Organic News

Upcoming Programs

Tuesday, April 7 - Organic Field Crop Production Meeting, Vegetable Research Station, University of Arkansas, Kibler, Arkansas. 9 am to 3 pm. If you are in the area or just want a great trip, come join us. I have been asked to be a part of an Organic Field Crop Panel at this Arkansas meeting!

Monday, April 20 through Tuesday, April 21 - Organically Grown Wine Conference - Willamette Valley, Oregon. Two free days of connection, education, and tasting at the 2026 Organically Grown Wine Conference—a gathering at the intersection of organic viticulture, winemaking, market innovation, and the people who are shaping the future of wine. To register ---------->>>

Thursday, May 7th, Uvalde Spring Field Day – Texas A&M Research and Extension Center in Uvalde, 8 am to 4 pm. Registration required by <<<-May 1, 2025. QR at left

Tuesday, June 30, Eagle Lake Rice Field Day, at the David R. Wintermann Rice Research Station, northwest of Eagle Lake off Hwy 102. Tours starting at 4:00 pm, which will be followed by an evening program and dinner at the Eagle Lake Community Center. For more information call Brandy Morace, 409-752-2741 or email bmorace@aesrg.tamu.edu

Thursday, July 9, Beaumont Rice Field Day, at the Research Center, west of Beaumont off U.S. Hwy 90. Field tours starting at 8:00 AM, followed by a morning program, a barbeque lunch, and an afternoon tour on current research projects at the center. For more information call Brandy Morace, 409-752-2741 or email bmorace@aesrg.tamu.edu

Monday, August 3-Tuesday, August 4 – Southern Family Farmers & Food Systems Conference, San Marcos, Texas. Pre-conference workshops Aug 2-3rd. LBJ Student Center, Texas State University. Email: conference@farmandranchfreedom.org or smallproducers@txstate.edu

Wednesday, August 19 – Organic Cotton and Peanut Tour, Seminole, Texas. near Seminole. 8 am to 1 pm. Several stops, great sponsored lunch and lots of organic crop updates. Lunch is provided by generous sponsors for the tour.

Wednesday, September 2 – Southwest Dairy Day**,** Dalhart, Texas. Lots of exhibits, speakers, tours, and sponsors.

Monday, September 14 – Friday, September 18 – Global Sorghum Conference, Lubbock, Texas. Hosted by Texas Tech University and a part of the Global Sorghum Association, an international organization dedicated to sorghum production and research.

Texas Conservation and Sustainability Initiative

TCSI is a project to incentivize Texas' large agricultural sector to adopt conservation and sustainability practices and develop new markets for crop, animal production, and forest commodities. This project is funded by the USDA-NRCS Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) program, which was formerly called Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities. The project has three major goals: 1) provide financial incentives for

Bob Whitney, Regents Fellow & Extension Organic Program Specialist • bob.whitney@ag.tamu.edu • (979) 571-2086 cell

producers to adopt NRCS practices known to improve conservation and sustainability, 2) evaluate the benefits of these practices, including their ability to store carbon and reduce greenhouse gases, and 3) expand markets for products produced with conservation practices.

Practices include, but are not limited to, cover cropping, **conservation tillage**, manure management, prescribed grazing, forest restoration, windbreaks, riparian buffer strip installation, **irrigation**, nutrient management, and range/pasture planting.

I have been told that the payment rates are great ($100,000) and the limit is very generous for each farmer. Email: TCSI@ag.tamu.edu, Phone: 979-314-8095,

Website: TCSI.tamu.edu

TDA AgLink Continuity Grant for Food and Fiber Resilience

This new grant is funded through a major reinvestment in Texas agriculture under House Bill 43, backed by the Texas Department of Agriculture and introduced by State Representative Stan Kitzman. Passed in the Texas 89th Legislative Session as HB 43, AgLink will use state funding to deliver a comprehensive package of support for farmers, ranchers, and processors who routinely face weather extremes, natural disasters, and unpredictable economic pressures. AgLink was created to close critical gaps in assistance and provide support across every segment of the agricultural sector.

AgLink will support **critical agricultural processing and handling businesses**, including cotton gins, grain elevators, grain warehouses, and rice dryers. When natural disasters such as drought, wildfire, flood, or winter storms strike, these operations often experience significant reductions in raw materials delivered for processing or marketing, resulting in severe financial strain.

