



ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Fostering the improvement and widespread adoption of organic farming.

New Federal Funding for Organic Farming Research: H.R. 2436 – The Organic Agricultural Research Act of 2017

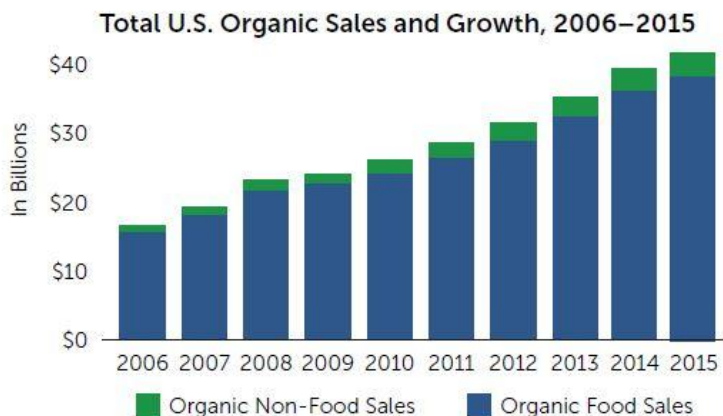
Background

HR 2436 was introduced by Rep. Pingree (D-ME) with Cosponsors Rep. Newhouse (R-WA) and Rep. Panetta (D-CA). The bipartisan legislation is intended to become part of the 2018 Farm Bill after consideration by the House Agriculture Committee.

The bill would reauthorize and increase funds for USDA’s Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), the flagship federal science program for organic farming. OREI currently funds \$20 million per year in competitive grants for organic research, extension and education. HR 2346 would increase the funding to \$50 million/year. By reaching that level of funding the program acquires “baseline” status and is presumed to be a permanent part of the Farm Bill’s Research Title.

Rationale

Continued growth of organic agriculture requires investment in research, education, and extension programs that provide sound information and assistance to America’s farmers. OREI funded research delivers valuable information, tools, and resources that can help all farmers—both organic and non-organic—increase the environmental and economic sustainability of their operations. For the past decade, funding for this extremely important program has remained roughly level, and has not kept pace with organic sector growth and opportunity.



Investing in agricultural research is a win-win.

Every \$1 invested in public agricultural research generates \$10-\$20 in domestic economic activity.



Collin Thompson, a Community Food Systems Educator for Michigan State University Extension, testified at a Farm Bill field hearing in Michigan. Thompson outlined the important role of federal investment in agriculture research. "The critical funding we received through the Agriculture and Food Research Institute is essential to the work I do every day. I could not help growers without this support."

Small Investment, Big Impacts

Currently 0.02%, or two one-hundredths of a percent, of Farm Bill funding goes to organic research. An increased investment will support scientists and infrastructure dedicated to organic systems research, helping to boost on-farm productivity and addressing the challenges faced by American farmers. This creates jobs, economic opportunity, and stability which is good for our farmers, our rural communities and our country.

Next Steps

The bill's authors are seeking more cosponsors. We need strong bipartisan support from all regions of the country. This is the best way to ensure that the proposal makes it into the markup of the 2018 Farm Bill next year.

What You Can Do

If you are interested in signing on to co-sponsor this important legislation please reach out to Congresswoman Pingree or Congressman Newhouse.

We urge Congress to support organic agriculture by significantly increasing OREI funding in the next Farm Bill to \$50 million in order to address the research needs of the organic sector, and provide American farmers with the tools for success.

Organic agriculture continues to be one of the fastest growing sectors – creating rural economic opportunity and jobs at four times the national average.