



# News Release

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**In Cooperation with:**

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Sandra Adams, Commissioner

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## Tobacco leads the way in Virginia's growing organic market

**RICHMOND, Va.** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released its 2015 Certified Organic Production Report today from the survey conducted earlier this year. The survey queried all known USDA-certified organic farms across Virginia.

“The number of USDA-certified organic farms and the value of sales have more than doubled since the last time only certified farms were surveyed in 2011,” said Herman Ellison, Virginia state statistician. “Consumer demand for organic products has been beneficial for Virginia farmers.”

In 2015, Virginia's USDA certified organic farms sold a total of \$49.1 million in organically produced commodities, including \$27.8 million in crops sales and \$18.3 million in sales of livestock, poultry and their products.

“Consumers are most familiar with food products, but in the Commonwealth, tobacco generates the most value,” Ellison said. “Poultry, milk and vegetable products are also very valuable for farmers.”

Tobacco sales totaled \$18.7 million, or 38 percent of all sales. Broilers and milk followed with \$9.5 million and \$7.2 million in sales, respectively. Vegetables and other crops round out the top five. Average sales were \$353,209 per farm.

There were 139 certified organic farms in 2015, comprising 23,453 acres of land. Sixty-four percent, or 14,984 acres, is cropland, and 8,469 is in pasture or rangeland. An additional 2,295 acres are transitioning to organic production on certified farms.

In Virginia, 35 percent of the farms sold at least some products directly to consumers, via farm stands, farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), and other arrangements. Fourteen percent sold to retail or food service, and 73 percent of farms used wholesale markets. Thirteen farms sold products through a CSA.

Of the 139 operators, 31 percent have been farming less than 10 years, and 42 percent have grown or raised certified organic products less than five years. Seventy-three farms plan to increase production during the next five years and 51 expect to maintain production.

The 2015 Certified Organic Production Report provides acreage, production and sales data for a variety of certified organic crops and inventory and sales data for certified organic livestock commodities. The 2015 Certified Organic Production Survey included all known farm operators who produced certified organic crops and/or livestock.

To learn more about this and other NASS surveys and corresponding data in Virginia, visit [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Virginia/](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Virginia/). To sign up to be counted in the Census and other surveys, visit <https://www.agcounts.usda.gov/cgi-bin/counts/>.