For more information use the QR Code at right. ----------→

Be sure to go to FAQs near the bottom and click on it. It will give you a great PDF that answers many questions but eventually you will look at #9 and go here:-------→

Next Phase to Include a Producer Grant Program!

I had a great visit with Karen Reichek, Grants Administrator at TDA and she was excited to announce that producers will be included in the next phase of grant programs called **AgPro**. She said to give it about **6 weeks**, and they would be rolling out an announcement and details for producer applications. So, if you aren't a processing or handling ag business then your time is coming. **Main line: (512) 463-7476 or (800) TELL-TDA (835-5832).**

Allelopathy in Plants!

Recently Hay and Forage Grower Magazine had a great article on "Uncovering the unknowns of cereal rye allelopathy," by Marta Kohmann and Lisa Kissing Kucek. They are researchers and Extension specialists in Wisconsin and some of their work is focused on allopathy, especially in cereal rye. I have written on allelopathy and continue to look at some plant compounds for weed control, but this work is interesting because they show differences among rye varieties. I think it is worth a read if you have time.

Small Grains at the Crossroads: Choosing the Best Path for Your Crop

Every year, I am usually out checking small grain fields across Texas this time of year—from the High Plains down to South Texas—and one thing is always clear: We are not all at the same stage, but we are usually at some sort of decision point.

Bob Whitney, Regents Fellow & Extension Organic Program Specialist • bob.whitney@ag.tamu.edu • (979) 571-2086 cell

In the Upper Panhandle, small grains may just be reaching Feekes 5–6 (green-up to jointing). In Central Texas, crops are often at Feekes 10 or boot to heading. And in South Texas, many fields are already at pollination (Feekes 10.5 or even moving toward grain fill (Feekes 11). Even with those differences, the key question remains the same:

- *What is the best use of this crop from here forward?*

Why Growth Stage Still Matters—Even Across Regions

The decisions you make now are still tied closely to crop development, but the options available to you depend on where your crop sits today.

Here is how I think about it across Texas:

Feekes 4–6 (Panhandle / later-planted wheat)

- Full flexibility: grazing, silage, grain, or cover crop
- Nitrogen decisions still influence yield potential

Boot to Heading (Central Texas)

- Strong window for silage or grazing
- Grain is still viable, but management decisions are mostly set

Pollination to Grain Fill (South Texas)

- Primary option becomes grain harvest
- Some late silage is possible, but quality declines quickly and silage may not be possible after soft dough!

For example, do you know what a small grain cover crop can add back to the soil based on fertilizer costs? **This chart was based on N prices 2 months ago!**

QR Code for Small Grain Article

Where Organic Growth Is Coming From—and What It Means for Texas

The organic market continues to show steady growth, even under the same economic pressures affecting all of agriculture.

According to a recent report by the **Organic Trade Association**, U.S. organic sales reached **$76.6 billion in 2025, increasing by 6.8%**, while the overall food market grew at approximately 3.4%. Organic food alone grew even faster, at 6.9% compared to 2.3% for total food sales. This marks another year in which organic has outperformed the broader marketplace.

This pattern is important. Organic growth is not limited to a single year or driven by short-term factors. It reflects a sustained trend of consumer demand that has continued through inflationary periods, supply chain disruptions, and broader uncertainty in food markets.

At the same time, organic has reached a level of maturity within the food system. With more than 6% penetration into total U.S. food sales, organic products are no longer confined to specialty markets. They are now part of routine purchasing behavior for a significant portion of consumers.

This combination—continued growth alongside market maturity—creates a different type of market environment than in earlier years of organic expansion. Growth is still occurring, but it is not evenly distributed. Demand is increasing at the consumer level, while returns

Cover Crop Biomass	Moderate Growth		Heavy Growth	
Dry Matter Produced	3,000 lb/acre	Return/Acre	6,000 lb/acre	Return/Acre
Nitrogen Returned	45–75 lb N	$28.80 – $48.00	90–150 lb N	$57.60 – $96.00
Phosphorus Returned	9–15 lb P_2O_5	$8.37 – $13.95	18–30 lb P_2O_5	$16.74 – $27.90
Potassium Returned	45–75 lb K_2O	$21.15 – $35.25	90–150 lb K_2O	$42.30 – $70.50
Total Nutrient Value		**$58 – $97**		**$117 – $194**

Bob Whitney, Regents Fellow & Extension Organic Program Specialist • bob.whitney@ag.tamu.edu • (979) 571-2086 cell

at the farm level do not always reflect that increase.

