

2007

A Framework to Assess State Support of Certified Organic Farming

Shauna M. Bloom
University of Guelph

Leslie Duram
Southern Illinois University Carbondale, duram@siu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gers_pubs

This is an Author's Accepted Manuscript of an article published in the *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture*, Vol. 30 No. 2 (2007) [*copyright Taylor & Francis*] available online at doi: [10.1300/J064v30n02_10](https://doi.org/10.1300/J064v30n02_10)

Recommended Citation

Bloom, Shauna M. and Duram, Leslie. "A Framework to Assess State Support of Certified Organic Farming." (Jan 2007).

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Geography and Environmental Resources at OpenSIUC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications by an authorized administrator of OpenSIUC. For more information, please contact opensiuc@lib.siu.edu.

A FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS STATE SUPPORT OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Shauna M. Bloom² and Leslie A. Duram¹

¹Corresponding Author:
Department of Geography and Environmental Resources
Southern Illinois University,
Carbondale, IL 62901
duram@siu.edu

²Department of Geography
University of Guelph
Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1G 4W5
sbloom@uoguelph.ca

ABSTRACT

Support for organic farming varies from state to state, and there have been few attempts to document what types of support currently exists. This research assesses regionally specific and relevant support available to organic farmers at the state level. This exploratory study develops a framework of ten key categories of organic agricultural support: leadership, policy, research, technical support, financial support, marketing and promotion, education and information, consumer issues, inter-agency activities, and future developments. Data from state departments of agriculture, land grant universities, extension services, and other state-level agencies provide the basis for a numerical assessment of support in each category. State assessments are based on the number of activities, availability of information, and attention from personnel for each of the ten categories. A pilot study of Minnesota and Illinois was conducted to verify the utility of the framework and to explore the variation of support available within a region. This assessment framework is a valuable tool for farmers, researchers, state agencies, and citizen groups seeking to document existing types of organic agricultural support and discover topics that need more attention.

KEYWORDS: organic agriculture, organic farmers, policy, information

INTRODUCTION

The USDA-Economic Research Service (ERS) found that the major obstacles to adopting organic agricultural methods are the cost and risk associated with changing to a new way of farming, finding ways to market specialized products, and finding relevant information and

technological support (Greene and Kremen, 2003). Particularly because organic farming is based on diversification and market niches, individual decisions are fully in the hands of individual farmers (Bues and Dunlop, 1990; Ikerd, 2001). Major barriers facing organic farmers include lack of stable markets, and lack of organic farming research information (Duram 1999). Other challenges farmers face include an inability to receive crop insurance, lower subsidy payments because of diversified crops, lack of access to allowable inputs, and not receiving premium prices for the three year transition period (Walz, 1999). Additionally, the social and environmental benefits provided by organic production methods remain unrewarded because few governmental programs adequately reward organic farmers for their techniques (Lampkin and Padel, 1994; Lotter, 2003).

In order to provide relevant support to organic farmers, it is necessary to understand their personal characteristics and decision-making influences, which are both complex and individualized (Lockeretz, 1997). Organic farmers are willing to accept new ideas, enjoy the challenges that organic farming offers and the job satisfaction it provides, and more actively seek information sources (McCann et. al., 1997; Duram, 2005). Organic farming does not fit the classic model of diffusion/adoption, but has moved more slowly because organic farmers must develop new techniques and share information among themselves (Padel, 2001). In fact, farmers who quit farming organically often do so because they lack marketing support and information sources (Rigby et al., 2001).

Organic farmers rank “lack of information and personal experience” as a significant challenge to transitioning to organic production methods (Walz, 1999). Furthermore, Lockeretz (1997) found that farmers who use little or no chemicals need more information in order to implement these alternative production practices. Organic farmers receive information from a

wide variety of sources. Some of these sources are similar to the sources used by conventional farmers, but many others are not. Organic farmers rely less on public sources of information than private sources, like other farmers, certifying agents, input suppliers, books, and group activities (Walz, 1999; Duram and Larson, 2001; Lohr and Park, 2003). Public agencies, such as state departments of agriculture and extension services should use this to their advantage to create information networks and catalog information sources for farmers in a particular region (Lohr and Park, 2003). Many organic farmers preferred workshops over publications and field days and organic farmers are very interested in a long-term study on organic production methods specific to local conditions (Delate and Dewitt, 2004).

In 1997, a survey conducted by the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) found that organic farmers found most extension agents to be a barrier to production rather than a useful source of information. Indeed, there is a close attitudinal alignment between government extension agents and conventional farmers (Egri, 1999). This can hinder the ability of extension agents to give sound advice to organic farmers. In a study by Duram and Larson (2001) organic farmers ranked state departments of agriculture and the USDA as the least used sources of information. The study found that organic farmers use few, if any, government sources of information.

Government support of organic agriculture in the United States has mostly been limited to creating a national standard for certification. The USDA and some states are starting programs that are geared toward providing information about farming organically, but there is still a lack of technical support provided to organic growers by all levels of government (Scowcroft and Lipson, 2001). Despite the fact that organic research is increasing, there is still a discrepancy in the proportion of acres dedicated to certified organic research and the number of

acres farmed organically in the United States (Lipson, 1997; Sooby, 2003). The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program is part of the USDA and responsible for developing and supporting sustainable agriculture. As recent as 2003, only 19 percent of the SARE projects had organic research components (Greene and Kremen, 2003). Certified organic research is minimal at land grant universities as well. Organic research only makes up 0.02 percent of the total research done through the land grant system (Sooby, 2003).

Overall, then, organic farmers need relevant, regionally specific information and assistance, but this support appears to be lacking. While many studies have looked at information needs of organic farmers few studies have examined what is actually provided and no study captures an entire range of state support that could and should be available to organic farmers.

As an exploratory study, this research first defines “state support” of organic agriculture and then develops a tool for assessing the level of state support provided to certified organic farmers in any given state. A framework of key categories was created, along with a method for comparing support among states, based on data from state departments of agriculture, land grant universities, extension services, and other state-level agencies. The article concludes with a pilot study of two states, Minnesota and Illinois, to assess the effectiveness of the framework tool.

Components of Support and the Assessment Criteria

To develop an assessment framework, this study surveyed relevant literature and state department of agriculture websites to create a list of current organic farming support. This information was organized into categories and subcategories which became the framework for assessment. Numerical assessment of state support in every category is based on the number of

activities, availability of information, and attention from personnel, where: 0 – None, 1 – Minimal, 2 – Moderate, 3 – Extensive. In some cases, however, a variable demands more specific criteria, and these sub-categories are described below.

Keep in mind that this assessment framework was developed to be useful across many regions and is thus as general as possible with no “weighting” system given to the scores in a particular category of support. Of course, if there is a specific goal in mind, or specific needs in one region, this assessment may incorporate a scoring system. These general assessment criteria were chosen because they were relevant at the time of data collection and they provide a clear representation of the activity occurring in many states.

For this general assessment tool, there are ten main categories (Table 1). The first category is leadership, which is comprised of a mission statement, vision, and goals that encourage organic agriculture. These goals can be established by the governor, legislature, state level agencies, or university researchers. Another factor within this category is the presence of an advisory board, which typically includes people from all segments of the organic agriculture industry. The final component within the leadership category is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is an inter-agency agreement to promote organic agriculture. For the leadership category, the specific assessment ratings are:

Vision/Goal/Mission:

- 0 – None
- 1 - Facilitate development (goal to insure integrity for consumers)
- 2 – Facilitate development and provide support in general
- 3 - Increase production and provide support (specific goals)

Advisory Board

- 0 – None
- 1 – Inactive board
- 2 – In process of creating a board
- 3 – Active board

Memorandum of Understanding

- 0 – None
- 1 – Discussion started
- 2 – Process is underway
- 3 – Existing signed MOU

The second main category in the framework is policy, which includes state statutes and rules related to organic agriculture, as well as enforcement of these rules. This includes monitoring national and international organic policies and observing of the status of organic farming within the state. The existence of an approved state organic program and certification accreditation provides the state with the authority to enforce the production and certification requirements of the USDA's National Organic Standards Program. State organic programs and accreditation comes from the USDA's Organic Program, but such activities are voluntary-- states are not required to participate in either program. Most sub-categories fit the basic 0 to 3 assessment rating, but a few require specific rating criteria:

NOP approved State Organic Program

- 0 – None
- 1 – Application process begun
- 2 – In approval process
- 3 – Program approved by NOP

Accredited Certification Program

- 0 – None
- 1 – Discussion started
- 2 – Program development underway
- 3 – Certification program active

Legislation:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Legislation allowing activity but not mandated
- 2 – Mandating legislation
- 3 – Promotion of organic a component of legislation

Monitor Status:

- 0 – None

- 1 – Some data on state level activity available on website
- 2 – At least one report written
- 3 – Reports written regularly (usually biannually)

The third major assessment category is research, which can be undertaken by several state-level organizations. One of the main entities conducting agriculture research is the university land grant and extension system. Most state-level agriculture agencies such as the state department of agriculture, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other agencies have the opportunity to participate in various forms of organic research by providing funding, organizing farmer participation, or seeking on-farm experiments. Research is often initiated and carried out by farmers themselves or non-governmental organizations. A comprehensive research program should be built on a network of public agencies and non-governmental agencies, but must be farmer-driven, so the results are relevant to their on-farm demands. For the research category, the sub-categories require specific rating criteria as follows:

University/Extension

- 0 – None
- 1 – Some acreage or studies conducted but no organized effort
- 2 – Moderate amount of acreage & projects/ interaction with farmers
- 3 – At least 20 acres /interaction with farmers & students/OFRF

Research –State Department:

- 0 – None
- 1 – At least one grant for organic research in past 10 years
- 2 – Two or more projects supported
- 3 – Ongoing support

Farmer Initiated Research:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Farmer participatory research
- 2 – Farmer advisory panel
- 3 – Farmer directed research

The fourth main category is technical support, which has six sub-categories. The first is state department of agriculture personnel with duties specifically addressing organic agriculture. Other areas include assistance to growers in evaluating organic as a production option, risk management issues, developing sound business practices, and whole farm planning to manage pests, weeds, crop rotations, and soil building. Technical assistance also includes helping farmers through the three-year transition period as they shift from conventional to organic production methods. Technical assistance includes training all county level agriculture offices on organic farming methods. Finally, dealing with pesticide and GMO drift prevention and mediation is also part of technical assistance for organic farmers. The rating system for a few specific variables in the technical support category is:

Organic Specialist at the DOA:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Waiting for funding
- 2 – One position at least .5 FTE
- 3 – More than one position

Pesticide and GMO Drift

- 0 – None
- 1 – Signs suggested
- 2 – Information for purchasing signs
- 3 – Registration list/map for “Do Not Spray” areas

All other categories of technical support:

- 0 – None
- 1 - Web links/referrals to other sources
- 2 – Hands –on materials/workshops
- 3 – On-going assistance and one-on-one assistance

The fifth category is financial support. This support can come in the form of cost-share programs for certification and transitional periods¹. It also includes loan and insurance

assistance, because many organic farmers do not qualify for the typical conventional programs.

Two sub-categories require a specific rating criteria, as noted:

Certification cost-share:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Federal program, no links or application forms on webpage
- 2 – Federal program -links or application forms on webpage
- 3 – State level program in some form

Loans / Insurance:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Organic participation option within other programs
- 2 – Programs tailored for small/diversified operations including organic
- 3 – Program tailored specifically for organic producers

The sixth category is marketing and promotion, with an emphasis on linking growers and processors, as well as growers and consumers. This can be done by facilitating joint marketing ventures and production contracts, hosting tradeshow, studying consumer demand and preferences, and creating databases of growers, processors, and distributors. Farmers may need assistance in developing their own marketing strategies and making connections locally, regionally and even globally. For the marketing category, states are rated on these criteria:

All categories of Marketing:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Some activity (research completed)
- 2 – Information easily accessed and specific to the state
- 3 – Active marketing program

The seventh category is education and information sources. This includes educating conventional farmers on the benefits and opportunities for conversion, and educating current organic producers about new production methods. This is often accomplished through websites, workshops, courses, demo sites, and written materials. It could be in the form of a mentor

program that connects new organic producers with more experienced producers or a comprehensive information network. Information on certification can come in many forms, including internet sources, but should include a list of accredited certifiers in the state. In the education and information, the sub-categories that require specific rating criteria are:

Website Content:

- 0 – None
- 1 – one to four components
- 2 – five to ten components
- 3 – More than ten components

Workshops/Courses/Field days:

- 0 – None
- 1 – At least one conference/workshop/course
- 2 – Two or more conference/workshop/course
- 3 – Annual conference/workshop/course

Written/Mentor/Certification/List/Info network:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Web links/referrals to other sources
- 2 – Minimal info provided
- 3 – Easily accessed information specific to the state

The eighth category is consumer issues, which can include informing consumers about the benefits of organically produced food and providing information about where to purchase organic food. The consumer issues are closely related to marketing programs. In terms of the consumer issues category, each sub-category requires a specific rating system, as follows:

Education:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Basic information on the website
- 2 – Advertising of organic products
- 3- Comprehensive marketing campaign

Information Sources:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Basic information in the website

- 2 – Basic information and links to other sources of information
- 3 – Level 2 plus print material available

Directories:

- 0 – None
- 1 – List on website or in print form
- 2 – Searchable database
- 3 – Consumer friendly database (information on products/contact info)

The ninth category addresses inter-agency activities. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play an active role in the organic agricultural sector within some states. Many organizations work closely with state agencies and universities to conduct research and educate consumers. The focus of this category is the interaction of the state departments of agriculture with other agencies and NGOs within the state. This category also includes the grant funding that state departments of agriculture provide to other organizations to conduct research and develop new programs for organic agriculture. There may also be resources provided to organic growers and consumers from agencies other than the state department of agriculture. The inter-agency category requires specific rating criteria as noted:

Funding to other organizations:

- 0 – None
- 1 – One grant in 10 years
- 2 – Two or more in past 10 years
- 3 – Ongoing support

Interaction among agencies:

- 0 - None
- 1 – Informal
- 2 – Moderate interaction
- 3 – Organized networking/partnerships

Resources from other agencies:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Links on website/informational sheets or brochures

- 2 – Workshops and field days
- 3 – Levels one and two plus specialized support

The tenth category assesses plans for future organic agricultural initiatives. This is open to a variety of activities a state is planning to implement, but either has not received funding or has not progressed for other political reasons. Criteria for assessing future developments are:

Future Developments:

- 0 – None
- 1 – Plans developed but no action taken
- 2 – Waiting for funding
- 3 – New activities under development

Overall, then, this assessment framework details the comprehensive activities that could be undertaken to support organic agriculture at the state level. If each category and sub-category was present in a state, their total score would be 138. Few, if any, states are likely to earn the total possible points, but this framework may be used to compare the level of support from state to state and to encourage policy makers to target necessary programs within their state.

Testing the Framework

In order to test the efficacy of this assessment framework and to investigate sensitivity to variations within a region, two Midwestern states were analyzed: Minnesota and Illinois. These states are both mostly rural with one major urban center, a combination which presents unique opportunities for organic farmers, yet the two states have notable differences. Minnesota is among the top ten in certified organic operations in the country, while Illinois lags behind in terms of acreage and certified farmers (Table 2). This raises the question: how does state support of organic agriculture vary between these two Mid-western states?

To verify the utility of the assessment framework, data was collected from agricultural agency and NGO websites (IDEA 2005; Minnesota Department of Agriculture 2005) and contact with key personnel in state agencies. Telephone interviews were also conducted with the personnel listed on the National Organic Program website as contacts for organic information in each state. These interviews were conducted to verify information and gain further insight. Additional data were collected from the *State of the States* report conducted by the Organic Farming Research Foundation (Sooby, 2003). The West Law database was utilized to obtain information on state statutes and rules pertaining to organic food and agriculture. Once data was collected on each state's organic agricultural activities, this information was analyzed and sorted by sub-category, then points were tallied for each of the ten main categories. The assessment framework shows clear differences in organic agricultural support between the two states (Figure 1).

Leadership for organic farming includes three types of support: vision, advisory board and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Minnesota is one of the only states in the Midwest to have signed an MOU, an agreement between multiple agencies to cooperate in providing resources that promote organic agriculture. Indeed, Minnesota provides all three types of leadership support, while Illinois does not provide any.

Policy support could consist of a National Organic Program (NOP) approved program, a certification program, legislation, and monitoring of the status of organic production within the state. Neither state has a NOP approved state organic programs and they are not planning to submit an application at this time. The main purpose of a NOP approved program is to assume the responsibility of enforcing the Organic Food Production Act which requires a substantial financial commitment. State legislation is also a component of this category, but must be viewed

with caution. Illinois statute, for example, allows the state DOA to develop a certification program, but no action has been taken or is planned in the future. Minnesota, on the other hand, has legislation that deals with registered certifiers, producers, handlers, and processors; a review panel and advisory board, and the state issues a report every two years detailing the progress that has been made both in support and in production of organic agriculture

The main agencies conducting research in organic agriculture at the state level are the land grant universities and extension services. The assessment was based on the number of research acres dedicated to organic agriculture, the number of on-going projects, and the amount of interaction and outreach with farmers and students. Research programs that are well integrated and connected with farmers and agricultural professionals in the state, as is the case in Minnesota, the impact is greater and the amount of actual support is more meaningful. Other components are the number of research projects supported by the state departments of agriculture and the amount of farmer participation in the research. Both Illinois and Minnesota State Departments of Agriculture have supported organic agriculture research through grant programs in the past ten years.

States with strong technical support have information available in a variety of forms and include some hands-on assistance. An important step, as Minnesota has recognized, is the effort to train all agricultural professionals in at least the basics of organic production and educate them about useful resources to gather more information on organic production methods. This provides resources that were previously useful only to conventional farmers, and makes them accessible and relevant to organic farmers. Minnesota has a diversification specialist in the department of agriculture that devotes at least 85% of her time on organic production. Illinois does not have a

position dedicated to organic production and does not assign any personnel hours specifically to organic production.

Currently, very little financial support is offered to organic producers in any state. The three-year transition period is especially difficult for farmers and often dissuades farmers from converting to organic methods. Note that one of the most relevant programs available, EQIP, is a county level program and thus could not be included in this assessment. Indeed, the only state-level financial assistance is a certification cost-share program with funds made available through the USDA. Illinois earned points as a result of their efforts in promoting the cost-share program and making the application process easily accessible. Minnesota also has a state-level cost-share program in addition to the federal funds and a low-interest loan program specifically designed for sustainable and organic farmers to make on-farm improvements. At this time, neither state has a program to offset the risk farmers take on during the transition period. They also lack programs to make crop insurance available for organic crops.

Marketing support can include a wide variety of activities ranging from maintaining databases of producers, and processors, to developing a comprehensive marketing campaign. Indeed, Minnesota maintains an online database of growers and distributors that assists farmers in marketing their crops and livestock. Minnesota also has a marketing campaign to promote local organic food. Illinois has limited resources to help farmers market their organic products.

Organic agricultural education includes informing conventional farmers about converting to organic methods and helping organic farmers who want to learn new techniques. Because successful production methods vary by region, it is important to provide information that is tailored to a given area, and this is accomplished in Minnesota. One of the most meaningful aspects of the education category is to provide farmers with opportunities to exchange

information. This may be accomplished through a mentoring program, a web-based list-serve for farmers, and regular field days—all of which are offered in Minnesota.

Making the resources easily accessible to farmers is important as well. Both states have some information on their state department of agriculture website. In most states, the majority of the agricultural education opportunities and information resources occur through the extension service. For organic agriculture, however, this model is not always valid. In Minnesota, for example, the state department of agriculture provides many of the resources themselves or in conjunction with the extension service. Educational opportunities include workshops, field days, handbooks, brochures, and information sheets, as well as informational networks and mentoring programs.

Consumer issues include educating shoppers about organic food and labels, as well as information on where to buy organic food. Minnesota provides some consumer information on their state department of agriculture website and has provided funding for a marketing and outreach program to educate consumers on organic food. Illinois does not have any state-level education activities in place.

