

Farm Bill 2023: The OSRI Act

The Organic Science and Research Investment Act (OSRI Act) was recently introduced by [Senator Fetterman \(PA\)](#). This act provides continued, needed investments into organic agriculture research and market analysis in order to increase resilience of U.S. agriculture, create economic opportunity for producers, and improve the ecological vitality of the landscape. Here's what the OSRI Act will do, why it is important, and how you can help support it.

WHAT WILL THE OSRI ACT DO?

1) Create the Coordinating and Expanding Organic Research Initiative.

This initiative charges the Research, Education, and Economics agencies at USDA to catalog the current, ongoing research on organic food and agriculture topics and provide a path to increase organic agriculture research conducted and funded by the USDA.

2) Direct the USDA to develop a plan to increase organically managed acreage.

This plan will formulate how the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the sole in-house research operation at USDA, will dedicate a portion of their research fields to organic agriculture research.

3) Bolster programs operated by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

The OSRI Act would provide stair-stepped budget increases to the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), expand the statutory priorities to include climate change, organic alternatives to prohibited substances, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. The bill would also provide first-time Congressional authorization for the Researching the Transition to Organic Program (RTOP), currently known as the Organic Transition Research Program (ORG).

4) Boost funding for the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative (ODI).

The data produced through the ODI is essential for the development of risk management products and targeted market development. The OSRI Act directs the Economic Research Service (ERS) to conduct a full, systematic evaluation of the economic impact organic agriculture has on rural and urban communities, taking into account economic, ecological, and social factors.

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WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Agricultural and economic research investments must be a part of the United States' strategy to increase domestic organic production to meet the growing domestic and international demand for organic products. Currently the ARS invests less than 1% and NIFA ~2% of their budget into direct organic agriculture research, while organic agriculture makes up more than 6% of the food sales market.

The OREI and ORG competitive grant programs operated by NIFA require all research projects to involve producers in their research, ensuring that the research conducted produces action-oriented, usable research products that ultimately increase the economic profitability and ecological vitality of farming operations.

It is also important to note that investing into organic agriculture research does not only benefit organic producers. Research of practices, techniques, and systems that originate in organic research are often adopted by conventional farming operations because of their economic and ecological efficacy.

Examples of this include the increasing use of cover crops in field crop production, and integrated pest management techniques. Conversely, conventional research often cannot be utilized by organic producers due to the substance restrictions and systems-based nature of the organic method of production.

The policies in the OSRI Act represent a significant step toward providing needed

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investments into organic agriculture research, and supporting a rapidly-growing and -maturing organic food and agriculture market. These policies will provide research tools to help farmers thrive.

They also signal to researchers that organic agriculture research is a valued and important area of study which incentivizes young researchers to pursue organic agriculture research projects and expertise. Alongside these market-wide benefits, public investments in agricultural research can have significant positive impact on rural communities.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The OSRI Act is a marker bill, and the more support it receives at this stage of the process, the more likely it is to get incorporated into the Farm Bill this year.

You can learn more about the OSRI Act and how to support with this [TOOLKIT](#).
The toolkit includes:

- OSRI Act overview
- Sample Newsletter
- Templates for congressional outreach
- Template for a Letter to the Editor
- Social Media Posts & Graphics

