

BIOAg Project Report

Report Type: PROGRESS

Title: Tracking the Organic Sector in Washington State

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Abstract: The organic agriculture sector in Washington achieved an estimated \$776 million in farm-gate sales in 2019. Regular, accurate statistical data on this sector are not available from the standard government sources, thus WSU has been compiling data continuously since 2004. Growers, processors, consultants, businesses and others in the organic sector need solid data upon which to base their decisions. This project has supported the gathering, analysis, and dissemination of organic sector data for 2020. Data were collected directly from the 3 certifiers that account for 98% of the certified organic farms in Washington state. We created a report of the overall organic sector for the state plus a detailed tree fruit report, both in PowerPoint format, as well as an updated Excel file containing all the data from previous years. We have prepared lecture slides for WSU Organic and Sustainable Agriculture degree classes. The WSU organic sector reports are available online and results will be presented to industry individuals and meetings upon request.

Project Description: The project has three objectives:

1. Collect 2020 data on organic farm number, acreage, sales, and crop details for Washington State.
2. Produce annual organic trends reports for the Washington organic sector overall, as well as a separate, more detailed report on organic tree fruit.
3. Make the findings available to end users via the Organic Statistics web site, WSDA, lecture slides for WSU Organic and Sustainable Agriculture classes, newsletter articles, and presentations at stakeholder meetings.

The majority of the work for all three objectives has been completed. Updating the farms sales information is pending receipt of the 2020 data from WSDA.

Outputs

- Overview of Work Completed and in Progress:
The three main certifiers working in Washington State [Washington State Department of Agriculture Organic Food Program (WSDA), Oregon Tilth Certified Organic (OTCO), California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)] were contacted to request farm, crop, and area data on farms they certified in WA in 2020. Data were provided by all three. Organic tree fruit data were collected from the Washington State Tree Fruit Association (WSTFA) on volume and price for apple, pear, and cherry. Additional data on the global area of organic tree fruit in 2019 (the most current data) were compiled from the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) World of Organic Agriculture report and

database. The USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) 2019 Organic Producer Survey was used to help update national trends and WA ranking. The USDA-National Organic Program (NOP) organic database was used to look for farms not certified by the three certifiers mentioned above. The USDA-Foreign Agricultural Service Global Agricultural Trade System (FAS GATS) database was used to update the information on organic imports and exports.

From the data collected, the annual organic tree fruit trends report was updated and posted online. The annual WA trends in organic agriculture report was updated except for the 2020 farm sales data (see below). It was posted online and will be replaced with a final version once the sales data have been received and analyzed. Both of these reports (in PowerPoint format) were then used to create a short and a long version of each for use by WSU teaching faculty to support their organic agriculture curriculum content. The files were sent to each department for distribution to the appropriate faculty, and were posted online.

The WA trends report contains information updated from the 2019 Organic Producer Survey and helps to show where WA stands nationally in organic production. This survey by NASS is not done on a regular basis, but it is the only source of national data with detail. The NOP organic database does not contain area or crop specific details. Also, as organic apples are an important US export product, data on US organic exports and imports were updated for 2020 from the GATS database.

Farm sales data were received from OTCO. Initial data were just received on 12/10/21 from WSDA. They were slow in providing data due to serious personnel shortages and work overload. Further data are expected from a followup request made on 12/14/21. CCOF does not provide this information, thus no data were received from them. However, estimates were made based on crop acreage and per acre farmgate values.

The Excel file that contains all the data in numeric form, by year, is in the process of being updated for 2019 and 2020. When complete, this will be posted online.

A procedures document detailing the methods used to conduct the organic trends work and the content of the various slides is largely compiled. This will be available to future staff at WSU who continue the organic trends work.

- Publications, Handouts, Other Text & Web Products:
Recent Trends in Certified Organic Tree Fruit in Washington State: 2020. Posted at https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/tfrec.cahnrs.wsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/03/WA_OrgTreeFruit_ann_rev_2020.pdf and added to the CSANR publication database.

Current Status of Certified Organic Agriculture in Washington State: 2020. Posted at <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/tfrec.cahnrs.wsu.edu/wp->

content/uploads/sites/9/2021/12/WA_OrgStats_ann_rev_2020.pdf and added to the CSANR publication database.

A long and short version PowerPoint of Recent Trends in Certified Organic Tree Fruit, made available to WSU teaching faculty.

A long and short version PowerPoint of Current Status of Certified Organic Agriculture in WA, made available to WSU teaching faculty.

Publications are posted to the CSANR library at <https://csanr.wsu.edu/publications-library/>

- Outreach & Education Activities:
PowerPoints provided to WSU teaching faculty for use in their courses that include organic agriculture.

Responded to various email requests for information on organic agriculture from individuals and industry.

Impacts

- Short-Term: Up-to-date (2020) data on organic agriculture in WA is available for anyone to use.
- Intermediate-Term: WSU instructors have access to new information that they can use to train the next generation of agricultural professionals.
- Long-Term: 2020 data add to the long-term trend data that was initiated in 2004. Trend data can be more useful to examine than year-to-year variation. The data are archived such that researchers can access them in the future for new research projects.

Additional funding applied for/secured: WSDA Organic Program support for some additional time for D. Granatstein in 2022 (\$1000)

Graduate students funded: S. Shrestha, for creating PowerPoint files for lectures.

Recommendations for future research: Train staff at WSU regarding the procedures and methods used to collect and collate organic production data and to document trends. Create formats for data dissemination to WSU teaching faculty to support their organic agriculture curriculum content and evaluate effectiveness as a learning tool.