's organic farms, compared with 7 percent in Wisconsin. Wisconsin continues to lead the nation in the number of dairy farms and the number of organic livestock and poultry farms.

Wisconsin ranks second in the number of organic beef farms.

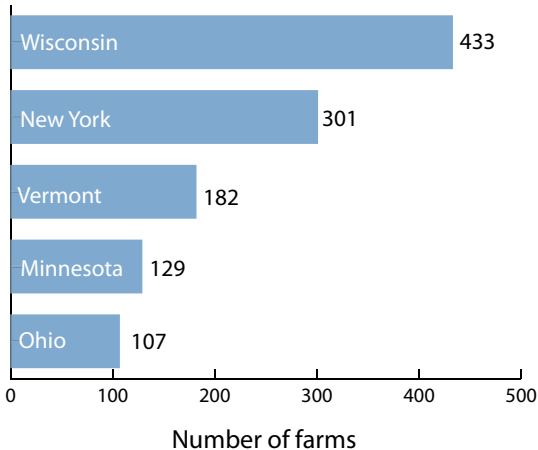
Wisconsin also ranks high with respect to the number of farms producing crops. Looking across all organic plant commodities including grain, fruit, vegetables, berries, hay and nursery/greenhouse crops, Wisconsin ranks second nationally in the number of farms, behind only California. For organic vegetable and melon farms, Wisconsin ranks fourth behind California, New York and Washington, respectively.



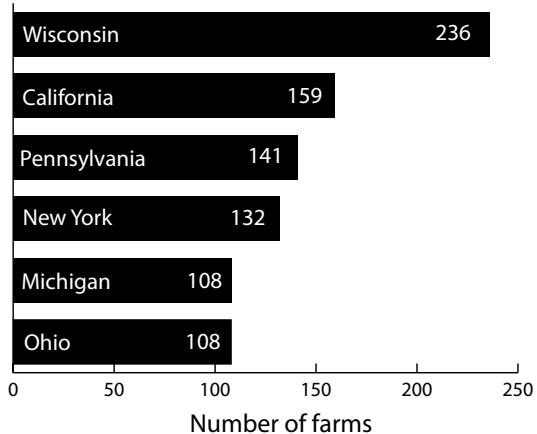
Top five states in number of organic farms



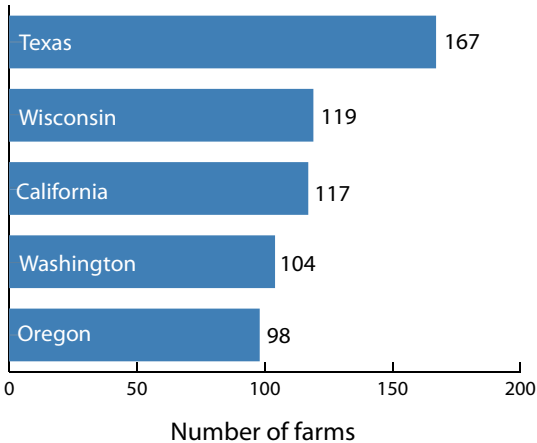
Top five states in number of organic dairy farms



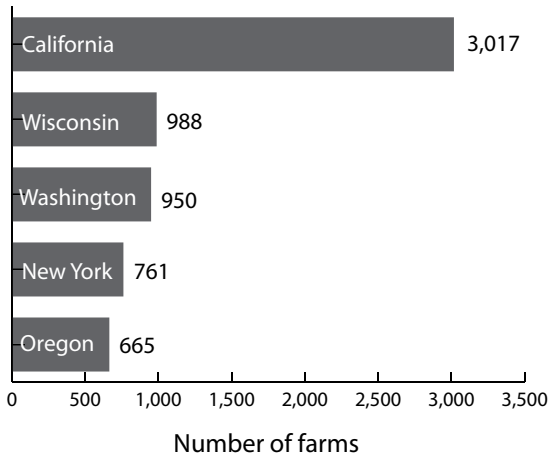
Top six states in number of organic livestock and poultry farms



Top five states in number of organic beef farms

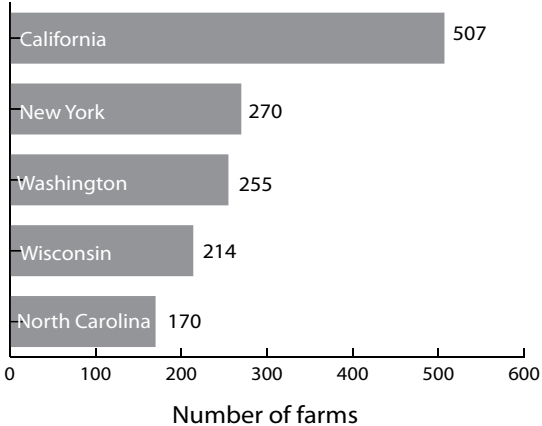


Top five states in number of organic crop farms\*



\*includes all plant commodities: grain, fruit, vegetables, berries, hay, and nursery and greenhouse crops

Top five states in number of organic vegetable and melon farms



**Figure 6. State rankings for numbers of organic farms for different products**  
Source: USDA National Ag Census, 2007





Organic farm-gate product sales contribute greatly to Wisconsin's overall agricultural economy. As of 2007, Wisconsin ranked fourth nationally in dollar amount of organic product sales, with \$80.6 million in overall sales of crops and products from farms representing 4.7 percent of total organic sales in the United States (Figure 7).

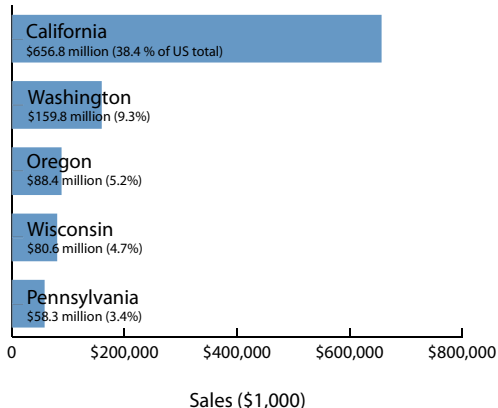
Wisconsin's organic milk sales from farms reached \$57.6 million, or 13.5 percent of total U.S. organic dairy sales—a close second to California's 13.8 percent. Wisconsin's organic livestock and poultry sales totaled \$3.9 million in 2007, contributing 3.5 percent of national sales and placing Wisconsin fourth in this sales category.

Sales of Wisconsin's organic grain, fruit, vegetables, berries, hay and nursery/greenhouse crops also comprised a significant amount of the national total. Organic vegetable and melon sales stood at \$5.4 million in 2007, placing Wisconsin ninth nationally with 1.2 percent of total sales. Wisconsin's organic crop sales reached \$16.7 million in that same time period, ranking 11<sup>th</sup> and representing 1.5 percent of total national sales.

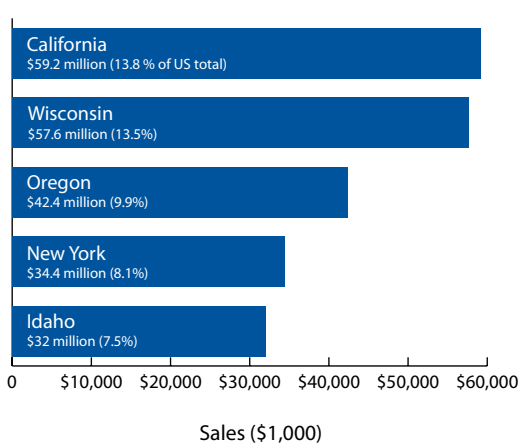
These figures illustrate Wisconsin's sustained major presence in the national organic marketplace. Organic agriculture in Wisconsin continues to grow and thrive, creating a stable, profitable livelihood for farmers and contributing significantly to the state's overall agricultural economy.



