Organic farming refers to ecologically-based production systems used to produce food and fiber. Organic farming may be most widely known for what it is not; however, it is more important to define organic farming by what it is. Organic farming can be defined by the proactive ecological principles and certifications standards that have been codified in governmental regulations such as the National Organic Program in the United States and in many of the more than 160 countries in which organic farming is practiced today. These principles and certifications standards have been developed in response to the increasing public interest in organic farming, which has grown significantly in recent years. According to the USDA National Organic Program, there were over 30,000 certified organic farms in the United States in 2012, with an additional 30,000 farms practicing organic farming, but not certified. Organic farmers can be found in many countries around the world, with significant numbers in Germany, England, New Zealand, and the United States. Organic farming has been one of the fastest growing markets in agriculture during the last twenty years. It combines both tradition and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.

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WEB RESOURCES

This section contains a selection of key institutions and organizations involved in organic farming research, education, and outreach programming that present valuable information and reference sources on their websites. Web resources were evaluated on their relevance, authority, depth of coverage, and timeliness.

Government Resources


USDA-AMS administers the National Organic Program, the regulatory program responsible for developing standards for organically produced agricultural products in the United States. The website provides access to the NOP newsletter, fact sheets, presentations, standards resources, and other regulatory resources.


USDA-ERS is the premier government source for economic and policy research involving food, agricultural, natural resources, and rural development. The website provides an extensive overview and background information as well as readings and statistics on organic farming in the United States.


The AFSIC organizes and provides access to information related to sustainable and alternative agricultural systems. The website provides access to subject guides and reference sources on organic agriculture, including databases, news, and online resources and information tools.


USDA-NASS is the nation’s leading provider of unbiased information and statistics on the state of US agriculture. The website provides the most recent available statistics on organic farming including production, marketing, and economics data.

USDA-NIFA provides federal assistance and national program leadership for the food and agricultural sciences by supporting research, education, and extension programs in the land-grant university system and other partner organizations. The website provides access to official reports, data, web resources, and funding information related to organic agriculture.

European Commission, Agriculture and Rural Development: Organic Farming (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/home_en)

This website provides a one-stop entry point for finding official information and reference sources on organic farming in the European Union. It features access to news, policy information, online tools, and databases providing quick access to many organic farming institutions and organizations in Europe.


This website presents information on organic agriculture available at FAO, including production information for various countries, mandates and reports, projects, publications, meeting and event reports, a multilingual glossary, and related web resources.

Industry Organizations and Associations

International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) (www.ifoam.org/index.html)

IFOAM is the worldwide umbrella organization of the organic agriculture movement representing member organizations in more than one hundred countries. The website covers organic farming worldwide and contains an extensive collection of information resources on organic production, business and marketing, research, statistics, news, events, and standards and certification. The website also contains several directories and bibliographies and provides access to training materials.


ATTRA offers technical assistance related to sustainable agriculture to farmers and ranchers, extension agents, researchers, educators, and other agricultural professionals through its website, publications, and other media. The Organic Farming website provides access to factsheets, workbooks, bulletins, and other publications related to organic crop and livestock production, business and marketing, and certification.

Organic Trade Association (OTA) (www.ota.com)

The OTA is the trade organization for the organic industry in North America. The website provides access to OTA news and events, policy briefs, reports and fact sheets, market data, and directories of organic products, businesses, and services.

Soil Association (www.soilassociation.org)

The Soil Association was established in 1948 as one of the first organizations promoting organic agricultural practices and grew to become the largest organic farming association in the United Kingdom. The website provides access to news and events, technical information for farmers, market and business information, and certification resources.

Research Institutions

International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS) (www.icrofs.org)

Founded in 2008 after an expansion of the former Danish Agricultural Research Centre for Organic Farming (DARCOF), ICROFS initiates, coordinates, and participates in organic farming and food systems research and education with a national and international focus. The website provides access to the most recent research, publications, and news from ICROFS. The organization also hosts and administers the Organic Eprints archive.

International Society of Organic Agriculture Research (ISOFAR) (www.isofar.org)

Established in 2003, ISOFAR works to promote and support organic farming research by facilitating worldwide research, methodological development, education and knowledge exchange. The website provides access to the most recent publications, news, and events from ISOFAR.

Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) (http://ofrf.org)

OFRF has aimed to foster the improvement and widespread adoption of organic farming systems by conducting and sponsoring organic farming research, disseminating research results to farmers and agricultural professionals, and educating the public and policymakers about organic agriculture since 1992. The website provides access to numerous information resources, including a grant database, organic education materials, and policy information.

Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) (www.fibl.org/en.html)

FiBL is an independent, nonprofit research institute with offices in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria, specializing in advancing organic farming science, research, and education since 1973. FiBL conducts applied research in the field of organic agriculture and provides advisory and training services for researchers, farmers, extension professionals, and government agencies in organic soil management, crop production, animal husbandry, and economics and business management. The website provides access to the most recent research, publications, and news from FiBL.

Rodale Institute (http://rodaleinstitute.org)

Originally named the Soil and Health Foundation, the Rodale Institute was established in 1947 as the first research organization in the United States to focus on advancing knowledge of organic farming and other systems of sustainable agriculture. In addition to conducting research, the Rodale Institute engages farmers and consumers through outreach and education initiatives. The website provides access to publications, news, online tools, databases, and educational materials.

The Louis Bolk Institute (www.louisbolk.org)

The Louis Bolk Institute conducts organic farming research and international development projects and provides advisory services for farmers and businesses. Headquartered in the Netherlands, the Louis Bolk Institute has additional offices in Ghana and Uganda. The website provides access to more than 1,725 publications authored by staff members.

The Organic Research Centre Elm Farm (www.organicresearchcentre.com)

Established in 1980, the Organic Research Centre has become the leading research and development and advisory organization for organic agriculture in the United Kingdom. The website provides access to news and press releases, research articles and bulletins, conference proceedings, descriptions of current and completed research projects, and web links.

US land-grant universities and local extension and advisory services provide many critical resources on organic farming research and production, often in the form of bulletins, factsheets, and performance and field trial results, targeted toward farmers, agricultural educators, government agency employees, university faculty and staff, and extension educators interested in organic farming systems. A few examples of useful information gateways are here:

- Cornell University, Agricultural Experiment Station: Organic at Cornell (http://cuaes.cornell.edu/organic)
- University of Minnesota, Southwest Research and Outreach Center: Organic Ecology (http://srec.cfans.umn.edu/Research/Outreach/OrganicEcology/index.htm)
- The University of Vermont, Northwest Crops and Soils Program: Organic Farming (www.uvm.edu/extension/crops/organic-farming)
- University of Tennessee, Institute of Agriculture: Organic and Sustainable Crop Production (http://orgagron.org)
- The US Department of Agriculture provides information about sponsored past and current organic farming research activities primarily in two databases:

US Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA): Current Research Information System (CRIS)
book illustrates that the economic realities of present day organic farming sometimes fail to adequately address some of the social causes and challenges for organic farmers around the globe, principles and practices of organic farming systems, and prospects for the future. Written by more than fifty authors from thirteen countries, the eighteen chapters of this book provide a solid overview of technical and scientific issues surrounding organic farming systems as well as addressing the economic, social, and political implications of organic agriculture.

The book's十六 chapters with their many references create a useful reference source for researchers, students, and the public. The editor, an acclaimed scholar in the field himself, draws on an impressive list of leading experts to present a synopsis of the historical development of the organic movement, key policy and market issues, and a number of important organizations and institutions that shape the organic farming movement today.

This comprehensive book is a recommended reference title for researchers, professionals, and producers, summarizing available scientific evidence and best practices for the safety, sensory, and nutritional quality of organic foods. The first part of the book provides an introduction to basic quality and safety of organic food, including a discussion of factors affecting nutritional quality, quality assurance, and consumer expectations. The second part presents issues surrounding organic livestock husbandry and animal production while the third section discusses organic crop and vegetable production.

### Relevant Sources

**Organic Crop Breeding**


**Handbook of Organic Food Safety and Quality**


This well-researched title provides an excellent overview of the history of organic farming as a social movement from its beginning in the 1930s to the present from a political sociology perspective. The book is well-researched and easy to read and introduces the reader to a review of social movement theory before it investigates the defining periods of the organic food and farming movement.

**Organic Farming: An International History**


**Organic Farming: The Ecological System**


This title is recommended as a recent reference source for understanding the scientific basis of organic farming. The book provides a comprehensive introduction to all aspects of organic crop production and includes a brief bibliography and a glossary. Science and Technology of Organic Farming is a title highly valuable for students, crop scientists, agricultural professionals, and practitioners and won a CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title Award in 2011.

**Organic Farming: The Ecological System**


**Organic Agriculture: A Global Perspective**


**Sociological Perspectives of Organic Agriculture: From Pioneer to Policy**


This book provides an insightful account of some of the contemporary challenges of the organic farming movement using California as a case study. While realizing many of the original ideas, such as developing a more environmentally sound food production system, the book illustrates that the economic realities of present day organic farming sometimes fail to adequately address some of the social causes and challenges for organic farmers around the globe, principles and practices of organic farming systems, and prospects for the future.

**Organic Agriculture: A Global Perspective**


This title presents a collection of eighteen essays exploring a number of contemporary issues the organic farming sector is facing. Written by economists and social scientists and aimed at academic researchers involved in sustainable food systems research, the book investigates the history of organic movements in various countries and discusses a diverse range of topics, such as the quality of organic foods and consumer behavior, challenges for organic farmers around the globe, principles and practices of organic farming systems, and future directions.

**Organic Agriculture: A Global Perspective**


This title presents a comprehensive review of the major organic farming systems around the world. Organic Agriculture: A Global Perspective provides a valuable and useful resource for researchers and students wanting to explore the organic farming movement from a global standpoint. Written by more than fifty authors from thirteen countries, the eighteen chapters of this book provide a solid overview of technical and scientific issues surrounding organic farming systems as well as addressing the economic, social, and political dimensions of organic agriculture.
AGRICOLA the National Agricultural Library (NAL) and cooperating institutions, and collections of related subjects, such as food and nutrition, AGRICOLA content relevance for researching the scholarship of organic farming.

The following research databases, listed in alphabetical order, are recommended because of their comprehensiveness, coverage, and LITERATURE DATABASES

Ecology and Farming

1016-5061.

Ecology and Farming.

food systems.

Organic Agriculture

Additional Titles

Science symposia and the International Horticultural Congress. These publications cover all branches of horticultural sciences and horticulture, forestry, and other essential topics in both temperate and tropical climates, with a particular focus on the biological approach to food production.

Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment

publishes papers focusing on the interface between agro-ecosystems and the natural environment. Specifically, the articles focus on the influence of agriculture on the environment and the impact of those changes on agro-ecosystems.


Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems publishes papers focusing on the economic, ecological, and environmental impacts of agriculture, the effective use of renewable resources and biodiversity in agro-ecosystems, and the technological and sociological implications of sustainable food systems.


The Journal of Sustainable Agriculture publishes papers focusing on the emerging fields of agro-ecology and sustainable agriculture. It promotes an interdisciplinary approach to the design and management of food systems as one process in a complex landscape of agricultural production, conservation, and human interaction.


Biological Agriculture and Horticulture publishes papers focusing on alternative systems of biological husbandry in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and other essential topics in both temperate and tropical climates, with a particular focus on the biological approach to food production.


Acta Horticulturae is a peer-reviewed monographic series containing mainly the proceedings of International Society for Horticultural Science symposia and the International Horticultural Congress. These publications cover all branches of horticultural sciences and frequently contain reports and papers on various aspects of organic horticulture.

Additional Titles


Organic Agriculture publishes original research and invited review papers focusing on principles and practice of organic agriculture and food systems. Organic Agriculture is the official journal of The International Society of Organic Agriculture Research.


Ecology and Farming is a trade magazine covering the global development of organic agriculture. Ecology and Farming is the official publication of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.

LITERATURE DATABASES

The following research databases, listed in alphabetical order, are recommended because of their comprehensiveness, coverage, and content relevance for researching the scholarship of organic farming.

AGRICOLA Ipswich, Massachusetts: EBSCO, coverage varies

AGRICOLA (Agricultural Online Access) provides access to over 4.9 million bibliographic references to agricultural literature acquired by the National Agricultural Library (NAL) and cooperating institutions, and collections of related subjects, such as food and nutrition, agricultural economics, parasitology, forestry, aquaculture, wildlife, and environmental science supplied by information centers. AGRICOLA has used the freely accessible NAL Thesaurus as indexing vocabulary since 2002. A search for "organic production OR
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AGRIS, Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 1975–.

