

# ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS



At present there are about 200 certified organic producers in Illinois. Most of these are small farms that cater to Illinois consumers through direct marketing. Larger farm acreages, historically devoted to cash grains, are increasingly serving organic markets for specialty grains and are reintegrating livestock into their systems. Illinois farmers presently supply only a fraction of the local demand for organic and/or sustainably grown food. Increased access to technical information and suitable processing and distribution channels are needed to help this sector grow.



We are working on cover crop management.  
Photo: Black magic roller by Dale Mutch

To be 'organic' farmers comply with USDA's National Organic Program guidelines and government-approved certifiers inspect farms where organic food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules. Companies that handle or process organic food, before it gets to your local supermarket or restaurant, must be certified too. Farms that do not comply with the full set of organic standards, including certification when sales exceed \$5000, are not organic and can be fined if they present themselves as such. Farms using natural or sustainable techniques, may or may not be using methods consistent with organic principles. Many smaller farms that market directly to consumers use their personal interactions, instead of certification, to educate their customers about their production practices and product quality.

## Research on Organic and Sustainable Agriculture



Scientists are studying weeds, disease and soil ecology at the Windsor Organic Research Trial

UIUC and our research partners are conducting research to answer questions about organic and sustainable agriculture, where sustainable practices are defined to be those that are socially supportive, commercially competitive, and environmentally sound. The relationship between specific production, processing and marketing practices and agricultural sustainability remains an open and interesting question.

Researchers are investigating all aspects of *production practices and cropping system management* suitable for organic and sustainable agriculture. Work considers disease, weed and pest control measures, nutrient management, livestock husbandry, and the influence of organic and alternative practices on soil and water quality and green house gas emissions.



Marketing and consumer behavior studies

Scientists from the Illinois Natural History Survey and the University of Illinois are working, with the advice of experienced organic farmers, on the *Windsor Organic Research Trial (WORT)*. The study investigates transition paths and their influence on crops, insects, weeds, disease, and soil ecology. WORT will be Certified Organic in 2006.

Researchers are also studying the *social and economic dimensions* of organic and sustainable agriculture. Among other things, researchers address community issues, aspects of marketing and consumer behavior, regulatory policies, and conservation programs.



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Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## We Can Help You Find Out More About

- Growing or raising plants and animals using organic and sustainable methods;
- Weed, insect, and disease diagnosis and control, as well as soil nutrient, and plant and animal management;
- Reducing the environmental footprint of your growing/gardening operation, to reduce the negative affects of growing plants or raising animals on air and water quality;
- The economics of organic and sustainable practices;
- How organic and fresh foods can enhance your health;
- Where you can get organic and fresh local produce;
- How agricultural practices influence the environment; and
- Who to contact for additional information on certification or find suitable inputs.

## Consumers and Producers

*Annual Illinois Organic Production Conference* was developed by the Illinois Organic Task Force (Illinois Extension) in response to the demand for useful information on organic production. For more information, go to the conference website at [www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/orgconf/](http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/orgconf/).

*ASAP Summer Field Tours* provide opportunities to gain practical knowledge from successful farmers and other food entrepreneurs, on real farm settings. For more information go to [www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/](http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap/).

*New Agriculture Network* is a collaborative project between UIUC, Michigan State, Purdue, and Iowa State Universities, and organic growers in these states to facilitate information exchange between researchers and organic growers. For more information visit the website at [www.ipm.msu.edu/new-ag.htm](http://www.ipm.msu.edu/new-ag.htm).

*Farm Beginnings* is an educational training program designed for new and established farmers interested in learning how to farm sustainably. For more information go to [www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu](http://www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu).

## Education

Students can pursue related undergraduate and graduate studies in all ACES departments, and participate in classes during the semester, or in summer research/farming efforts.

## Contact Information for ASAP

For more detailed information on these projects and other organic resources contact us at:

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