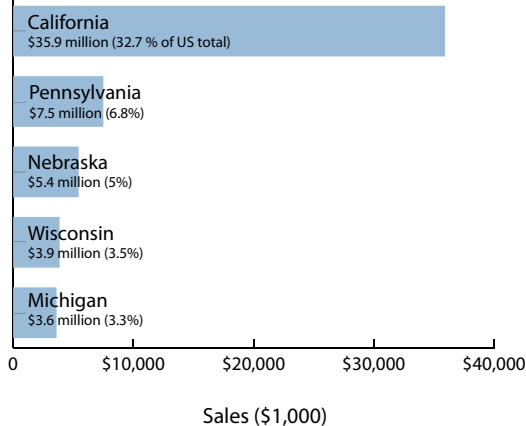
Top five states in dollar amount of organic product sales



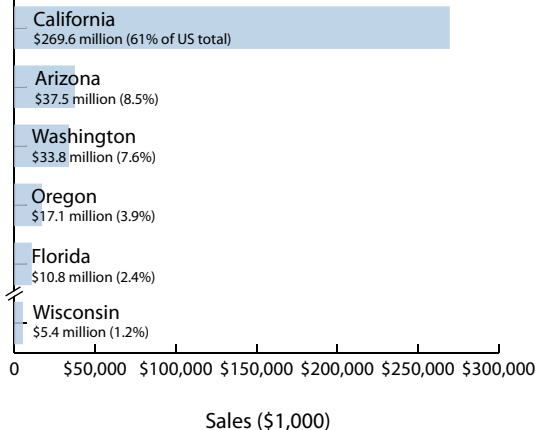
Top five states in dollar amount of organic dairy sales



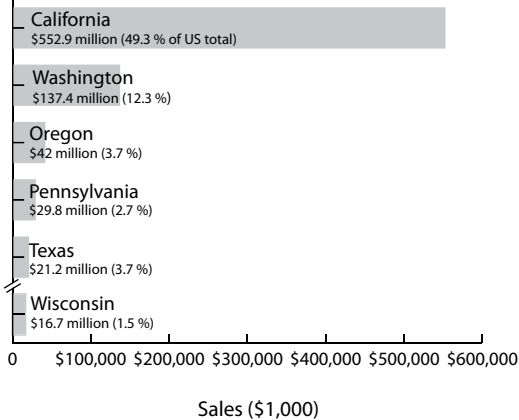
Top five states in dollar amount of organic livestock and poultry sales



Top five states plus Wisconsin (#9) in dollar amount of organic vegetable and melon sales



Top five states plus Wisconsin (#11) in dollar amount of organic crop sales\*



\*includes all plant commodities: grain, fruit, vegetables, berries, hay, and nursery and greenhouse crops

**Figure 7. State rankings for numbers of organic sales for different products**

Source: USDA National Ag Census, 2007

## Wisconsin's organic cost-share program

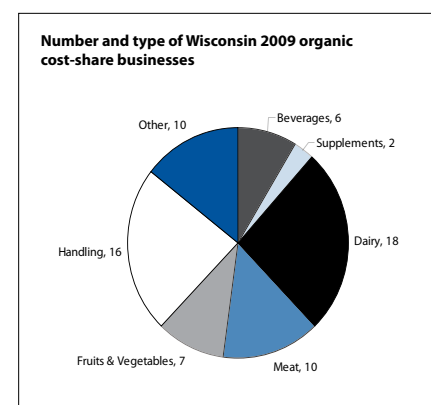
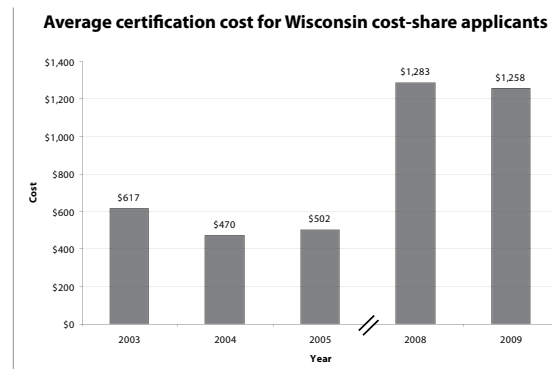
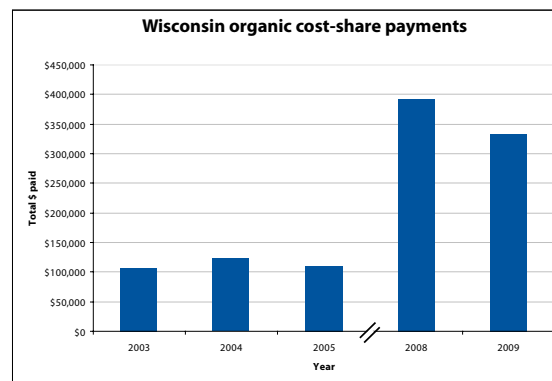
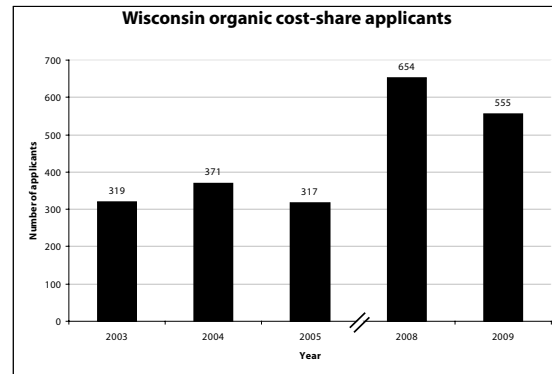
The Wisconsin Organic Cost-Share Program is funded by the federal government through the USDA National Organic Program and administered by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. All certified organic farmers and processors are eligible to apply for the program each year, which provides a 75 percent cost-share of certification costs, not to exceed \$750 per farm or processor. Payments for the 2009 cost-share program included certification costs incurred from October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009.

The total number of cost-share applicants, average certification cost for these applicants, and total cost-share money paid has increased significantly from 2003 to 2009. The program was not funded in 2006 or 2007 and saw the most dramatic increase in applicants between 2005 and 2008, with more than double the number of applications (Figure 8). In 2009, cost-share payments totaled over \$333,000.

In 2009, 498 Wisconsin organic farms received cost-share payments. The average certification cost for those farms was \$1,116. In comparison, the average certification cost for cost-share farms was \$461 in 2003. Certification costs are increasing for a number of reasons, including the fact that certifiers are charging more to meet NOP requirements. The average cost-share payment amount also saw a significant increase from 2003 to 2009, growing from \$326 to \$589.

In 2009, 57 of Wisconsin's 234 organic businesses received payments through the Wisconsin cost-share program. The majority of those businesses were organic handlers and organic dairy product businesses. The average cost-share payment to organic businesses was \$708, a more than \$100 increase from 2008.

The program is expected to have funding through 2012. For more information, contact Laura Paine at DATCP (608-224-5120; [laura.paine@wi.gov](mailto:laura.paine@wi.gov)).



**Figure 8. Wisconsin organic cost-share data**  
Source: Wisconsin DATCP organic cost-share program data

---

## Organic agriculture and the economic downturn

Beginning in the early 1990s, sales of organic foods in the United States grew rapidly, averaging 20 percent per year. This growth rate slipped to 17 percent in 2008,<sup>3</sup> and the market most likely shrank (estimated -0.3 percent change) in 2009.<sup>4</sup> The recession that officially began in December, 2007, which resulted in double-digit unemployment and tightened consumer spending, was a major contributor to this decline.

Market research by Mintel International Group found that many consumers who purchased organic food in 2009 saved money by trading down from name brands to cheaper organic store brands. Nearly half of the leading companies in the organic food industry experienced sales declines in 2009. For example, Hain Celestial Group, which produces major brands such as Arrowhead Mills, saw its 2009 supermarket sales decline 4.2 percent in the category of shelf-stable, organic food and drink. In this same category, sales of private label brands such as Safeway Organics increased by 22.2 percent.

