Organics in Tennessee

Dec. 3, 2008
Overview

• Organics in Tennessee

• Review
  ✓ Previously identified needs & priorities
  ✓ Actions already taken to address needs

• TN Organic Production Network
  ✓ Purpose & goals
  ✓ Format for today’s meeting
The community of U.S. organic operations:
Distribution of certified organic operations around the U.S.

2006 USDA NOP Data, 27 certified operations in TN
12 farm operations
15 processors/handlers
U.S. number of organic acres farmed per state, in thousands of acres:

2005 Data
USDA ERS:
Operations: 8 farms
Cropland & Pasture: 727 acres

Little variation in 2000-2006 data for TN, ranges from 8 to 12 operations
2008: 23 Certified Organic Farms in TN

Distribution across the state by County: Blount, Coffee, Davidson, Greene, Hamilton (2), Henry, Jefferson, Lincoln, Loudon, Macon, Maury, McMinn, Monroe, Polk (2), Robertson, Shelby, Stewart, Williamson (2) [18 counties]

Several others interested: Inquiries from 20 farms representing ~575 acres in past 5 months
About Organic Operations in TN:

• Majority are fruit & vegetable farms
  ✓ 2 Dairy Farms, 1 Meat Operation, 1 Egg Operation

• 4 to 6 additional farms in TN certified through growers group
  ✓ Appalachian Harvest based in Abingdon, VA

• ~10 certified organic processors/handlers

• 14 Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) in TN
  ✓ follow NOP standards, farmers inspecting farmers
February 2007 Strategic Planning Meeting:

• Convened by TDA

• Purpose
  ✓ To develop recommendations & oversight for expanding organic production in TN
  ✓ To explore market opportunities for TN Farmers

• Participation by TDA, UT, TSU, Center for Profitable Ag, TN Farm Bureau, producers, industry representatives and others
February 2007 Strategic Planning Meeting findings:

What’s working with Organics now:

- Locally Grown
- Dedicated producers/consumers
- Demand
- Direct Marketing

How can we recruit/help transition farmers:

- Risk management plans
- Education
- Communication
- Occupy Idle Farms
- Agency Education
- Mentoring/Partnering
February 2007 Strategic Planning Meeting findings, continued:

**Goals & Priorities identified:**

- ✓ Identify Research & Extension needs
- ✓ Seminars/workshops
- ✓ Explore Certifying Issues
- ✓ Infrastructure to support organic production
  - Access to organic inputs
  - Processing facilities (meat, milk)
- ✓ Lending institution education
- ✓ Advertising
- ✓ Develop consortium to work together to address identified goals & priorities
**TN Organic Initiative:**

- Funded by TDA, 5 year project
- Statewide UT Organic Extension Program
  - Grower consultations
  - Educational programming
  - Organic research & demonstration plots
  - Coordinate the TN Organic Production Network
- Farm to Market Connections—Center for Profitable Ag
  - Support networks to connect producers w/buyers
  - Learn from successful programs in the state & region
  - Support development of programs in new parts of TN
**TDA Programs to support Organics:**

- **Certification Cost Share program**
  - Reimburses 75% of cost up to $750

- **TN Agriculture Enhancement Program (TAEP)**
  - Organics identified as a priority area
  - With 50% cost share for infrastructure, marketing, specialty equipment
Producer Survey:
TOGA Conference, March 2008

• 32 growers responded, of that 3 certified organic
  ✓ Majority vegetable & fruit producers
  ✓ Growing on less than 15 acres
  ✓ Selling via direct marketing methods

• Reasons for not certifying
  ✓ Paperwork hassle- 62%
  ✓ Cost- 52%
  ✓ Not necessary for market- 45%
  ✓ Ideological- 17%

• Most challenging on the farm
  ✓ Weed control
  ✓ Insect control

• Least challenging on the farm
  ✓ Marketing
  ✓ Soil fertility
There are several organizations, initiatives & leaders throughout TN working to support organics, locally grown & to develop farm to market connections:

- TOGA
- Appalachian Sustainable Dev.
- Jubilee project
- Center for Profitable Ag
- Cumberland Grown
- Local Table Magazine
- TN Farm Bureau
- TN State Legislature
- USDA
- And Others!!!
How can we collaborate to advance organics, locally grown & farm to market connections?

*The focus of today’s meeting:*

Developing the TN Organic Production Network

- Establishing the communication network
- Discussing ideas
- Prioritizing needs
TN Organic Production Network

Proposed operating structure/organizational context:

✓ Ongoing conversations & dialogue
✓ Coordinated by UT Extension
✓ Develop steering committee for leadership
  • work via phone/email
✓ Future meetings—quarterly?
  • Focusing on specific topics, bring in expertise?
  • Regional meetings & opportunities?
✓ Inclusive—all interested are welcome to participate
Format for Today’s meeting:

✓ Discussion to re-access/prioritize areas of need

Opportunity for dialogue, 20 min each:
• Producer /Industry issues
• Policy/Legislative issues
• 2008 Farm Bill/Dept of Ag Programs
• Organic Research

✓ Next Steps
• feedback/suggestions for operating structure & how to continue the conversation

✓ Adjourn at 4pm
Questions?