



2008 Organic Production Survey

Cooperating with the Montana Department of Agriculture
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2008 Montana Organic Production Survey Results

Results are now available from the 2008 Organic Production Survey (OPS). The 2008 OPS, the USDA's first-ever, wide-scale survey of U.S. organic producers, was a follow-on survey to the 2007 Census of Agriculture. The information was released in response to the growing interest in organics among consumers, farmers, business, policymakers, and others.

This survey counted 14,540 organic farms and ranches in the U.S., comprising 4.1 million acres of land. Of these acres, 1.6 million were harvested cropland and 1.8 million acres were pasture or rangeland. This count includes farms that were either USDA-certified organic or those that were exempt from certification based on having sales less than \$5,000.

Montana has 173 certified or exempt organic farms totaling nearly 285 thousand organic acres. There are about 168 thousand acres of organic cropland, 91 thousand of which were harvested, and approximately 117 thousand acres of organic pastureland in the state.

In MT, 2008 organic sales totaled \$25.4 million, and total gross sales of value-added organic products were \$1.9 million. Sales from the biggest field crops in the state (barley, winter wheat, spring wheat, and durum wheat) accounted for approximately \$21.3 million or about 84 percent of total organic sales. Sales from all vegetables, potatoes, and melons were about \$183 thousand, while organic fruit and tree nuts sales in MT were about \$141 thousand. Berry sales were about \$51 thousand. Montana's 2008 biggest organic livestock inventory was cattle, and all organic cattle sales totaled over \$1.2 million.

Over 53 percent of MT producers sold their products regionally (between 100 and 500 miles away), and about 31 percent sold their products locally or within 100 miles from the farm. Most farmers had wholesale market sales. Sixty percent of sales were to processors, mills, or packers and about 16 percent were to distributors, wholesalers, or brokers. A small percentage of sales were through other outlets such as farmers' markets, on-site sales, or deliveries to supermarkets.

Total organic production expenses in MT on certified and exempt organic farms were about \$12.7 million, or an average of \$73,519 per farm. Survey respondents indicated that they face various challenges, including regulatory, production, management and marketing issues. Despite these challenges, more than 79 percent of MT producers indicated that they plan to maintain or increase their organic production over the next five years.

For more detailed organic information on either the U.S. or state level, go to http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/Organics/. A full publication is available online with more facts. You can also call the Montana Field Office at 1-800-835-2612 and ask for Lindsey Houska for more information.