AGRIS (International Information System for the Agricultural Sciences and Technology) created by the FAO as an open access database to facilitate information exchange and to identify world literature dealing with all aspects of agriculture provides access to 2.8 million bibliographic records. A search for “organic farming OR organic agriculture” returns more than fifteen thousand results, including peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, book chapters, technical reports, and trade publications ranging from 1976 to the present.

CABI Direct, Wallingford, UK: CABI, 1910–.

The premier databases of the applied life sciences provides access to over 9 million bibliographic references covering research and development literature in the fields of agriculture, forestry, human health, human nutrition, animal health, and the management and conservation of natural resources. CABI Direct incorporates CABI Thesaurus, an online index of CABI terms. A search for “organic farming OR organic agriculture” returns more than thirteen thousand results, including peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, book chapters, and trade publications ranging from 1973 to the present.


This international open access database indexes papers and projects related to organic food and farming research with the goal of improving the dissemination and impact of research findings and facilitating international use and cooperation. Organic EPrints provides access to more than ten thousand bibliographic references.

Scopus. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier B.V., 1829–.

This multidisciplinary database indexes over nineteen thousand titles from more than five thousand international publishers and provides access to over 47 million bibliographic records for the scientific, technical, medical, social sciences, and arts and humanities fields. Scopus provides citing reference information for 26 million records dating back to 1996. A search for “organic farming OR organic agriculture” returns more than four thousand results, mostly peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings ranging from 1954 to the present.

Web of Science. New York, New York: Thomson Reuters, 1896–.

This multidisciplinary database consists of multiple citation indexes and provides access to more than 46 million bibliographic records covering more than twelve thousand high-impact titles from the sciences, social sciences, and arts and humanities. Web of Science provides citing reference information for journal articles dating back to 1898, conference proceedings dating back to 1990, and books dating back to 2005. A topic search for “organic farming OR organic agriculture” returns approximately 3,400 results, including peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and book chapters ranging from 1928 to the present.

LEGISLATION AND LEGAL RESOURCES

United States

US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, National Organic Program (www.ams.usda.gov/AMRv1.0/nop)

The standards codified by the National Organic Program describe the specific requirements verified by accredited certifying agents before any food product can be labeled USDA organic.

- 7 CFR Part 205—National Organic Program: Final Rule (http://www.gpoaccess.gov/epw/text/text-d7c7469d-3f1f492c-ba9e-eb09b4c3c68d3b0a28.html#lethttp://www.lexicigeria.com/7c0e07/7d2508_main_02.html)
- Program Handbook (www.americanorganics.org/NOPProgramHandbook)
- University of Arkansas, National Agricultural Law Center: Reading Room, National Organic Program (www.nationalaglawcenter.org/readingrooms/organicprogram)

Includes an agricultural law bibliography, Congressional Research Service reports, and references to statutes, regulations, and other information relevant to organic agricultural production.


A subject guide on US Federal laws and regulations, state laws and regulations pertinent to marketing organic products, other organic-related certification programs, selected background documents about US standards, general federal food-related labeling and regulatory programs and information, general state food-related labeling and regulatory information, and related food safety resources.

European Union


International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) (www.ifoam.org)

- IFOAM Family of Standards (www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/family_of_standards/family_of_standards.html): Contains all standards worldwide (private and government) officially endorsed as organic by IFOAM.
- IFOAM Organic Guarantee System (OGS) (www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/ogs.html): A package of activities and services developed by IFOAM to assist, unite, and lead the world of organic standards and verification systems.

World Health Information and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Codex Alimentarius (www.codexalimentarius.org)

The Codex Alimentarius contains internationally recognized food standards, guidelines, codes of practice, and other recommendations to ensure the health of the consumers and fair trade practices.


Reference


Article Categories:
- Library Reference and User Services
- Columns

Organic farming refers to ecologically-based production systems used to produce food and fiber. Organic farming may be most widely
management strategies that maintain and enhance soil fertility, prevent soil erosion, promote and enhance biological diversity, and minimize risk to human and animal health and natural resources.