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## Casey, Collins Introduce Legislation To Help Strengthen Organic Farming Research

**Washington, D.C.** – Organics continue to be one of the fastest growing sectors of American agriculture – providing vital support to farming families and creating jobs in communities across the country. Federal investment in organic agriculture research has not kept pace with this strong industry growth, however, and as a result domestic production of organic products is failing to meet consumer demand. To address this disconnect and help farmers benefit from the growing demand for organics, **U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA)** and **Susan Collins (R-ME)** have introduced the **Organic Agricultural Research Act of 2018**. The legislation would reauthorize and incrementally increase funding for USDA's Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative ([OREI](#)) to ensure continued investment in organic agricultural research.

"Serious investment in organic agricultural research is essential to the strength of American agriculture," **said Senator Casey**. "This legislation would help ensure that organic and conventional farms in communities across the country have the tools they need to continue to grow. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation so that we can build upon the growth we've seen for a number of years."

"Over the past five years, Maine's organic agriculture industry has grown by more than 75 percent with the support of the USDA's successful Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative," **said Senator Collins**. "Our bill would bolster federal investments in this important research program to help ensure farmers in Maine and across the country are equipped with the data, skills, and resources necessary to meet the increasing consumer demand for organic food."

Specifically, the **Organic Agricultural Research Act of 2018** would reauthorize OREI for an additional five years and gradually increase its funding from \$30 million in fiscal year 2019 to \$50 million in fiscal year 2023. Achieving this level of funding builds toward "baseline status" for the initiative, which would make it a permanent part of the Farm Bill's Research Title.

OREI is the flagship competitive organic research program at USDA, supporting applied research and extension projects that meet the needs of producers and processors that have adopted organic standards. The program helps organic and non-organic farmers alike by funding applied research projects that help growers improve their crop and livestock management skills, protect their produce from pests and diseases, ensure safe handling of fresh value-added products, and promote locally-grown options.

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