Likewise, major organic dairy companies saw declining supermarket sales in 2009, while supermarket sales of private label organic dairy products grew by 29.3 percent. Declining prices for conventional milk in 2009 probably influenced consumer purchasing decisions. Based on July, 2009 figures from the USDA, a half-gallon of 2 percent organic milk cost 82 cents more than a gallon of 2 percent conventional milk. A year earlier, this difference was less than ten cents due to higher prices for conventional milk.

Adults ages 25 to 34 were the most likely to report buying organic food in 2009, but this demographic was also the most likely to report changes in their organic purchasing due to the recession. Twenty-five percent of these consumers said that they switched to less expensive organic products such as store brands, and 21 percent said they cut down on the amount of organic food and drink they buy. On the other hand, 35 percent of consumers in this demographic said they hadn't changed their organic product purchasing habits, and 10 percent said that they were buying more organic products despite the recession.

While they may be trading down to cheaper store brands, U.S. consumers do not appear to be giving up on organic food. A study conducted by the Organic Trade Association found that 31 percent of U.S. families bought more organic food in 2009 compared to 2008, and 17 percent of U.S. families said their largest spending increases in 2009 were for organic products.<sup>5</sup> 2009 research by Packaged Facts, which is an affiliate of Market Research Group, found that consumers earning at least \$75,000 a year whose financial situation had recently deteriorated were the most likely to step up their organic purchases.<sup>6</sup>

What do these trends mean for Wisconsin's organic industry? The economic downturn has affected various organic crops and products differently, and Wisconsin's organic markets have responded in unique ways. Below, business and nonprofit leaders, farmers and a researcher weigh in with their perspectives on the present state of Wisconsin's organic sector in 2009, and what the future might hold.

---

<sup>3</sup> Organic Trade Association. 2009. *Organic Industry Survey*.

<sup>4</sup> Mintel, 2009. *Organic Food and Drink Retailing – US – November 2009*. Mintel International Group Limited.

<sup>5</sup> Organic Trade Association, 2009. "Despite economy, consumers still are choosing organic." *What's News in Organic*, issue 45.

<sup>6</sup> Packaged Facts. 2009. *Premium Consumers in the New Economy: Food and Foodservice*. Cited in Kaldec, Dan. 2009. "Organic Food Sales Remain Strong." *TIME* online, July 22 <[http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1911974\\_1911972\\_1911956,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1911974_1911972_1911956,00.html)>. Accessed 12/17/09.

## **Organic viewpoints: How the economic downturn has affected dairy**

### **James Baerwolf: Local is an advantage when selling organic milk**

While overall organic sales fell sharply in 2009, this was not the case at Sassy Cow Creamery in Columbus. Sassy Cow is a small, family-owned and -operated creamery that produces and sells organic milk, and rBGH-free traditional milk and ice cream. Sassy Cow products are sold in 120 retail outlets in Wisconsin and Illinois; our organic milk is carried in about 80 of these locations. Our organic milk costs \$2.50 more per gallon than our traditional milk.

Sassy Cow opened its doors in 2008 and expanded into many more retail outlets in 2009. As a result, sales and profits from our organic and traditional milk increased, despite the economic downturn. Had we been better established before 2009, our organic milk sales probably would have been flat. Our traditional milk sales probably would have increased even without expansion into new retail outlets. We haven't done the market research that would tell us whether our customers traded down from our organic to our traditional product in 2009.

The outlook for the future of Sassy Cow is positive. We have established a good market share with potential for growth in Chicago and other markets. The overall organic industry, however, has entered a new phase. When the industry was experiencing double-digit growth, there were almost no limits to growth in the organic milk supply. If the customer base for organic milk doesn't grow substantially for a while, there will be more competition for those customers. This could result in lower prices for organic milk.

Being a local business is an advantage in the organic market. People who buy organic are more predisposed to look for other factors, like local. These customers are typically quite aware of the advantages of purchasing from a local farm that they know of or have been to. Local also matters to many conventional milk customers, but many more look exclusively for the lowest price.

*James Baerwolf is the co-owner of Sassy Cow Creamery in Columbus, Wisconsin.*

### **Jerry McGeorge: 2009 was a challenging year**

2009 has been a challenging year for the entire American economy, including the organic dairy industry. After enjoying more than a decade of annual growth rates in excess of 20 percent, growth in the organic dairy industry slowed dramatically beginning in the last quarter of 2008. Nationally, growth in organic dairy sales was one percent in the fourth quarter of 2008, compared to the fourth quarter of 2007. As of October 3, 2009, organic dairy sales declined three percent.

The overall economic situation has certainly played a role in these declining sales. However, consistently low farm prices for conventional milk have also contributed to the decline in demand for organic dairy products. These low farm-gate prices have translated to lower prices on grocery store shelves. While organic products have always commanded a price premium, the reduced prices for

conventional dairy products have widened that price differential. Increasingly, price-conscious consumers have opted for the cheaper conventional products.

*Jerry McGeorge is the Director of Cooperative Affairs at Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative and is a member of the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council.*

### **Tom Kriegel: Organic dairy markets respond differently to flattened demand**

Beginning in the mid-1990s, demand for organic dairy products grew dramatically. Annual sales growth rates were often close to 20 percent. Organic marketers actively worked to balance supply and demand in order to maintain price premiums that, in Wisconsin, averaged close to \$5 per hundredweight more than non-organic prices.

2009 proved to be an exception to that trend. Consumer demand for organic dairy products flattened as the supply growth rate increased in 2008. In response, organic businesses stopped adding producers, reduced prices paid to farmers and enacted quotas on existing producers. The prices paid to organic dairy farmers declined in 2009 for the first time in years. While price reductions typically have ranged from five to ten percent, one Wisconsin organic dairy business reportedly reduced its price paid to farmers by about 36 percent. This was extremely bad news for dairy farmers expecting to receive organic prices for the first time in late 2008 or 2009.

Many privately owned organic dairy businesses cut off some producers as soon as their contracts expired, in part because the contracts didn't allow price reductions. Numerous farmers were told that if they wouldn't renegotiate their milk prices, their contracts would not be renewed when they expired, regardless of other factors. The strategy taken more often by cooperatively owned organic dairy businesses was to slightly reduce prices and enact quotas.

Despite these challenges, many organic dairy farmers who were receiving organic prices prior to late 2008 did much better economically in 2009 than non-organic producers. The Wisconsin non-organic milk price plunged from December 2008 to January 2009 and hovered near \$10 per hundredweight until August 2009. For a wage earner, receiving this low price would be like paying to keep one's job. In comparison, the Wisconsin all-milk price averaged \$18.93 per hundredweight in 2008. Making matters worse, input prices increased sharply for all dairy systems near the beginning of 2007 and have remained fairly high.

For many Wisconsin organic farms that received organic milk prices and whose production levels were similar to quota-imposed levels, the combined impact of price reductions and quotas in 2009 was similar to reducing their milk price from about \$25.00 to \$22.00 per hundredweight, which was far less than the decline of non-organic prices.

In 2009, dairy farmers in Wisconsin who followed certified organic production practices but who did not receive organic prices experienced the worst of all worlds: high production costs and dismal

conventional milk prices. During the transition from conventional to organic production, farmers must follow organic standards but cannot sell into organic markets. While this transition period is always expensive, it was economically disastrous in 2009.

Wisconsin's confinement, organic and grazing dairy systems appear to have fared better than these systems elsewhere. Data show that organic, grazing and confinement dairy systems in New England need substantial price premiums to be economically competitive with their Wisconsin counterparts. In part, this is because feed is more expensive in New England. Most Wisconsin dairy farmers—but few in New England—raise their own grain and forage. Home-grown feed appears to reduce the production costs and enhance the profitability of Wisconsin dairy systems, compared to out-of-state counterparts.

When the data becomes available, it will likely show that the New England organic dairy farms that maintained their contracts likely performed better, financially, than their non-organic counterparts but less favorably than their Wisconsin organic counterparts. This is because a high percentage of New England dairy farms converted to organic production in recent years, some because they were in economic jeopardy as non-organic producers. These producers may not have made up for their recent transition costs.