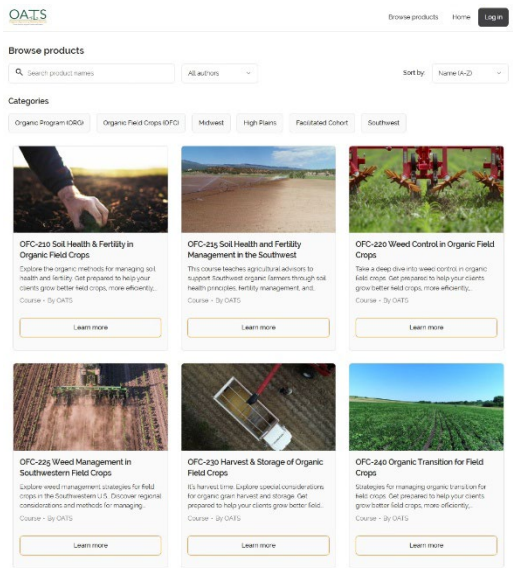
There is a lot more to say about this subject, and I have it all written in a very recent post. Just scan the QR code with your phone. I also have a few other article posts on trends and consumer attitudes you might find interesting and all are found on https://agrilifeorganic.org.

Organic Trends in 2026 discusses some interesting international trends, one of which is how organic peanuts are in demand but that there is not much supply or production area.

A Generation Raised on Organic: Why That Matters—and What Cotton Needs to Understand is a post that looks at who the organic buyer is now and why they are not interested in anything but organic. Millennials and Gen Z were born and have lived with organic agriculture as a normal thing and as consumers now are buying organic almost exclusively.

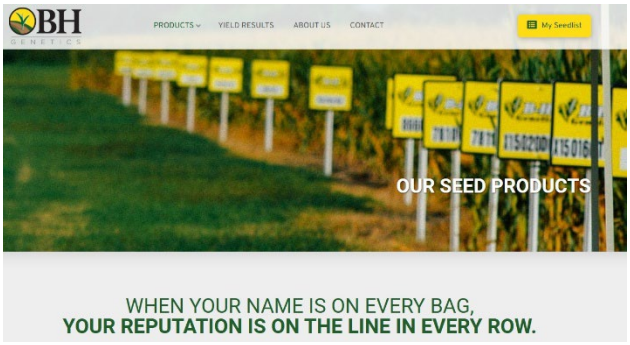
Ready for some great organic field crops training?

OATS or Organic Agronomy Training Service is offering "free of charge" two online organic courses for Southwest farmers. Weed Management in Field Crops and Soil Health and Fertility Management are available on their website. You will register but that is nothing more than a name and an email. They will send a code to your email, and you use the code to finish your registration. This QR Code get you there.



Some great Texas Folks are featured in the two courses, and you should be surprised at what you see! Try it – should be fun and educational.

BH Genetics offers Untreated Sorghum and Corn Seed



BH Genetics is a Texas based seed company located in Ganado, Texas. I have known about them and their products for decades. Bart Hajovsky (BH) is the owner and a friend of organic producers. He has kept up with organic in Texas and he called me this year to offer to organic growers non-GMO and non-treated seed in corn and sorghum, including forage sorghum and sorghum-sudan. Scan the QR code to see what is available on their seed list.

OREI Grant Applications

Just a heads up that this is the season for all researchers and Extension Specialists to apply for the National Institute for Food and Agriculture – Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) grant programs due on May 14. So far, we are putting together projects in Rice, Cowpea, Corn, Corn Disease Control, Wheat, Greenhouse Tomato, and Cotton. I think that is it!

These are all in organic agriculture and awards can be as high as $3.5 million which means a lot of great organic agriculture development.

Bob Whitney, Regents Fellow & Extension Organic Program Specialist • bob.whitney@ag.tamu.edu • (979) 571-2086 cell