Inter-agency activities include state department funding to outside organizations, interaction among agencies and organizations, and resources provided by other state level agencies. Illinois received points because several state agencies, such as extension services and land grant universities have provided information resources to organic farmers. Illinois tends to refer farmer requests to outside resources for information on organic methods. Minnesota's agriculture department provides funding to several agricultural organizations and makes an effort to exchange information and work with these NGOs and other state agencies to maximize

support for organic farmers. Much of Minnesota's interagency activity is based on a network of agency personnel and farmers utilizing a list-serve, meetings, and conference calls.

Future developments include all activities that are planned, but are not actually in place yet, due to budgetary and personnel constraints. Illinois and Minnesota both have additional organic farming programs planned, which they hope to implement but they are waiting on funding from grants or state legislation budget allocations. In Illinois, the state department plans to become more active in organic agriculture and has applied jointly with the University of Illinois and the Illinois Stewardship Alliance for several new grants through the USDA. The grants would provide the funding to create educational opportunities for transitioning farmers and the creation of a distribution system with an emphasis on getting products from rural areas to urban markets. Minnesota is focusing on maintaining the support they have created and expanding marketing efforts as well as support during the transition time.

Overall, then, Minnesota scored 119 points (86%,) while Illinois earned 35 (25%) of the total possible points. This single application of the assessment framework shows that even states in the same region can vary greatly in their support of organic agriculture. And such variation in state-level support seems to impact the number of certified organic acres in a state (Table 2). This type of assessment tool is relevant and could be useful for many state governments and agricultural groups seeking to gauge their particular state's resources. Of course the situation is not static, and assessments must remain current to gain validity. In Illinois, for example, there are recent efforts from the land grant university to provide support for organic producers. The University of Illinois Extension and several university faculty members have created an organic task force to identify areas of need within the organic community. Several projects have

stemmed from this task force including listening sessions with farmers, a study on the market potential of organic products, and an organic production workshop.

Minnesota has full support in four categories and at least half in all categories. The support in Minnesota initiates from the state department of agriculture, the University of Minnesota, extension services, and many other state agencies and non-governmental organizations. Although the support is spread among the various entities, there is a concerted effort to make the support as seamless as possible. A few noteworthy types of support offered by the state of Minnesota include a farmer information exchange network to encourage mentoring, a training course for agriculture professionals in the state, a comprehensive website, a state level cost-share program, and many opportunities for farmer input into the support offered.

Conclusion

This assessment tool is broadly applicable. Farmers would use the list of 10 categories and 46 subcategories as a check sheet to learn about the activities in their state. Researchers may analyze data within this assessment framework to discover areas that need further research attention. State governments should use this assessment tool to determine activities and policies that need implementation. Citizen groups may be interested in comparing their state's activities to other states in their region.

In this study, a few things become clear based on the study of two Midwestern states. Strong support in the leadership and policy categories creates an atmosphere of encouragement for state agency personnel. When those with power over the state departments of agriculture (state legislation, governors, agency directors, etc.) recognize organic agriculture as an important goal, it encourages and provides opportunities to agricultural professionals to create more

organic farming programs. The impetus for initiating state support often occurs when farmers come forward and make their needs known to state government, departments of agriculture, land grant universities, and extension services.

Another important facet of support is the interaction, collaboration, and networking that exists between agricultural professionals, researchers, and farmers in the state. This leads to support that is tailored to the current and ever changing needs of the organic industry present in any given state. In this enabling environment, agriculture professionals who are interested in organic agriculture can make it more of a priority and create more opportunities for farmer support. It is important that agriculture professionals and organic advisory boards continually monitor the needs of the organic industry and adjust support accordingly. Incorporating farmers in the decision-making process, ensures that their needs are addressed and provides more effective support.

The criteria, and the framework itself, can be adjusted for regional differences and changes over time, in order to provide a relevant and meaningful assessment for any given state. For example, this framework could be tailored to the needs of a specific region or agricultural type: an analysis of an urbanized state or an assessment of support for organic dairy operations may necessitate the ranking (“weighting”) of some specific subcategories. The framework presented here provides the general basis for a state assessment (with the 0-3 rating system), but an assessment could be focused by assigning other numerical ratings to specific variables of interest.