So what does this mean for the future for the organic dairy industry in Wisconsin? The experience of 2009 shows that the organic dairy market is subject to its own economic forces, as well as the forces affecting the conventional milk market and the general economy. Organic marketing is not risk-free.

Both on the state and national level, wholesale buyers of organic milk exited the organic market during 2009. Many of their producers have been or will be picked up by wholesale buyers of organic milk that are still in business, and that will gain market share and power. Wisconsin had about seven unique wholesale buyers of organic milk at the beginning of 2009, some of them small and local (local in this case means that the wholesale buyer of organic milk procures their organic milk within a 30-50 mile radius of their facility). During 2009, one of the wholesale buyers of organic milk exited the Wisconsin market.

The organic share of the overall dairy market is still small, representing about 3 percent of the overall dairy market's volume and about 5 percent of its value. Therefore, a return to the growth, upward price pressure and premiums that existed in the organic dairy market prior to 2009 is possible. The speed of recovery, however, is likely to mimic the recovery of the conventional dairy market and the general economy.





Those Wisconsin organic dairy farms with favorable financial performance in 2009 are likely to perform well in 2010. The outlook is less certain for dairy farmers in the midst of the transition to organic production who are not yet receiving organic prices.

Data collected in Wisconsin between 1999 and 2007 showed that, while organic dairy farming yielded net farm income from operations (NFIFO) per cow at levels that were financially competitive with conventional and grazing dairy systems in Wisconsin, organic dairy systems were the most expensive to manage. The organic price premium is important to the financial competitiveness of organic dairy farms across the United States, because their cost of production per cow and per hundredweight of milk sold is higher than other dairy systems. There is a wide range in production costs among Wisconsin's organic dairy farms. As in any other dairy system, organic dairy producers who manage their production costs will be more likely to succeed into the future.

*Tom Kriegl is the Farm Financial Analyst at the UW-Madison Center for Dairy Profitability*

## **Organic viewpoints: Grain markets are shifting**

### **Michael Schulist: Global markets weigh in**

The current market for organic grain continues to shift.

The organic marketplace has fluctuated with the economy in the last few years. In 2007, organic grain producers saw a market upswing. In 2008, the market reached a plateau. And in 2009, the market softened.

Approximately three-quarters of organic commodity markets are weaker than they were a year ago. Organic corn and wheat are among those weakening crops, while the organic soybean market has strengthened. The organic small grain market has remained stable.

Buyers have resisted premium prices in the wheat market due to abundant domestic and Canadian supply. The weak corn market is mainly due to less demand, as fewer dairy producers are buying corn versus straight pasturing. In the soybean arena, increased demand results from buyers' reluctance to buy imported organic soybeans.

In the next year, the market for feed grains could strengthen because the 2009 corn crop failed to reach maturity before the first frost, resulting in light test weight corn. Wet weather in October not only delayed maturity, but it left both conventional and organic farmers with damp corn susceptible to molds and fungi in Wisconsin and throughout the Corn Belt.

On the global market, significant amounts of organic soybeans originating from China, India and South America are challenging producers in the United States. The USDA's implementation of

Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) should especially benefit the organic industry in that organic consumers will have the information they need to choose domestic and local organic products.

The bottom line: Diversity and quality is the key to market survival. Organic producers who grow a mix of crops have a chance of leveling the price peaks and valleys in the current marketplace (strength in one market will offset weakness in another). High test weight grains with low concentrations of molds and fungi will be the most sought after commodities by end users.

*Michael Schulist is an organic farmer, serves as Marketing Director for the Wisconsin Organic Marketing Alliance and is a member of the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council. He is an organic dairy producer and grows organic potatoes on his farm.*

## **Organic viewpoints: Organic produce—two perspectives**

### **David Bruce: Despite the downturn, sales are strong**

Wisconsin continues to be a leader in organic produce in the Midwest. Overall acreage has increased, as have the number of certified organic farms growing produce. Despite the economic slowdown, sales have been strong.

An increasing number of wholesale distributors throughout the Midwest are interested in carrying organic produce. They are also growing more aware of consumer interest in locally grown food. In-store signage and point of origin information at the retail level help tell this story.

While dairy is the mainstay of Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative, the produce program has grown substantially both in terms of sales and the number of farmers involved. In 2009, the CROPP produce program served as the marketing agent for 176 farmers, 157 of whom were in Wisconsin. This compares to 120 farmers in the produce pool in 2008. Most of these were smaller-scale growers raising between two and 15 acres of mixed organic produce as part of a diversified farming operation. They would not otherwise have access to the broad range of markets that buy Organic Valley produce.

2009 brought its share of production challenges, including cool weather and the difficulty of widespread downy mildew and late blight. Future challenges include bringing all growers into compliance with the Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) standards and impending food safety regulations. Organic Valley anticipates that 2010 will bring opportunities for increased sales both in our current markets and to new local and institutional markets.

*David Bruce is Produce Pool Director with Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative in La Farge.*





## **Kiera Mulvey: Organic CSA farms in southern Wisconsin are thriving**

Community Supported Agriculture, or CSA, is a unique social and economic arrangement between local households and farmers who work together to share the responsibility of producing and delivering fresh food. Households support farms by paying an annual fee in the winter or spring that entitles them to a share of the season's harvest.



The Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC) has been working in southern Wisconsin for over 18 years. In 2008, MACSAC adopted a policy requiring all MACSAC-endorsed farms to be certified organic according to the national organic standards. Almost all MACSAC farms sell produce, and some sell other products as well.

Because of the strong connections between CSA members and farmers, and growing awareness of the many social, economic and health benefits of CSA farm membership, MACSAC farms continue to thrive despite the economic downturn. MACSAC farm membership increased from 29 endorsed farms in 2007 to 35 endorsed farms in 2009. During this time, the number of shares sold by MACSAC-endorsed farms grew from 3,500 to 5,900, with over 12,000 individuals eating from MACSAC farms.

MACSAC's Partner Shares Program, which provides financial and educational assistance to help low-income families purchase and cook with CSA shares, grew substantially during the downturn. Between 2007 and 2009, MACSAC saw almost a 100 percent increase in participation in this program.

MACSAC works with several health care plans serving the Madison area. These Health Plan Partners reimburse their members who purchase vegetable shares from MACSAC farms. Each year, more people learn about the CSA concept and are connected to MACSAC's farms through outreach done by our Health Plan Partners. Though MACSAC does not track the number of CSA farm members claiming reimbursements, our Health Plan Partners report increasing claims each year.

The future is indeed bright for CSA farms and members. The positive experiences of current CSA farm members, high quality produce, increasing numbers of pick-up locations and promotions by partner agencies and businesses have all contributed to heightened awareness of, and participation in, CSA. MACSAC anticipates that consumers will continue to demand CSA shares, and growers will continue to be attracted to this model of direct market agriculture, for years to come.

*Kiera Mulvey is the Director of the Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition.*

## **Organic viewpoints: Consumer demand as experienced by food co-ops**

Despite the recession, organic consumers are finding ways to continue purchasing organic food, according to representatives from Willy Street Co-op of Madison, Outpost Natural Foods Cooperative of Milwaukee and People's Food Co-op of La Crosse.

Organic prices are still leveling out from the jump in oil prices last year, but cooperative owner numbers continue to climb. Lynn Wilson, Cooperative Services Manager at Willy Street Co-op, said the co-op has 16,000 owners and obtains approximately 150 unsolicited new owners a month. Outpost currently has 14,000 owners, a number that continues to grow, according to Outpost Communications Director Margaret Mittelstadt.

Fresh produce remains the hallmark of cooperatives' organic selection and a gateway to organic consumption, cooperative representatives said. Taking advantage of limited-time specials, using coupons and trading down to cheaper, yet comparable, organic items are just some of the trends representatives have seen in organic consumer buying.

"People are not embracing organics as an entire lifestyle ... There are more people who dabble in it, although that I think has receded with the economy," said Michelle Schry, General Manager of People's Food Co-op, La Crosse. Schry said People's Food Co-op currently has 3,938 members.

