

Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 Horticulture and Organic Agriculture Titles

Title X – Horticulture and Organic Agriculture_ of the 2008 farm bill consists of four subtitles: Horticulture Marketing and Information, Pest and Disease Management, Organic Agriculture, and Miscellaneous.

Please keep in mind these bullets are short descriptions of the various components of the bill and are not intended to be all inclusive. Further details can be found by reviewing the bill in its entirety or by reviewing notes and analysis conducted by various organizations and/or governmental agencies. The source for the following bullets is: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/FarmBill/2008/Titles/TitleXHorticulture.htm>.

Specific programs within these titles include:

- Specialty crop competitiveness – this is a continuation of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 which was never funded. The purpose was to increase the supply of highly nutritious fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops for American consumers. Funding was to be distributed through state administered grants.
- Pest eradication and detection – funds were to be available to states for several programs including Early Plant Pest Detection and Surveillance Improvement Program, Threat Identification and Mitigation Program and Specialty Crop Certification and Risk Management Systems. Each of these programs was designed to identify early, access risks, and mitigate and/or prevent those risks related to plant pests and diseases.
- National clean plant network – creates a network to house clean plant material to be used by private nurseries and producers.
- Pest and disease revolving loan fund – provides funds to local governments to finance purchases

of equipment to monitor, remove, dispose of, and replace infested trees.

- Food safety education initiatives – establishes program to educate persons involved in the fresh produce industry, and the public, about sanitary handling practices and ways to reduce pathogens in fresh produce.
- Market news activities (specialty crops) – expands market news activities to provide timely price information on fruits and vegetables.
- Farmers' market promotion program – adds an agri-tourism promotion program and requires at least ten percent of funds to be used to support use of electronic benefit transfers from Federal nutrition programs at farmers' markets.
- Grants to improve transportation – authorizes grants to improve cost-effectiveness and current transportation deficiencies related to transportation of specialty crops to local, regional, and international markets.
- Miscellaneous provisions include Clementine marketing order, establishment of marketing board for honey producers, Census of Agriculture to include specialty crop information, Hass Avocado marketing order, and mushroom promotion program.

Specific organic agriculture provisions include:

- Cost-share assistance for organic certification – maintains federal cost share at 75 percent, but increases cap to \$750 per operation.
- Organic production and market data and economic research and analysis – the Secretary of Agriculture is to submit a report no later than 180 days into the program outlining progress and identification of additional production and marketing data needs. Objectives are to: collect and distribute comprehensive reporting of prices relating to organically

produced products; conduct surveys and analysis and publish reports of organic production, handling, distribution, retail and trend studies (including consumer purchasing patterns); and develop surveys and report statistical analysis on organically produced agricultural products.

- National organic program – increases authorized funding.

There are numerous other connections to horticulture and organic agriculture within the other farm bill titles. These connections include (note that other connections also may exist but are not included here):

- Planting flexibility (Title I) – authorizes a pilot program allowing production of cucumbers, green peas, lima beans, pumpkins, snap beans, sweet corn, and tomatoes for processing. For Iowa, the limit is up to 1,000 base acres. To be eligible producers had to have entered into a contract to produce the specified crop for processing, agree to produce the crop as part of a crop rotation, and provide evidence of disposition of the crop. Base acres are reduced per crop year by an acre for each acre planted under the pilot program.
- CRP transitions (Title II) – special treatment of CRP land transitioning from retiring farmer or rancher to beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher. The new farmer or rancher can begin organic certification land improvements one year prior to contract termination.
- EQIP (Title II) – conservation practices related to organic production and transition are now eligible.
- CSP (Title II) – establishes means for producers to initiate organic certification while participating in new CSP. Requires that outreach and technical assistance are available and that program specifications are appropriate for participation.
- Ag management assistance program (Title II) – allows funds for assistance in organic certification through USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.
- Technical assistance for organic certification practices (Title II) – ensures, to maximum extent possible, that: appropriate range of conservation practices is available; conservation practice standards incorporate; and adequate technical assistance is available for implementing conservation practices for specialty crops, organic, and precision agriculture.
- Technical assistance for specialty crops (Title III) – provides funding for technical assistance to address unique sanitary, phytosanitary, and technical barriers that prohibit or threaten export of U.S. specialty crops.
- Local and regional food aid procurement (Title IV) – mandates funding for a point-of-purchase pilot program to encourage households to purchase fruits, vegetables, or other healthful foods. Encourages pilot projects to develop and test strategies for improving diets and health status among eligible population and reducing obesity and diet-related disorders in U.S. population.
- Fruit and vegetable promotion (Title IV) – initiates special outreach to elementary school children located within State selected schools based on proportion of eligible children.
- Healthy urban food enterprise development (Title IV) – establishes Center to increase underserved communities' access to healthy foods, including locally grown and produced agricultural products. Center is to provide technical assistance and award subgrants to carry out feasibility studies and to establish and assist enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, store, and market healthy, affordable foods.
- Farmers' market nutrition programs (Title IV) – extends authorization of senior farmers' market nutrition program and disallows any benefit provided by the program to be considered as income or resources and prohibits collection of State and local sales taxes on purchases of food made with program benefits.
- Locally produced foods (Title IV) – directs Secretary to encourage institutions, such as schools, that receive funds from child nutrition programs to purchase unprocessed agricultural products,

both locally grown and locally raised, to maximum extent practical and appropriate.

- Emergency food infrastructure grants (Title IV) – authorizes grant funding to assist food banks to expand capacity and infrastructure to handle perishable food products, improve identification of potential providers of donated food, and support procurement of locally produced food from small family farms and ranchers.
- Conservation loan and loan guarantee program (Title V) – gives priority to qualified beginning farmers, ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, owners or tenants who use the loans to convert to sustainable or organic agricultural production systems, and producers who use loans to build conservation structures or establish conservation practices.
- Pollinator research (Title VII) – authorizes funding for research on colony collapse disorder and other specific research.
- Specialty crops (Title VII) – establishes research initiative to address productivity and profitability, food safety related to fresh produce, and other items.
- Organic agriculture (Title VII) – adds new purpose to the research and extension initiative to study conservation and environmental outcomes of organic practices and develop new and improved seed varieties for use in organic production systems.
- Country-of-origin labeling (Title XI) – adds chicken (whole and parts), goat meat, ginseng, pecans, and macadamia nuts. Designation of U.S. state, region, or locality where commodity was produced is sufficient to identify U.S. as country of origin for these products.
- Insurance of organic crops (Title XII) – requires FCIC to contract studies of organic production coverage improvement. Studies will determine whether FCIC will eliminate or reduce premium surcharge for organic production. Studies to include development of procedure to offer additional price election that reflects actual prices received for organic crops.
- Emergency assistance for livestock, honey bees, and farm-raised fish (Title XII) – provides emergency relief to eligible producers for losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions not covered by supplemental revenue assistance payments, livestock indemnity payments, or by livestock forage disaster program.
- Orchard and nursery tree assistance (Title XII) – provides assistance to eligible orchardists and nursery tree growers for trees lost to natural disasters.

... and justice for all

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