

Previewing his path forward for organic and pledging to elevate the significance and importance of organic agriculture at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Secretary Tom Vilsack kicked off the Annual Membership Meeting of the [Organic Trade Association](#) on Wednesday.

Speaking live at the virtual meeting to over 250 members of the trade association, Vilsack laid out a forward-looking agenda for the organic sector.

Addressing positively the majority of the Organic Trade Association's priorities for the Biden administration, Vilsack vowed to "build a solid trust foundation" between USDA and the nation's organic farmers and stakeholders.

"I understand and appreciate, that we've got some work to do in rebuilding the trust between the Department and the [organic] industry. And I am committed to that. And those who work at USDA are committed to that," said Vilsack.

Other actions Vilsack announced included re-establishing the position of USDA Organic Policy Advisor; increasing by "tens of millions of dollars" the funds available through USDA's Organic Certification Cost Share program to help farmers transitioning to organic; and beefing up organic enforcement and "expanding the number and the diversity of those who will be involved in inspections and certifications.

He also plans to expand the procurement for USDA's emergency feeding programs to "small- and medium-sized distribution systems," and giving "socially disadvantaged producers" access to more federal procurement dollars; and prioritize climate-smart agriculture and regenerative practices.

"We are working hard to protect the [organic] brand and to expand a number of issues and opportunities for the organic industry...all designed to provide a strong message of the significance and importance that I place personally, and that the department places on this industry," said Vilsack.

"We recognize the importance of it, we recognize the value-added opportunities that it presents, and we think it is an important-- a very important part of the industry that will help us to a much better, climate-friendly agriculture."