

The USDA has said it will invest up to \$300 million into a new Organic Transition Initiative.

The initiative, which is part of the USDA Food System Transformation Framework, will “provide comprehensive support for farmers to transition to organic production”, according to a statement from the USDA.

Organic Trade Association (OTA) CEO and Executive Director Tom Chapman described the investment as “historic” as it “increases options for American farmers to ‘adopt practices that are both good for their businesses and the climate,’ [which] is a significant win for our industry.”

The USDA seconded this, describing how “organic production provides producers with the ability to demand a premium in the marketplace and thus take home a greater share of the food dollar; there can also be climate and environmental benefits.”

The OTA's CEO pointed out that the “USDA's new Organic Transition Initiative will jumpstart that growth by making the organic transition process more accessible and impactful; particularly for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, who experience unique challenges to accessing resources and support programs.”

Organic-specific technical assistance, market development, and updates to USDA farm programs for conservation, crop insurance, and certification cost-share programs are all core components advocated by the OTA that will all be included into the new program.

“This initiative will deliver wrap-around technical assistance, including farmer-to-farmer mentoring; provide direct support through conservation financial assistance and additional crop insurance assistance and support market development projects in targeted markets,” the USDA emphasized.

Trade association members emphasized the importance of these critical components in listening sessions and working groups that took place over the course of the last year, culminating in an in-person transition listening session with USDA at Organic Week 2022.