

ORGANIC TRADE ASSOCIATION

Grain, Pulse, and Oilseed Council

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



Organic
SINCE 1985
trade association

Organizational Structure & Meetings

The Organic Trade Association Grain, Pulse, and Oilseed Council is made up of member companies with a role in the organic grain space. Its members cover the entire supply chain from growers to processors to manufacturers, all of whom are committed to ensuring the resilience and profitability of organic grain, pulse, and oilseed production in the United States. The Council's main work project has been to continue the effort of the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration – a pre-competitive collaboration of organic grain companies focused on identifying and overcoming barriers to the growth of domestic organic grain acreage. The Organic Trade Association and a contract partner, Sustainable Food Lab, support the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration in its efforts.

The Grain Council met in person at the Organic Trade Association's annual Policy Conference in May 2018. At this meeting, the Grain Council received updates on the ongoing work of the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration and provided feedback to guide the development of several white papers and other projects focused on collaborative approaches to growing domestic supplies of organic grains. Members of the Organic Trade Association's Farmers Advisory Council (FAC) have also been engaged in this work to ensure that farmers are given the opportunity to provide feedback and ensure effectiveness of the Council's projects. The 2018 Policy Conference provided an opportunity for FAC and Grains Council members to take a deep dive into the world of organic grain extension research. An assessment of existing models of extension research was used to identify key elements of success, as well as gaps and other areas where improvement is needed. The Council discussed a proposal to develop a Train-the-Trainer program as a pathway for agricultural professionals working with organic row crop farmers. Clif Bar, recognizing the need for more organic farmers in their supply chain in this region, committed \$50,000 from their new CLIF Ag Fund to get the pilot started. The Council is currently seeking other companies to expand capacity. The U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration also commissioned third-party research to examine the impact of prices on organic grain production and examples of pricing mechanisms used in other sectors to address price volatility, risk, and competitiveness. The U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration hosted a half-day workshop at the Policy Conference to discuss the results and implications of the research outputs.

The U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration

Eight Organic Trade Association member companies—Annie's, Ardent Mills, Clif Bar, Grain Millers, Stonyfield, Organic Valley, King Arthur Flour, and Pipeline Foods—have

Council Members



brought forward company resources to continue the ongoing work of the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration. Contracting with Sustainable Food Lab for organizational support, the collaboration designed a work plan with several ambitious goals to continue the work of sector research, knowledge, and tool development, as well as identifying and overcoming barriers to growth in organic grain acreage in two pilot regions: Aroostook County, Maine, and the Northern Great Plains (North & South Dakota and Montana). These two locations previously had been identified as areas of interest by the members of the collaboration. In Aroostook County, Maine, the focus this year was connecting farmers with produce buyers, to make the case for a wholesale shift to organic production practices with organic grains being a critical aspect of the rotation. In the Northern Great Plains, the focus this year was ensuring existing extension staff get the training they need to support organic farmers in that region.

White Paper on Organic Grain Production

The previously published white paper¹ by the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration, which outlined the major barriers for existing and potential organic grain producers, has been widely adopted as a framework for how to improve the supply of organic grain in the U.S. This year, the collaboration endeavored to update the paper with key findings from the collaboration's recent activities and included recommendations for increased organic grain production and a more resilient system.

One of the recommendations is a need to increase availability of trusted advisor networks and improved access to organic resources for farmers. The paper highlights the need for "adaptive knowledge networks," which is a new model for extension that is principle based and expert facilitated. Rather than prescribing, they support farmers to learn and innovate together around solutions and research that have been adapted for regional conditions. The paper will also highlight the beneficial role of "train-the-trainer" programs to support crop consultants in becoming more fluent in organic practices, certification, insurance, and transition. In addition, a farmer-facing online tool is needed for centralizing and accessing organic resources and guides by region and topic.