Despite finding ways to cut costs when buying organic, some consumers are weary of the organic price tag. "We still hear that organic is so expensive," Mittelstadt said. Co-op customers, however, tend to have a better-than-average understanding of the reasons why organic products cost more. These include labor-intensive production practices, fewer government subsidies and, in some cases, a commitment to pay fair wages to farmers and farmworkers.

The varying economic environments and demographics of the three cities account for some differences in the sales and patronage of the cooperatives. Madison and Milwaukee are located in population-dense areas with relatively high per-capita income compared to the rest of the state. La Crosse County, in the heart of rural Wisconsin, has a lower per capita income and smaller market.

Commenting about the La Crosse market for organic food, Schry said, "I think people really understand organics at a much more deep level where we are and are more committed to it because they know people who grow organic and they've built relationships."

Wilson said that the Willy Street Co-op saw a significant hike in sales in 2009. The co-op's basket count increased by 2 items and sales exceeded their projections by \$1.5 million.

Schry believes that consumers' interest in organics will continue to develop. "I don't really think it [the organic market] has plateaued," she said. "It has moderated with the economic forces that are going on right now. I think there's a whole lot more growth left in the industry, particularly as a lot of this generation Y starts to have the buying power that the generation X-ers have right now."

---

## **Appendix A:**

### **The Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council**

The Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council is a private sector committee that includes organic farmers and businesses, consumers and representatives of certification agencies and non-profit organizations. The council was organized to provide guidance to Wisconsin agencies on educational, market development, policy and regulatory issues as they relate to organic farming, food production and marketing. The council meets regularly with an interagency team made up of agriculture-related state and federal agency representatives. It is a standing council of the Wisconsin DATCP and is coordinated by DATCP's Organic Specialist, Laura Paine.

In 2004, Governor Doyle set a goal for Wisconsin to "lead the nation in organic agriculture." An organic summit was held and a task force was convened to develop recommendations for fostering growth in the organic agriculture sector.

Priorities identified by the task force included creation of an educational and promotional program for Wisconsin organic products; establishment of programs that facilitate networking among organic farmers; development of coursework, degree programs and research on organic agriculture at University of Wisconsin campuses and the state's technical colleges; and support and technical assistance for enhancing processing capacity. The task force's report to the governor can be found at [www.organic.wisc.edu](http://www.organic.wisc.edu).

The first steps in accomplishing these priorities were completed in 2006. They included:

- Creation of an organic agriculture specialist position in DATCP's Division of Agricultural Development
- Creation of an organic research and education coordinator position at the University of

Wisconsin-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS)

- Establishment of the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council and interagency team

The council's membership consists of three organic farmers, three organic business representatives, a certifier, a representative of a non-profit educational organization, a consumer representative and three at-large members. Members are appointed by DATCP's Agriculture Board to three year-long, staggered terms. The council's members were seated in February 2007, and they continue to meet three to four times annually. Agencies working with the council include DATCP, the Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources and Commerce, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, the University of Wisconsin CALS and Extension and the Wisconsin Technical College System.

Council members and agency staff work together on activities that support and promote organic farming. To organize their efforts, the council formed six committees.

### **Organic Advisory Council projects and committees**

#### **Government relations and legal affairs**

This committee coordinates activities of the council in advising DATCP and other agencies on rules and policies affecting organic agriculture, and developing white papers and proposals addressing organic issues.

#### **Biennial report**

This report will create and track measurable goals for the growth of Wisconsin's organic sector.

#### **Consumer education**

This committee is primarily focused on general consumer education about organic food and organic integrity issues, including products being labeled or sold as organic in Wisconsin

that are not certified organic, or products that may be decertified due to inappropriate production procedures.

### **Farmer education**

This committee works to enhance the capacity of universities and colleges to provide training in organic agriculture and processing, and enhance communication and networking capacity among organic and transitioning farmers.

### **National organic issues**

This committee addresses National Organic Program issues and other national issues that impact organic farms, such as the farm bill, and communicates with other states' organic advisory councils.

### **Supply chain infrastructure**

This committee covers marketing, market development and processing capacity development. This work includes education and technical assistance for farmers, improving market access for small organic farmers, processor education, technical assistance and capacity building, accessibility of information regarding organic certification for processors and handlers, addressing regulatory barriers to small-scale and specialty processing businesses and increasing small scale processing capacity in Wisconsin.

For more information, contact Laura Paine at 608-224-5120 or [Laura.Paine@wi.gov](mailto:Laura.Paine@wi.gov), or visit [www.organic.wisc.edu](http://www.organic.wisc.edu).

### **Current Organic Advisory Council Members**

#### **Organic Farmers**

Tricia Bross (term ends 4/30/2011)  
Luna Circle Farm  
Rio, WI

Chris Malek (term ends 4/30/2012)  
Malek Family Stewardship Farm  
Stevens Point, WI

Rich Lange (term ends 4/30/2010)  
Lange Farms  
Platteville, WI

#### **Organic Business Representatives**

Mike Schulist (term ends 4/30/2010)  
Wisconsin Organic Marketing  
Alliance Cooperative  
Custer, WI

Jerry McGeorge (term ends 4/30/2012)  
Organic Valley  
La Farge, WI

Robert Wills (term ends 4/30/2011)  
Cedar Grove Cheese  
Plain, WI

#### **Non-Profit Representative**

Harriet Behar (term ends 4/30/2011)  
Midwest Organic and Sustainable  
Education Services  
Gays Mills, WI

#### **Consumer Representative**

Margaret Bert-Mittelstadt (term ends 4/30/2010)  
Outpost Natural Foods Cooperative  
Milwaukee, WI

#### **Certification Representative**

Bonnie Wideman (term ends 4/30/2012)  
Midwest Organic Services Association  
Viroqua, WI

#### **At-Large Members**

David Engel (term ends 4/30/2012)  
Rising Sun Jersey Farm  
Soldiers Grove, WI

Christine Mason (term ends 4/30/2011)  
Standard Process, Inc.  
Palmyra, WI

Jim Munsch (term ends 4/30/2010)  
Deer Run Farm  
Coon Valley, WI

#### **Interagency Team**

Pat Murphy  
Natural Resources Conservation  
Service State Office

Russ Raeder  
Farm Service Agency State Office

Kevin Shelley  
UW Nutrient & Pest Mgmt. Program

Jed Colquhoun  
UW-Extension  
Horticulture Weed Specialist

Carla Wright  
WI Department of Natural Resources

Irv Possin  
WI Department of Commerce

Randy Zogbaum  
WI Technical College System

-Or-  
Don Jaworski  
Assoc. Dean, Agriculture Services  
Northeast WI Technical College

Jennifer Heaton-Amrhein  
DATCP-Agricultural Resource  
Management

Perry Brown  
WI DATCP-Division of Agricultural  
Development (DAD)

#### **Coordinators**

Laura Paine  
Grazing & Organic Ag Specialist  
WI DATCP-DAD

Erin Silva  
UW-Madison Agronomy Department

---

## Appendix B:

### Active UW-Madison organic research

The following information was gathered through a search of the USDA Current Research Information System and updates from researchers. This list may not include all organic research occurring at UW-Madison. If you know of other projects we should include, or if you have any questions about organic research at UW-Madison, please contact Erin Silva at 608-890-1503 or [emsilva@wisc.edu](mailto:emsilva@wisc.edu).

#### **Development of a low-input system for forage and grain production: intercropping winter cereals in a permanent stand of kura clover (*Trifolium ambiguum*)**

**Researchers:** Ken Albrecht (Agronomy) 608-262-2314, [kaalbrec@wisc.edu](mailto:kaalbrec@wisc.edu); Jadwiga Andrzejewska (Poland) and Shawn Conley (Agronomy)

**Description:** The objective of this research is to develop an intercropping system with cereal crops and clover that requires no nitrogen fertilizer for grain or forage production and provides permanent groundcover. The cereal crop-clover intercropping system has potential to increase profitability and biodiversity on the agricultural landscape while reducing groundwater and surface water contamination and minimizing soil erosion.

