

# NORTH DAKOTA ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

## WHAT IS ORGANIC AGRICULTURE?

The USDA National Organic Standards Board defines organic agriculture as “an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity, which is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain and enhance ecological harmony.”

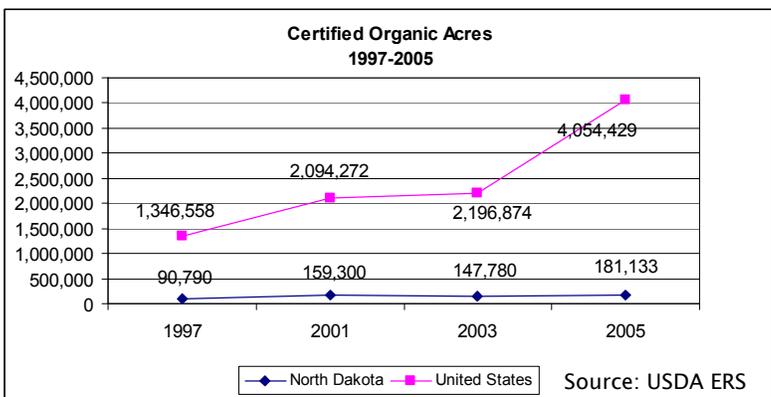
Organic farming emphasizes the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation. Before a product can be labeled “organic,” a Government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it gets to your local supermarket or restaurant must be certified, too. These inspections take place each year to ensure the organic standards are met.

It should be noted that the terms “natural” and “organic” are not interchangeable. The USDA defines “natural” as a product containing no artificial ingredients or added color and is only minimally processed.

## NORTH DAKOTA FACTS

According to the USDA ERS, North Dakota had total of 159 certified organic farms in 2005, which is down from a high of 176 farms in 2001. North Dakota ranks second in the number of certified organic cropland acres.

North Dakota is by far the leader in production of oilseeds (flax & sunflowers), producing 50 percent of the total U.S. production. The state also leads the nation in production of organic oats and buckwheat. North Dakota ranks second in the production of rye, dry peas and lentils.



North Dakota Certified Organic Crops						
	2001		2003		2005	
	Acres	ND Rank	Acres	ND Rank	Acres	ND Rank
Total Oilseeds	20,243	1	14,334	1	22,900	1
Total Grains	63,880	1	56,306	2	45,193	4
Total Beans	27,705	3	11,090	6	9,655	5

Source: USDA ERS

As of 2006, 30 companies in North Dakota are organically certified to handle and/or process organic products. These companies are diverse in size, ranging from commercial scale food processors to value-added on-farm processing plants, and products, ranging from meat slaughter to flour milling.

For more information visit the North Dakota Agriculture Department’s website <http://www.agdepartment.com/Organic/StatusOrganicAgND.htm>.