Report on Price Management and Investment Mechanisms

This year, the collaboration endeavored to gain a better understanding of organic grain commodity cycle trends and the impact of prices on current and future organic grain production in the U.S. This paper aims to identify various price management and investment mechanisms used by supply chain actors and (financial) service providers in other sectors to support farmers. The Sustainable Food Lab has contracted with two research firms to conduct a review of historical price and production data for U.S. organic grain in the U.S., and analyze models that could cover transition costs, reduce risks related to price volatility and ensure a minimum viable price. Case studies of different types of pricing mechanisms and investment schemes will show how to apply these mechanisms to support and incentivize organic grain production.

Last year, the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration launched new crop budgeting tools to help farmers in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana plan future organic crop production and understand the economic impacts of their agronomic practices. The two cash-flow budget calculator templates, available for download at OTA.com, are great resources for organic grain farmers in the Northern Great Plains.

Market Opportunities in Aroostook County, Maine

Organic acres have increased in Aroostook since the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration began engaging in the region, but the system is still constrained by distance to market and price competitiveness. Mixing other, more profitable crops into a rotation with organic grains is a possible path to increasing organic grain production. This year, the collaboration supported market research to determine which other cash crops farmers can grow that would result in improving grain profitability, and engaged directly with farmers in the region to seek feedback on their research results, particularly regarding expansion into potato and fresh produce markets. Preliminary findings were shared with regional stakeholder at a workshop in January. More research engagement is needed to continue to share effective solutions for the region.

Farmer Mentorship in the Northern Great Plains

Among the key challenges for farmers in the Northern Great Plains (North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana) are the lack of extension support and distance between organic producers. This year, the collaboration focused its efforts to address the need for building a farmer mentorship network. A Soil Health

¹ <https://sustainablefoodlab.org/barriers-and-opportunities-the-challenge-of-organic-grain-production-in-the-northeast-midwest-and-northern-great-plains/>

Mentorship Program launched in March with five organic grain growers in North Dakota led by NRCS specialist and soil health expert Jay Fuhrer. The objective of the program is to support growers in the region with direct technical expertise and a learning and mentorship network for farmers. The results of the pilot will be used as proof of concept to secure long-term funding to continue and expand farmer mentorship programs focused on soil health management for organic farmers.

Organic Trade Association Sector Councils

Our Councils provide ongoing opportunities for networking, leadership development, and education. They communicate sector issues, ideas, and concerns to Organic Trade Association staff and Board. Submit a Sector Council application online at OTA.com after you've met these basic requirements:

- Identify at least seven Organic Trade Association members committed to participating in the Council
- Identify at least one member who will act as the primary contact until officers are elected
- Review the Council Operating Guidelines and agree to operate within the requirements required by Organic Trade Association for councils it approves.



Maintaining the momentum in 2019

In the coming year, the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration will continue to work with the Organic Trade Association Grain, Pulse, and Oilseed Council to review and finalize the reports described above, and prepare for the dissemination of the information to the broader public. These reports can be used to communicate with organic grain stakeholders and have a significant potential to inform public policy and supply chain, NGO and university programs. The collaboration, with input from the full council, will meet to evaluate which of the recommendations identified within each paper should be focus areas for the upcoming year.

A key area of work for 2019 is expected to focus on implementing the key initiatives for improving organic extension, including train-the-trainer programs and other online tools and resources. Public-private partnerships to grant and match funding for these initiatives is a great opportunity for Organic Trade Association member companies to support the work of the U.S. Organic Grain Collaboration, the Grain, Pulse, and Oilseed Council, and the Organic Trade Association.

Additionally, as the Organic Trade Association continues its work related the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill, aspects of the Farm Bill affecting grain production will continue to be vetted through the Council for its support and feedback.

The Organic Trade Association Grain, Pulse, and Oilseed Council is chaired by Matt Dillon of Clif Bar. Jonathan Reinbold of Organic Valley serves as Vice Chair, and Shauna Sadowski of Annie's is the Secretary. The Council is supported by Johanna Miranda, OTA's Farm Policy Director.



Headquarters

444 N. Capitol St. NW, Suite 445A
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 403-8520
OTA.com | info@ota.com | [@OrganicTrade](https://www.instagram.com/OrganicTrade)

Locations

Washington, D.C. | Brattleboro, VT
Santa Cruz, CA | Corvallis, OR