#### **Farmer-farmer interactions in the organic dairy sector: spatial, market and structural implications**

**Researchers:** Bradford L. Barham (Agricultural and Applied Economics) 608-265-3090, [barham@mailplus.wisc.edu](mailto:barham@mailplus.wisc.edu); David Lewis (Agricultural and Applied Economics), Daniel Praeger (Agricultural and Applied Economics), Brian Robinson (Agricultural and Applied Economics), Alan Turnquist (Program on Agricultural Technology Studies) and Karl Zimmerer (The Pennsylvania State University Department of Geography)

**Description:** This project examines the spatial and temporal evidence for the clustering of organic dairy farm adoption using farm-level data from Western Wisconsin, the region in the state with the highest number and concentration of organic dairy farms. We also consider the links between adoption patterns of organic dairy farming, the emerging market organization of the organic dairy sector and the evolving structure of organic dairy farming, with an eye toward evaluating whether farmer-farmer interactions may be reinforcing the competitiveness of moderate-scale dairy farms.

#### **Crop productivity and plant nitrogen uptake in response to fertility management system for an organic vegetable rotation**

**Researchers:** A.J. Bussan (Horticulture), 608-262-3519, [ajbussan@wisc.edu](mailto:ajbussan@wisc.edu)

**Description:** As part of the long-term trials established in the summer of 2008, the goal of this project is to evaluate crop productivity and crop nitrogen uptake within an organically managed vegetable rotation (potatoes, snap beans and sweet corn) under five fertility management systems.

#### **Nitrogen leaching in an organic vegetable rotation under five fertility management systems**

**Researchers:** A.J. Bussan (Horticulture), 608-262-3519, [ajbussan@wisc.edu](mailto:ajbussan@wisc.edu)

**Description:** The goal of this experiment is to quantify and evaluate nitrogen cycling and fate (plant nitrogen uptake and nitrogen leaching) by processing vegetable crops under five organic fertility management systems. These data can then be utilized to evaluate the environmental impacts of potential nitrogen leaching, as well as help construct nitrogen budgets for fertilizer recommendations in organic processing vegetable rotations.

#### **Quantifying nitrogen mineralization and plant available nitrogen concentrations in the soil following crop, cover crop residue and manure incorporation across an organic vegetable rotation under five fertility management systems**

**Researchers:** A.J. Bussan (Horticulture), 608-262-3519, [ajbussan@wisc.edu](mailto:ajbussan@wisc.edu)

**Description:** This experiment is designed to quantify in-situ nitrogen mineralization and soil plant available nitrogen through time, following incorporation of several fertilizer and organic amendment sources in an organic vegetable rotation under five fertility management systems. Analysis of the net nitrogen mineralization quantities and rates following these five fertility management systems will allow recommendations for improved plant available nitrogen fertility management in organic vegetable rotations with cover crops.

#### **Competitive ability of potato cultivars**

**Researchers:** Jed Colquhoun (Horticulture), 608-890-0980, [colquhoun@wisc.edu](mailto:colquhoun@wisc.edu); and Shelley Jansky (Horticulture)

**Description:** This research project is investigating the ability of potato cultivars to tolerate and/or compete with weeds by investigating the correlation between competitive ability, resource allocation and potato cultivar introduction date, with introduction dates ranging from the late 1800s to 2005. In addition, the nutritional components of these cultivars relative to introduction date are being documented.



---

**Crop plant nutrition and insect response in organic field crop production: linking farmer observation to University research and Extension**

**Researchers:** Eileen Cullen (Entomology), 608-261-1507, cullen@entomology.wisc.edu; Kevin Shelley (Nutrient and Pest Management Program), Robin Mittenthal (Entomology) and Paul Whitaker (UW-Marathon County)

**Description:** This project examines the link between crop plant nutrition and insect response, as well as the premise that organic soil fertility management plays a sizeable role in managing insect pests.

**Strategies of pasture supplementation on organic and conventional grazing dairies: assessment of economic, production and environmental outcomes**

**Researchers:** Victor Cabrera (Dairy Science), 608-263-3308, vcabrera@wisc.edu; David Combs (Dairy Science), Rhonda Gildersleeve (UW Lancaster Agricultural Research Station) and Michel Wattiaux (Dairy Science)

**Description:** This project is designed to investigate the impacts of pasture supplementation decisions made by Wisconsin organic and conventional grazing dairies on selected economic, production and environmental variables. Project results will be utilized to develop outreach materials and decision aids.

**Organic certified seed potato production in the Midwest**

**Researchers:** Amy Charkowski (Plant Pathology), 608-262-7911, amyc@plantpath.wisc.edu; Ruth Genger (Plant Pathology), Doug Rouse (Plant Pathology), Russell Groves (Entomology), Shelley Jansky (Horticulture) and Guenther, J.

**Description:** This project will support organic production of certified seed potatoes in the Midwest through field-based and economic research. This research will provide growers with detailed agronomic, sensory and nutritional data on heirloom and specialty potato varieties. A microeconomic analysis will be conducted based on the results of on-farm trials, and will be complemented by a macroeconomic analysis of organic markets.

**Sustainable management solutions for the cucumber beetle – bacterial wilt pathosystem in Wisconsin**

**Researchers:** Russell Groves (Entomology), 608-262-3229, groves@entomology.wisc.edu

**Description:** This project focuses on the development of enhanced IPM practices, including organic, for cucurbit production employing a combination of novel cultural practices, resistant varieties and low-risk pesticides. The primary goal of this research is to demonstrate the deployment and measure the adoption of lower risk crop protection tools that help conventional and organic growers transition away from high risk pesticides to lower risk organic and alternative practices.

**On-farm research with organic graziers**

**Researchers:** Janet Hedtcke (Agronomy), 608-265-2948, jlrieste@facstaff.wisc.edu; Josh Posner (Agronomy), Altfred Krusenbaum (organic farmer), Ken Nordlund (School of Vet Medicine), Gary Frank (Center for Dairy Profitability) and Bob Van De Boom (organic farmer)

**Description:** Over the past two decades, research projects have been ongoing at the Krusen Grass farm in Elkhorn, Wisconsin while it transitioned from row crops to organic rotational grazing. Herd health, performance and productivity, farm financial and economic performance and nutrient management have been monitored. More recently, heifers and steers are being weighed two to three times per year to evaluate weight gains with a custom grazier.

**No-tillage organic soybean production in winter rye for improved weed and nutrient management in South Central Wisconsin**

**Researchers:** Janet Hedtcke (Agronomy), 608-265-2948, jlrieste@facstaff.wisc.edu; Josh Posner (Agronomy), Dave Stoltenberg (Agronomy) and Emily Bernstein (Agronomy)

**Description:** This research project aims to develop a no-till soybean phase that follows corn and a fall-seeded rye cover crop, comparing manure management, tillage levels, soybean planting dates and row spacing on-farm and on-station on organically managed fields. Performance variables will include measures of weed suppression, soybean yield, soybean profitability and water use.

**Organic and conventional production systems in the long-term Wisconsin Integrated Cropping Systems Trials: productivity, profitability and environmental impact**

**Researchers:** Janet Hedtcke (Agronomy), 608-265-2948, jlrieste@facstaff.wisc.edu; Josh Posner (Agronomy), Jon Baldock (AGSTAT), John Hall (Michael Fields Agricultural Institute), Dwight Mueller (Agricultural Research Station), Darwin Frye (Agricultural Research Station) and Jean-Paul Chavas (Agricultural and Applied Economics)

**Description:** In 1989, in response to the debate about the relative agricultural sustainability of low-input and conventional systems, a large-scale, long-term study entitled the Wisconsin Integrated Cropping Systems Trials (WICST) was initiated at two locations in southern Wisconsin to compare the productivity, profitability and environmental impact of a range of conventional and organic cropping systems.