Determining types of support to be provided to organic producers can be difficult for agriculture professionals because the needs of organic farmers are very different from conventional farmers. The assessment framework developed here provides a useful tool for

determining what support exists within a state and what areas need improvement. It can also be used as a mechanism for sharing ideas among states and improving the overall success of organic agriculture.

Footnote

¹ While our assessment focuses on the state level, it is worth noting that county policies may encourage the adoption of organic methods. For example, in June 2005, the Iowa county of Woodbury adopted the Organics Conversion Policy, which provides property tax rebates for those who convert from conventional to organic farming practices.

REFERENCES

- Beus, Curtis E. and Riley E. Dunlop. 1990. Conventional Versus Alternative Agriculture: The Paradigmatic Roots of the Debate. *Rural Sociology* 55(4): 590-616.
- Delate, Kathleen, and Jerald Dewitt. 2004. Building a farmer-centered land grant university organic agriculture program: A Midwestern partnership. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 19(2):80-91.
- Duram, Leslie A. 1999. Factors in organic farmers' decision-making: Diversity, challenge, and obstacles. *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* 14(1): 2-10.
- Duram, Leslie A. 2005. *Good Growing: Why Organic Farming Works*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. 250 pp.
- Duram, Leslie A., and Kelli L. Larson. 2001. Agriculture Research and Alternative Farmers' Information Needs. *Professional Geographer* 53(1):84-96.
- Egri, Carolyn P. 1999. Attitudes, Backgrounds, and Information Preferences of Canadian Organic and Conventional Farmers: Implications for Organic Farming Advocates and Extension. *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture* 13(3): 45-73.
- Greene, C. and Kremen, A. 2003. U.S. Organic Farming in 200-2001: Adoption of Certified Systems. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Resource Economics Division, *Agriculture Information Bulletin* No. 780. Washington D.C.
- Greene, C. 2004. Recent Trends on Organic Production. *Agricultural Forum Outlook* Presented February 19, 2004. (www.ers.usda.gov).
- Ikerd, John. 2001. Corporate Agriculture and Family Farms. Presented at National Conference of Block and Bridle. St. Louis Missouri, January 20, 2001.
- IDEA (Initiative for the Development of Entrepreneurs in Agriculture). 2005. University of Illinois Extension. (<http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/iidea/>)
- Lipson, M. 1997. *Searching for the "O-Word": Analyzing Current Research Information System for Pertinence to Organic Farming*. Santa Cruz CA: Organic Farming Research Foundation.
- Lockeretz, William. 1997. Diversity of Personal and Enterprise Characteristics among Organic Growers in the Northeastern United States. *Biological Agriculture and Horticulture* 14:13-24.
- Lohr, Luanne and Timothy Park. 2003. Improving Extension Effectiveness for Organic Clients: Current Status and Future Directions. *Journal of Agriculture and Resource Economics* 28(3):634-650.

- Lotter, Donald. 2003. Organic Agriculture. *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture* 21(4) 59-128.
- Mccann, Elizabeth, Shannon Sullivan, Donna Erickson, and Raymond De Young. 1997. Environmental Awareness, Economic Orientation, and Farming Practices: A Comparison of Organic and Conventional Farmers. *Environmental Management* 21(5): 747-758.
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture. 2005. From Farm to Your Family. (<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic/default.htm>).
- Padel, Susanne. 2001. Conversion to Organic Farming: A Typical Example of the Diffusion of an Innovation? *Sociologia Ruralis* 41(1): 40-61.
- Rigby, Dan and D. Cáceres. 2001. Organic Farming and the Sustainability of Agricultural Systems. *Agricultural Systems* 68:21-40.
- Scrowcroft, B., Lipson, M., Sooby, J. 2000. *State of the States: Organic Farming Systems Research at Land Grant Institutions 2000-2001*. Santa Cruz CA: Organic Farming Research Foundation. 64 pp.
- Sooby, Jane. 2003. *State of the States: Organic Farming Systems Research at Land Grant Institutions, 2001-2003*. 2d. ed. Santa Cruz CA: Organic Farming Research Foundation. 134 pp.
- Walz, Erica. 1999. *Final Results of the Third Biennial National Organic Farmers' Survey*, Santa Cruz CA: Organic Farming Research Foundation. 126 pp.

