

Q: Do you have any new or updated information about organic agriculture?

A: Yes! In September of this year the USDA released results from the nationwide 2014 Organic Survey, which is a special study conducted as part of the Census of Agriculture. There is a lot of really interesting information about organic agriculture at the national and state level with details about certified farms, exempt farms (defined as those engaged in organic agriculture but that have less than \$5,000 in annual sales), and operations that are transitioning to organic. Not surprisingly, California figures prominently in the report, with more farms and acreage in organic production than any other state, and the highest value of sales in the nation. Here are a few highlights.

2014 US and California organic agriculture (certified and exempt farms)

	US	California	CA as percent of total US
Number of farms	14,093	2,805	20
Acres operated	3,670,560	687,168	19
Value of all products sold (\$1,000)*	\$ 5,454,979	\$ 2,231,241	41
Value of crops sold (\$1,000)**	\$ 3,290,188	\$ 1,659,305	50

* Value of products sold is before taxes and/or production costs.

** Value of crops sold includes nursery and greenhouse.

Organic crops represent about 60 percent of the total value of all organic products sold in the US; the remaining 40 percent is for livestock and poultry, and livestock and poultry products. For California, the percent of organic crops is higher, at 74 percent of the total value, with the remaining 26 percent in livestock, poultry, and products. California's organic vegetables, potatoes, and melons are valued at \$847 million, or 68 percent of the US total. California is also shown to produce the vast majority of organic blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries in the US, along with the highest value of products sold in these categories in the nation.

The Survey includes information on production practices used in organic agriculture, for example, the use of biological pest management, the release of beneficial insects, and the use of compost. Marketing practices are also reported, including types of sales outlets and information on the first point of sale. Production challenges are highlighted, with farmers noting regulatory problems as their most pressing issue.

Finally, the Survey asked farmers if they plan to increase, maintain, decrease, or discontinue organic production in the next five years. In both the US and California about 80 percent of respondents indicated that they will increase or maintain their current level of organic production.

This is only a small sampling of the detail and information available. The full survey can be accessed at: http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/Organics/