

The State of Organic Seed

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Abstract

How seed is bred, produced, and managed affects the health of people and our planet, and the success of farmers and future generations. The organic seed movement is creating systems that adhere to the principles of diversity, fairness, health, and shared benefit, ensuring our plant genetic diversity remains in the hands of people, not patent holders. In this way, the organic community is committing to seed that's different from the biotechnology and chemical industry, which emphasize genetic uniformity, chemical production systems, and privatization.

The Organic Seed Alliance (OSA) is monitoring the success of organic seed systems in the U.S. and just completed a five-year update to its State of Organic Seed report. The report answers questions such as these: Do farmers have enough organic seed? What are our nation's organic plant breeding priorities? How are certifiers enforcing the organic seed requirement? How much of our tax dollars support organic seed research?

In 2014, we conducted our second organic producer survey for this five-year update. The survey assesses producers' attitudes and perceptions regarding organic seed, as well as their current use of organic seed and any obstacles that restrict organic seed sourcing, among many other topics. In addition to these surveys, OSA hosted eight listening sessions this past winter at organic farming conferences to gather additional input to inform our recommendations. An analysis of public investments in organic seed research and surveys of accredited certifying agencies (ACAs) and seed companies were conducted to better understand organic seed investments, organic seed enforcement issues and trends in organic seed exemptions. An updated State of Organic Seed report will be published in 2016.

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