Received:

Revised:

Accepted:

Table 2. Illinois and Minnesota: Organic Land Use Information

State	Certified Acreage 2001	Certified Operations 2002	Percent of Total Operations 2002	Certifiers Active by state 2001
Illinois	21,324	152	0.2	8
Minnesota	103,297	397	0.5	8

Sources: USDA 2002; Greene and Kremen. 2003

Table 1. Framework to Assess a State's Organic Agricultural Support

1	I. Leadership (9 Points*)	43	VI. Marketing and Promotion (27)
2	Vision/Goals/Mission	44	Help connect growers and processors
3	Advisory Board	45	Assist in joint marketing ventures
4	Memorandum of Understanding	46	Research demand/ consumer preferences
5		47	Assistance in developing market strategies
6	II. Policy (12)	48	Trade shows
7	NOP approved and accredited	49	Distributors List
8	State Statutes or Rules	50	Local
9	Monitor national/ international policies	51	Domestic
10	Monitor progress/status	52	International
11		53	
12	III. Research (9)	54	VII. Education and Information (27)
13	University/Extension	55	Website
14	State grants for research	56	Workshops
15	Farmer initiated	57	Courses/Field Days
16		58	Written Material
17	IV. Technical Support (24)	59	Mentor Program
18	Organic specialist	60	Display or Demo Plots
19	Certification process	61	Certification Information
20	Help growers evaluate organic option	62	List of accredited certifiers
21	Develop business plan/ Risk management	63	Information network
22	Transition programs	64	
23	Training county offices	65	VIII. Consumer Issues (9)
24	Farm plans: pest/rotation/soil building	66	Education
25	Pesticide and GMO drift prevention	67	Information sources
26		68	Directories
27	V. Financial Support (9)	69	
28	Transition Period	70	IX. Inter-Agency Activities (9)
29	Certification cost share program	71	Funding to NGOs
30	Loan programs	72	Interaction among agencies
31	Insurance	73	Resources from other groups
32		74	
33		75	Future Developments (3)
34		76	
35		77	
36	<i>*Points Possible noted by Main Category</i>	78	
37	<i>3 Points Possible for each Sub-Category;</i>	79	
38	<i>138 Total Points Possible</i>	80	
39		81	
40			
41			
42			

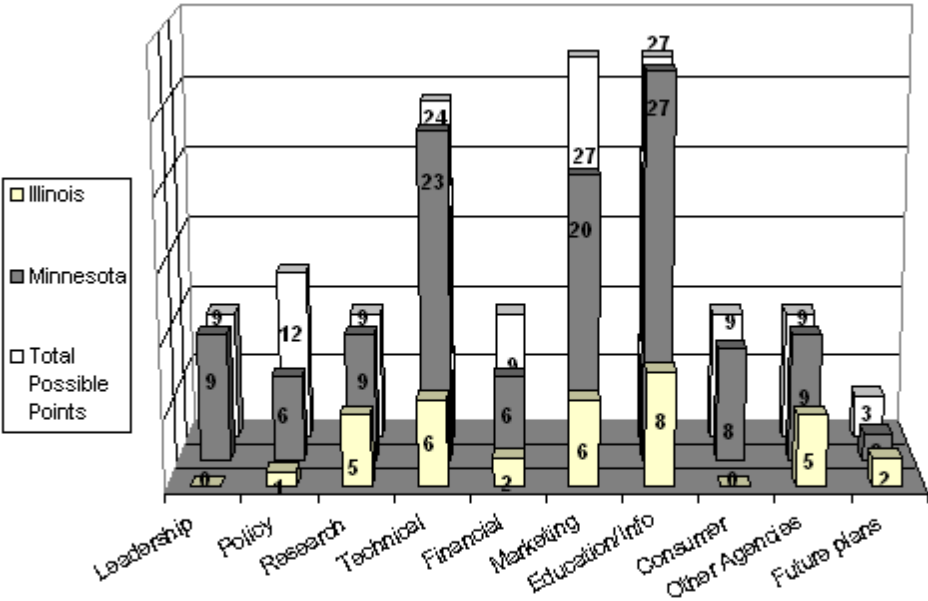


Figure 1. Categories of Support in Minnesota and Illinois