### **Organic corn hybrid/variety trial results**

**Researchers:** Joe Lauer (Agronomy), 608-263-7438, jglauer@facstaff.wisc.edu

**Description:** The University of Wisconsin Organic Corn Hybrid/Variety Trials were conducted to give corn producers information on performance and characteristics of corn hybrids and varieties that could be used in an organic corn production system. The trials were conducted using approved organic production practices at twelve sites certified for organic production. Seed used for the trials was either organically produced or untreated.

### **Multi-state organic corn hybrid/variety trial results**

**Researchers:** Joe Lauer (Agronomy), 608-263-7438, jglauer@facstaff.wisc.edu; Roger Elmore (Iowa) and Peter Thomison (Ohio)

**Description:** The purpose of this project is to investigate differences in grain yield and quality among hybrids planted in pure and mixed stands in organic production systems. To improve the reliability of crop management decisions, five locations (three southern, two northern) were established using certified organic production practices.

### **Refining and implementing multifunctional management strategies for organic processing vegetables**

**Researchers:** Paul Mitchell (Agricultural and Applied Economics), 608-265-6514, pdmitchell@wisc.edu; A.J. Bussan (Horticulture) and Doug Reinemann (Biological Systems Engineering)

**Description:** This project focuses on examining nitrogen, energy use and economics for organic and conventional processing vegetables systems.

### **Risk management tools for diversified vegetable producers in the Upper Midwest**

**Researchers:** Paul Mitchell (Agricultural and Applied Economics), 608-265-6514, pdmitchell@wisc.edu; Erin Silva (Agronomy) and John Hendrickson (Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems)

**Description:** This project focuses on the development of a system to help diversified vegetable farmers understand their costs of production by crop and marketing channel, and the potential benefits of crop insurance.

### **Legume cover crop management in a diverse organic cropping system**

**Researchers:** Matthew Ruark (Department of Soil Science), 608-263-2889, mdruark@wisc.edu

**Description:** The objective of this study was to evaluate the effect of cover crop species (crimson clover, berseem clover and chickling vetch) and growth of cover crop (6, 8 and 10 weeks) on crop yield, nitrogen uptake and plant available N. Results will be used to make recommendations for cover crop management for organic growers, as well as small-scale grain and vegetable growers.

### **Impact of organic management on dairy animal health and well-being**

**Researchers:** Pamela Ruegg (Dairy Science), 608-263-3495, plruegg@facstaff.wisc.edu; Linda Tikofsky and Ynte Schukken (Cornell University) and Mike Gamroth (Oregon State University)

**Description:** The overall objectives of this project are to assess cow health and well-being on farms that use organic management systems and evaluate, develop and disseminate recommendations for cost-effective, preventative health management programs. Indicators of herd health and milk quality will be identified and used to create herd performance benchmarks that will be provided to participating farms.

### **Developing carbon-positive organic systems through reduced tillage and cover crop-intensive crop rotation schemes**

**Researchers:** Erin Silva (Agronomy), 608-890-1503, emsilva@wisc.edu, in collaboration with Iowa State University, University of Minnesota, Michigan State University and North Dakota State University

**Description:** The goal of this project is to design and execute a multi-state, multi-site, multi-user no-till system using roller/crimper technology that will allow the organic row crop producer to forego a suite of tillage operations that may reduce soil quality and drive up the cost of production. This research will measure improvement in soil health, enhanced ecosystem services on organic farms and economic benefits of reduced tillage.

### **Northern organic vegetable improvement cooperative (NOVIC)**

**Researchers:** Erin Silva (Agronomy), 608-890-1503, emsilva@wisc.edu, in collaboration with North Dakota State University

**Description:** This project will create a robust national network of organic vegetable breeders working collaboratively to benefit the organic community with improved vegetable varieties adapted to organic systems. Participating growers will evaluate the suitability of the vegetables to their needs and provide guidance for further cultivar improvement.

### **Cover crop selection and use in no-till organic farming**

**Researchers:** Erin Silva (Agronomy), 608-890-1503, emsilva@wisc.edu, in collaboration with Iowa State University, University of Minnesota, Michigan State University and North Dakota State University

**Description:** The objective of this project is to establish management recommendations for the use of cover crops to eliminate tillage in corn, soybean, wheat and other important agronomic crops grown under certified organic conditions in the North Central region. The impact of cover crops on yield, economics, energy balance, nutrient cycling, pests and soil quality will be determined.

---

## Appendix C: Resources and organizations

The resources and organizations listed below provide support for organic farmers, students and others interested in organic agriculture. If you know of others that should be included in future reports, contact Cris Carusi at cecarusi@wisc.edu or 608-262-8018.

### College and university research and education *Lawrence University*

**Contact:** Jeff Clark, jeffrey.j.clark@lawrence.edu  
Lawrence University, a four-year private liberal arts college in Appleton, WI, offers a course in sustainable agriculture that addresses the state of modern agriculture in the United States and the world.  
www.lawrence.edu

### *Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, Green Bay*

**Contact:** Valerie Dantoin, 920-498-5568, valerie.dantoin@nwtc.edu  
NWTC offers a Certificate in Organic and Sustainable Agricultural Practices comprised of eight different courses developed by professional educators and farmers. In the fall of 2010, many of these courses will be offered on-line. www.nwtc.edu

### *UW-Fox Valley*

**Contacts:** Joy Perry, Biology, 920-832-2653, joy.perry@uwc.edu  
Gregory Peter, Sociology, 920-832-2655, greg.peter@uwc.edu  
UW Fox Valley's experiential learning opportunities involve students in local and organic food events and resource preparation, community garden projects and school food and waste management, as well as a number of non-agricultural sustainability projects.  
www.uwfox.uwc.edu

### *UW-Marathon County*

**Contacts:** Paul Whitaker, Biology, 715-261-6284, paul.whitaker@uwc.edu  
Kat Becker, Sociology, kat.becker@uwc.edu  
UW-Marathon County offers a semester-long, interdisciplinary course on "Social and Scientific Aspects of Organic Agriculture" on the UW Marathon County campus and via compressed video at UW Fox Valley in Menasha. www.uwmc.uwc.edu

### *UW-River Falls Sustainable Agriculture Program*

**Contacts:** Juliet Tomkins, 715-425-3176, juliet.tomkins@uwrf.edu  
William Anderson, william.anderson@uwrf.edu  
UW-River Falls offers a sustainable agriculture option within its Bachelor of Science degree in Crop and Soil Science. The program includes experiential learning opportunities, as well as traditional course work.  
www.uwrf.edu/pes/crop-soil/

### Programs and Centers at UW-Madison *Agroecology Master's Program*

**Contact:** Christine Elholm, 608-890-1456, caelholm@wisc.edu  
The Agroecology Program aims to train analysts and researchers in a broadened vision of the possibilities of agriculture, including organic agriculture.  
www.agroecology.wisc.edu

### *F.H. King Students for Sustainable Agriculture*

F.H. King Students for Sustainable Agriculture has a one-acre, organically managed, student-run farm where volunteers and interested students gain hands-on experience in small-scale sustainable agriculture. F.H. King also holds free educational workshops and events for the UW-Madison campus community.  
www.fhkingstudentfarm.com

### *Healthy Farmers, Healthy Profits Project*

This project finds and shares work efficiency methods that improve health, safety and profits for dairy farmers and nursery, fresh market vegetable and berry growers. bse.wisc.edu/hfhp/backgroundpage.htm

### *University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives (UWCC)*

UWCC strives to study, promote and research cooperative action as a means of meeting the economic and social needs of people. 608-262-3981; www.uwcc.wisc.edu

### *Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS)*

CIAS is a sustainable agriculture research center at the UW-Madison. 608-262-5200; www.cias.wisc.edu

### *Program on Agricultural Technology Studies (PATS)*

PATS is a research and extension unit at UW-Madison that examines the implications of new agricultural technologies. 608-265-2908; www.pats.wisc.edu



### ***Wisconsin Integrated Cropping Systems Trial (WICST)***

WICST is a long-term trial comparing six Wisconsin cropping systems for productivity, profitability and environmental impact. 608-262-0876; [www.cias.wisc.edu/wicst](http://www.cias.wisc.edu/wicst)

### ***UW Extension***

Within UW Extension, state specialists and county agents are committed to working with organic producers to answer question and generate information to improve crop production, quality and profitability both through research and outreach efforts. Additional resources through UW Extension include the Environmental Resources Center ([www.uwex.edu/erc/](http://www.uwex.edu/erc/)), the Integrated Pest and Crop Management Program ([ipcm.wisc.edu](http://ipcm.wisc.edu)) and the Wisconsin Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. [www.uwex.edu](http://www.uwex.edu)

### **State and federal agencies**

#### ***Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection***

[www.datcp.state.wi.us](http://www.datcp.state.wi.us); 608-224-5012

The ***Agricultural Development Division*** provides business development and marketing support, including business planning consulting, dairy product development, international trade assistance, the Something Special from Wisconsin program and the Buy Local program. It also is home to the Wisconsin Farm Center, a program that provides individualized assistance for farmers on financial management, dispute resolution, farm transfer, estate planning and other farm management issues. 608-224-5100; [www.datcp.state.wi.us/core/marketingagriculture/marketingagriculture.jsp](http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/core/marketingagriculture/marketingagriculture.jsp)

#### ***Wisconsin Farm Center: 1-800-942-2474***

[www.datcp.state.wi.us/mktg/agriculture/farm-center/info-outreach/index.jsp](http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/mktg/agriculture/farm-center/info-outreach/index.jsp)

**DATCP's Organic Agriculture Program** is located in the Agricultural Development Division. It includes administration of the USDA organic certification cost share program, coordination of the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council, organic farmer education and organic market development assistance. Contact: Laura Paine, 608-224-5120, [laura.paine@wi.gov](mailto:laura.paine@wi.gov) [www.organic.wisc.edu/](http://www.organic.wisc.edu/) [www.datcp.state.wi.us/mktg/business/marketing/val-add/organic/index.jsp](http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/mktg/business/marketing/val-add/organic/index.jsp)

### ***USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)***

FSA administers federal farm commodity, crop insurance, credit, environmental, conservation and emergency assistance programs. FSA's Non Insured Assistance Program, for which organic farmers are eligible, provides insurance for many specialty crops. 608-662-4422; [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

### ***USDA National Organic Program (NOP)***

The NOP develops, implements and administers national production, handling and labeling standards for organic agricultural products. The NOP also accredits foreign and domestic certifying agents. 202-720-3252; [www.ams.usda.gov/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop)

### ***USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)***

Wisconsin NRCS works with producers to address the environmental challenges that are unique to organic farming. NRCS provides technical assistance to grazing-based livestock operations, many of which transition to organic production. NRCS offers a special EQIP sign up targeted towards organic producers and EQIP cost-share for organic transition. 608-662-4422; [www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov)

### **Nonprofit agencies**

#### ***American Pastured Poultry Producers Association***

APPPA encourages people to learn and exchange information about raising poultry on pasture. 888-66-APPPA (2-7772); [www.apppa.org](http://www.apppa.org)

#### ***Cornucopia Institute***

The Cornucopia Institute engages in research and advocacy supporting organic and sustainable agriculture. 608-625-2042; [cornucopia.org](http://cornucopia.org)

#### ***Grass Works***

GrassWorks aims to expand the practice of grazing throughout Wisconsin and create a thriving market for grassfed products. GrassWorks events and publications are of value to organic producers implementing grazing. [www.grassworks.org](http://www.grassworks.org)

#### ***Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC)***

MACSAC promotes and supports organic CSA farms and operates the Partner Shares Program, which subsidizes CSA memberships for limited-income households. MACSAC also provides a mentoring program for its new farmers. 608-226-0300; [www.macsac.org](http://www.macsac.org)

---

***Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI)***

MFAI conducts applied research and breeding efforts that benefit the organic agricultural community. In addition, MFAI offers a wide range of workshops focused on topics of interest to organic farmers that are taught by farmer faculty. It is also involved in policy, food systems and urban agriculture activities. 262-642-3303; [www.michaelfieldsagainst.org](http://www.michaelfieldsagainst.org)

***Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)***

MOSES promotes sustainable and organic agriculture through information, education and research. It organizes the largest organic farming conference in the country and publishes the Upper Midwest Organic Resource Directory. The MOSES Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program pairs experienced and transitioning organic farmers to promote the successful adoption of organic methods. 715-778-5775; [www.mosesorganic.org](http://www.mosesorganic.org)

***Research Education Action and Policy on Food Group (REAP)***

REAP connects producers, consumers, policy makers, educators, businesses and organizations to nourish the links between land and table. 608-310-7836; [www.reapfoodgroup.org](http://www.reapfoodgroup.org)

***Wisconsin Organic Marketing Alliance (WOMA)***

WOMA is an organic marketing cooperative that supports clusters of organic grain producers who sell directly to organic livestock producers, making Wisconsin a leader in organic grain management while protecting the organic price structure. 608-427-2201; [organicmarketingalliance.org](http://organicmarketingalliance.org)

**Organic certification agencies**

Private certification agencies accredited by the USDA's National Organic Program ([www.ams.usda.gov/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop)) provide independent, third-party assurance that organic food is produced and processed according to U.S. organic standards. The following certifiers are active in Wisconsin. For a complete list of certifiers, visit [www.mosesorganic.org](http://www.mosesorganic.org)

***Global Organic Alliance***

PO Box 530, Bellefontaine, OH  
937-593-1232  
[globalorganicalliance@hughes.net](mailto:globalorganicalliance@hughes.net),  
[www.goa-online.org](http://www.goa-online.org)

***Indiana Certified Organic LLC***

8364 S State Route 39, Clayton, IN  
317-539-4317  
[icollcceo@earthlink.net](mailto:icollcceo@earthlink.net),  
[www.indianacertifiedorganic.com](http://www.indianacertifiedorganic.com)

***International Certification Services, Inc.***

301 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southeast, Medina, ND 58467  
701-486-3578

***Midwest Organic Services Association***

PO Box 821, 122 W Jefferson St, Viroqua, WI 54665  
Bonnie Wideman, 608-637-2526  
[mosa@mosaorganic.org](mailto:mosa@mosaorganic.org), [www.mosaorganic.org](http://www.mosaorganic.org)

***Minnesota Crop Improvement Association***

1900 Hendon Ave, St. Paul, MN  
612-625-7766  
[mncia@tc.umn.edu](mailto:mncia@tc.umn.edu), [www.mncia.org](http://www.mncia.org)

***Nature's International Certification Services***

PO Box 131, 224 State Hwy 56, Viroqua, WI 54665  
Dave Engel, 608-637-7080,  
[david.engel@naturesinternational.com](mailto:david.engel@naturesinternational.com),  
[www.naturesinternational.com](http://www.naturesinternational.com)

***Oregon Tilth, Inc.***

470 Lancaster Dr. NE, Salem, OR 97301  
503-378-0690  
[organic@tilth.org](mailto:organic@tilth.org), [www.tilth.org](http://www.tilth.org)

***Oregon Tilth, Inc.—Midwest Office***

P.O. Box 269, Viroqua, WI 54665  
Dave Engel, 608-637-8594  
[dave@tilth.org](mailto:dave@tilth.org), [www.tilth.org](http://www.tilth.org)

***OCIA International, Inc.***

1340 N Cotner Blvd, Lincoln, NE  
402-477-2323  
[info@ocia.org](mailto:info@ocia.org), [www.ocia.org](http://www.ocia.org)

***Wisconsin OCIA #1***

5381 Norway Drive, Pulaski, WI 54162  
Peggy Linzmeier, 920-822-4582

***Wisconsin OCIA Chapter #2***

Josephine Dobson, 507-450-0227

***Quality Assurance International***

9191 Towne Centre Dr., Suite 510,  
San Diego, CA 92122  
858-792-3531  
[qai@qai-inc.com](mailto:qai@qai-inc.com), [www.qai-inc.com](http://www.qai-inc.com)



