



TECHNICAL NOTE

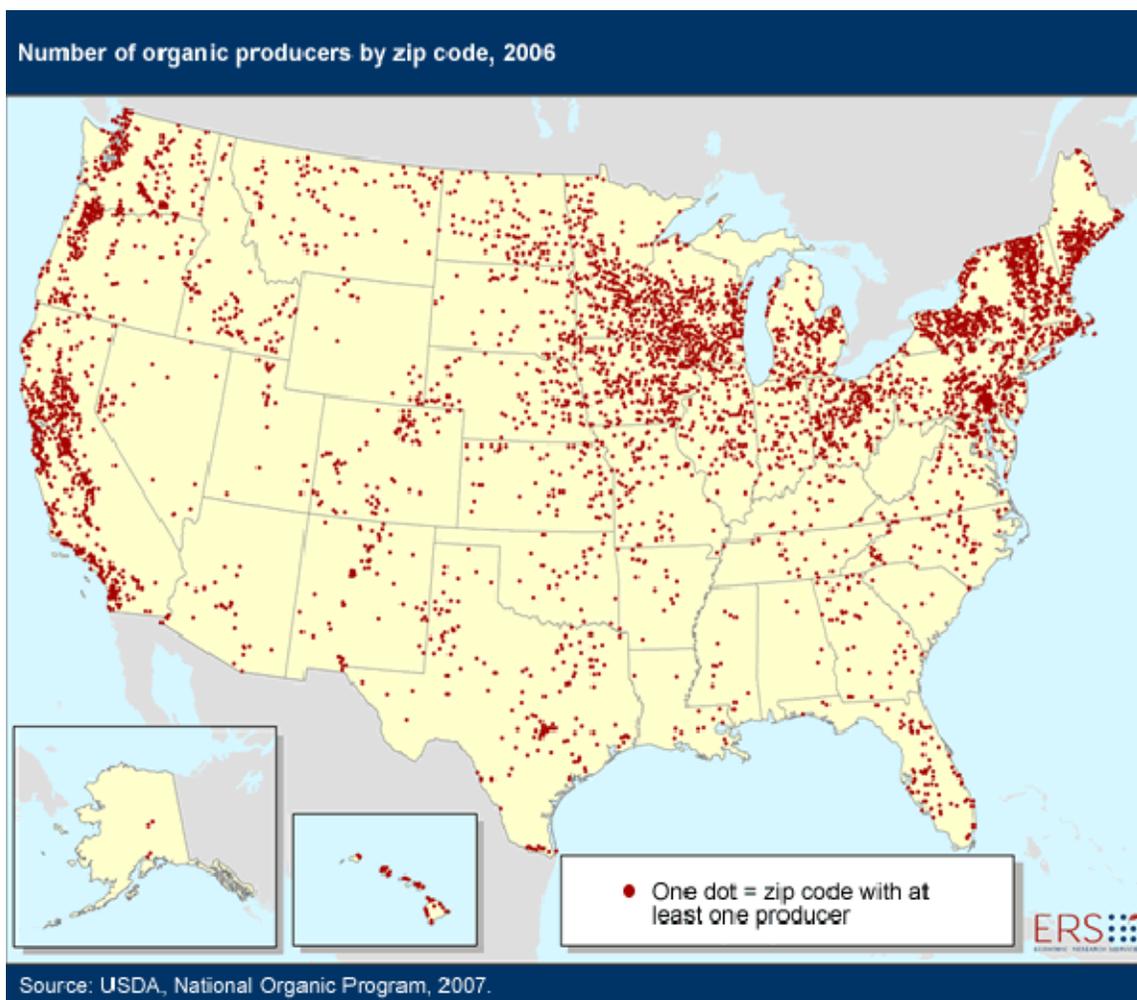


Sociology FL-04

December 2009

Organic Producers

Organic farming has been one of the fastest growing segments of U.S. agriculture for over a decade. The U.S. had under a million acres of certified organic farmland when Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990. By the time USDA implemented national organic standards in 2002, certified organic farmland had doubled, and doubled again between 2002 and 2005. Organic livestock sectors have grown even faster.



In 2005, for the first time, all 50 States in the U.S. had some certified organic farmland. U.S. producers dedicated over 4.0 million acres of farmland—1.7 million acres of cropland and 2.3 million acres of rangeland and pasture—to organic production systems in 2005. California remains the leading State in certified organic cropland, with over 220,000 acres, mostly for fruit and vegetable production. Other top states for certified organic cropland

include North Dakota, Montana, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Texas, and Idaho. Over 40 States also had some certified organic rangeland and pasture in 2005, although only 4 states—Alaska, Texas, California and Montana—had more than 100,000 acres. USDA lifted restrictions on organic meat labeling in the late 1990s, and the organic poultry and beef sectors are now expanding rapidly.

Top 10 States, 2005					
Number of certified operations		Cropland acres		Pasture acres	
California	1,916	California	223,263	Alaska	1,460,000
Wisconsin	580	North Dakota	143,322	Texas	241,353
Washington	527	Montana	126,450	California	137,004
Iowa	453	Minnesota	116,813	Montana	103,433
Minnesota	433	Wisconsin	91,030	Wyoming	66,290
New York	427	Texas	87,124	Colorado	60,766
Vermont	366	Idaho	81,220	North Dakota	37,811
Oregon	317	Kansas	80,180	Wisconsin	31,308
Pennsylvania	308	Nebraska	77,820	Idaho	19,412
Maine	288	Iowa	64,158	Nebraska	17,655

Overall, certified organic cropland and pasture accounted for about 0.5 percent of U.S. total farmland in 2005. Only a small percentage of the top U.S. field crops - corn (0.2 percent), soybeans (0.2 percent), and wheat (0.5 percent) - were grown under certified organic farming systems. On the other hand, organic production of fruits and vegetables is becoming more common. For example, organic carrots represented 6 percent of U.S. carrot acreage, organic lettuce represented 4 percent of the lettuce acreage, and organic apples represented 3 percent of the apple acreage in 2005. Markets for organic vegetables, fruits, and herbs have been developing for decades in the United States, and fresh produce is still the top-selling organic category in retail sales. Organic livestock was beginning to catch up with produce in 2005, with 1 percent of U.S. dairy cows and 0.6 percent of the layer hens managed under certified organic systems.

Taken verbatim from the USDA – Economic Research Service (ERS) data set at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/Organic>.