

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 12, 2026

The Honorable Richard Fordyce
Under Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Under Secretary Fordyce:

We write to urge you to promptly release Fiscal Year 2025 and 2026 cost share funding for the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) at the full reimbursement levels authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill.

Organic farmers and food manufacturers voluntarily opt into organic certification, which prohibits the use of most synthetic pesticides, artificial flavors and colors, and growth hormones. NOCCSP helps small and midsize farms defray the cost of the rigorous organic standards trusted by consumers.

There is strong and growing consumer demand for organic products. Inflation-adjusted organic retail sales grew at a compounded annual rate exceeding 7 percent from 2012 to 2023, with total annual sales now surpassing \$70 billion annually.¹ Despite growing demand, certified organic acreage has declined in recent years.²

Many farmers cite certification expenses as a major barrier to entering or staying in organic production. USDA's FY 2023 report to Congress showed that USDA's Farm Service Agency and State agencies distributed more than \$7.4 million in NOCCSP funds to 10,522 organic operations nationwide.³ By offsetting certification costs, the cost share program is one of the most direct ways USDA can deliver on its commitment to reduce financial burdens on small farms, expand domestic organic production, and keep U.S. farmers competitive in a growing market.

U.S. organic operations have not yet received their 2025 cost-share reimbursements, which are typically available in July. As a result, farms are currently carrying the full certification cost out of pocket. This delay increases financial strain, forces some businesses to postpone organic certification renewal, and risks accelerating the decline in U.S. organic farms and acreage at a time when demand for organic food continues to grow.

¹ Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Organic Situation Report, 2025 Edition* (February 2025) (online at https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/_laserfiche/publications/110884/EIB-281.pdf?v=83631)

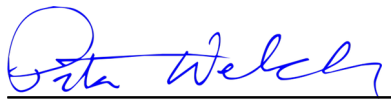
² *Ibid.*

³ Farm Service Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Organic Certification Cost Share Programs (OCCSP) 2023 Annual Report to Congress* (2023) (online at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/documents/organic-certification-cost-share-programs-occsp-2023-annual-report-congress>)

This outcome runs counter to our shared goals of bolstering domestic production, supporting family farms, and increasing access to healthy food. We urge you to ensure that Fiscal Year 2025 and 2026 cost share funding is made available as soon as possible at the full reimbursement levels authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill. Prompt action is essential to maintain organic farm viability and uphold the integrity and competitiveness of the U.S. organic sector.

We look forward to your timely response to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator