

Certified Organic Specialty and Minor Crops

U.S. farmers produced certified organic specialty crops (vegetables, fruits, and herbs) and other crops (including cotton, potatoes, peanuts) on over 250,000 acres in 2001. Including fallow land and land with green manure, area in certified organic specialty and other crops was 340,000 acres.

Vegetables were produced organically on over 71,600 acres in the United States in 2001, fruits were produced on over 55,600 acres, and herb/nursery crops were produced on about 14,600 acres (app. tables 10-15). Cotton, peanuts, and other minor and unclassified crops were grown on 197,000 acres.

Vegetables. The market for organic vegetables has been developing for over three decades in the United States, and certified organic vegetables are grown in every State with certified acreage except Wyoming. State and private certifying groups certified organic vegetable crops in 47 States on 71,667 acres in 2001, up 15 percent from 2000 (app. tables 11-12). About one-third of the acreage was planted to lettuce, tomatoes, or carrots and the rest was for other mixed vegetable acreage, other vegetable crops, and vegetable acreage that could not be classified.

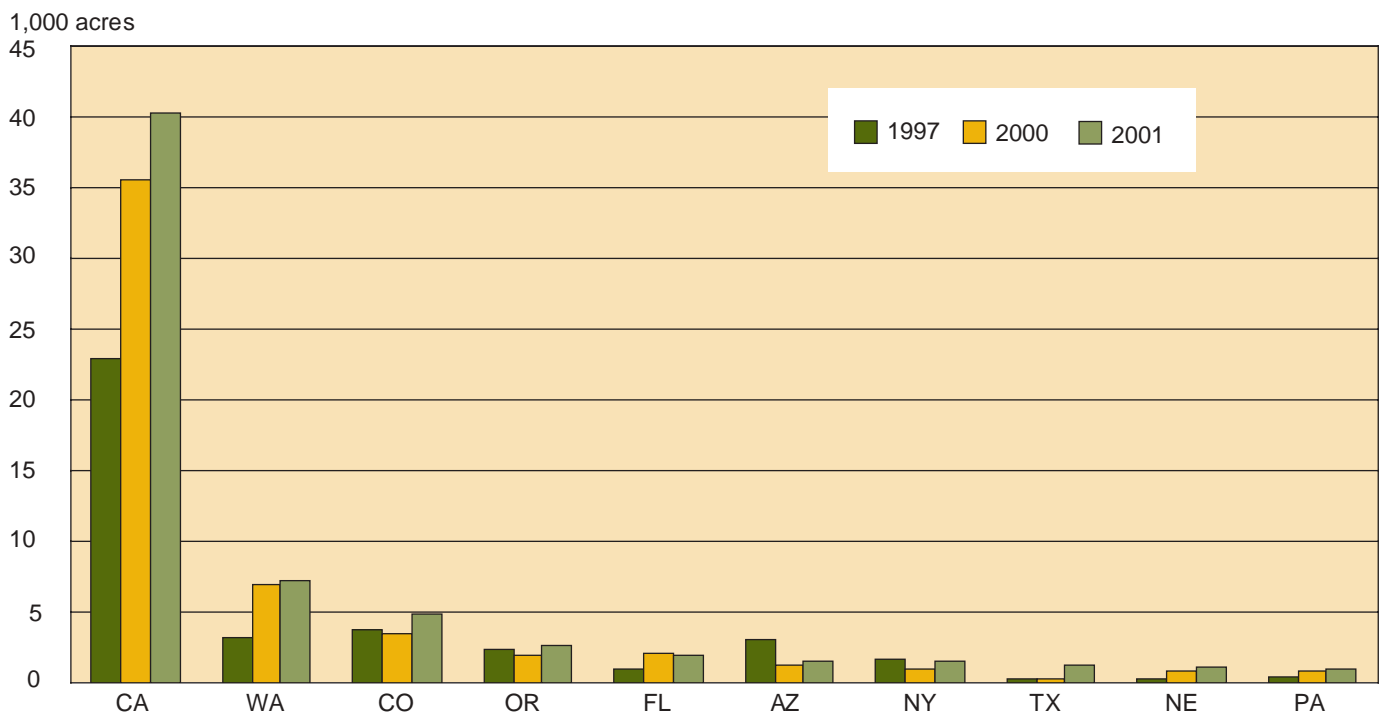
Nearly 5 percent of the total U.S. lettuce acreage was managed under certified organic farming systems in

2001, and nearly 4 percent of carrot acreage and 1 percent of tomato acreage was certified organic. Many farms with different sizes and characteristics—from 1-acre market gardens to operations with several thousand acres—grow lettuce, tomato, carrot, and other vegetable crops.

California is the biggest conventional vegetable producer in the United States, claiming 57 percent of total U.S. conventional vegetable acreage in 2001. California is also the biggest organic vegetable producer in the United States. Nine private certifying organizations certified 40,632 acres of organic vegetables in California in 2001, accounting for 41 percent of U.S. certified organic vegetable acreage (fig. 7). Washington and Colorado followed with 7,174 and 4,889 acres certified in 2001. Oregon had 2,585 acres of vegetables and Arizona, Florida, Nebraska, New York, and Texas each had over 1,000 acres of certified organic vegetables in 2001.

“Mixed vegetables” is a term used by the Census of Agriculture to classify small farms growing a variety of vegetables as the predominant commodity. The census allows farms up to 50 acres with five or more vegetable crops to be classified as mixed vegetable acreage, although in practice it rarely uses that category for farms over 5 acres. Mixed vegetable acreage was broken out in our previous report on 1997 certified acreage, but is

Figure 7--Certified organic vegetables, top 10 States



Source: Economic Research Service, USDA.

Local Markets Popular with Organic Farmers and Consumers

Organic producers capture a much higher share of the consumer food dollar when they market their produce directly to consumers, and the last decade has seen a renaissance in the use of farmers' markets and other direct markets—including some organic-only markets—across the country. According to USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, the number of farmers' markets in the United States jumped from 1,755 markets in 1994 to 2,863 in 2000. And the number of farmers and consumers using these markets tripled during this period, to 66,700 farmers serving 2.7 million consumers in 2000. Results from several producer surveys indicate that organic farmers market directly much more frequently than do conventional farmers (Walz, 1999; Fernandez-Cornejo et al., 1998).

States and local municipalities have been fostering the development of farmers' markets as a way to revitalize neighborhoods, enhance local food access, and preserve regional farmland and open space. A number of nonprofits are also fostering direct connections between consumers and local farmers via interactive Internet directories of local farm products and services, including Local Harvest (www.localharvest.org) and the Robyn van En Center (www.csacenter.org) at the national level, and Farm to Table (www.FarmtoTable.org) and Community Harvest (www.communityharvestdc.net) at the State level.

Organic farmers are producing a large array of "value-added" products—foods processed on their farm or in farm-owned plants or farm-based cooperatives—in addition to fresh fruits and vegetables to sell directly to the consumer. According to the most recent OFRF organic producer survey, 31 percent of the survey respondents produced value-added products in 1997. These products included salsa, syrup, cider, pickles, preserves, dried and canned fruits and vegetables, butter, yogurt, cheese, milled flours, meat products, and wine.

included in the "unclassified/other vegetable" category here because many certifiers reported this category inconsistently between 1997 and 2001. Much of this mixed crop acreage, especially on smaller farms, is grown for farmers' markets, consumer subscription programs, restaurants, and other direct marketing outlets.

California was by far the top producer of certified organic tomatoes, lettuce, and carrots in 2001. Carrots and lettuce are grown primarily for the fresh market, and California had 13,517 acres of organic lettuce in 2001 and 4,031 acres of carrots. Arizona had 1,451 acres of lettuce in 2001, and Colorado had 727 acres. Washington had over 300 acres of carrots, while Texas and Colorado each had over 100 acres of carrots (app. table 11).

California is also the largest processed tomato producer in the world, accounting for about half the world's supply, and some of the large processing tomato growers in that State are now growing part of their crop in organic rotations (Klonsky et al., 1993-94a). Producers in California grew 3,326 acres of certified organic tomatoes in 2001, mostly for the processing market, up 12 percent from 2000 and up 72 percent from 1997. New organic food products continued to be introduced rapidly in 2001, some containing or based on tomatoes—Heinz, for example, has just launched its organic catsup product in the United States.

Certified organic vegetable acreage accounted for 1.6 percent of the U.S. vegetable acreage in 2001. Over 10 percent of the vegetable acreage in Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and Colorado—and over 2 percent of the vegetable acreage in Connecticut, Arkansas, Massachusetts, Utah, Washington, California, Oregon, and Pennsylvania—was certified organic in 2001.

In many States, particularly in the Northeast and Southeast, the majority of certified organic operations are small-scale farms that produce a vast array of vegetable crops, fruits, herbs, and flowers for marketing directly to consumers in the local area. Much of the vegetable acreage in some of those States is under organic management, especially in Vermont where organic farming has been expanding steadily for more than three decades. Like some other Northeastern States, Vermont tends to have smaller and more diversified farms that mostly operate on hilly terrain. A shorter growing season in northern latitudes and a growing number of marketing outlets—farmers' markets, upscale restaurants, and farm-side stands that cater to summer tourists and local residents—create unique incentives to produce vegetable and other specialty crops.

Fruit and tree nuts. State and private groups certified organic fruit and nut crops in 46 States on over 55,600 acres in 2001, up 28 percent from the previous year (app.

tables 12-13). Organic grapes accounted for 26 percent of the acreage certified, followed by apples (22 percent), citrus (17 percent), and tree nuts (10.5 percent); 24 percent of the total was unclassified. The unclassified category included a substantial amount of berries and stone fruits.

California is the leading State in many fruit and nut crops. Growers in California had over 29,000 acres of organic fruit and nut acreage, over half of the total (fig. 8). Washington was second (9,289 acres), Florida third (6,154 acres), and Arizona fourth (2,644 acres).

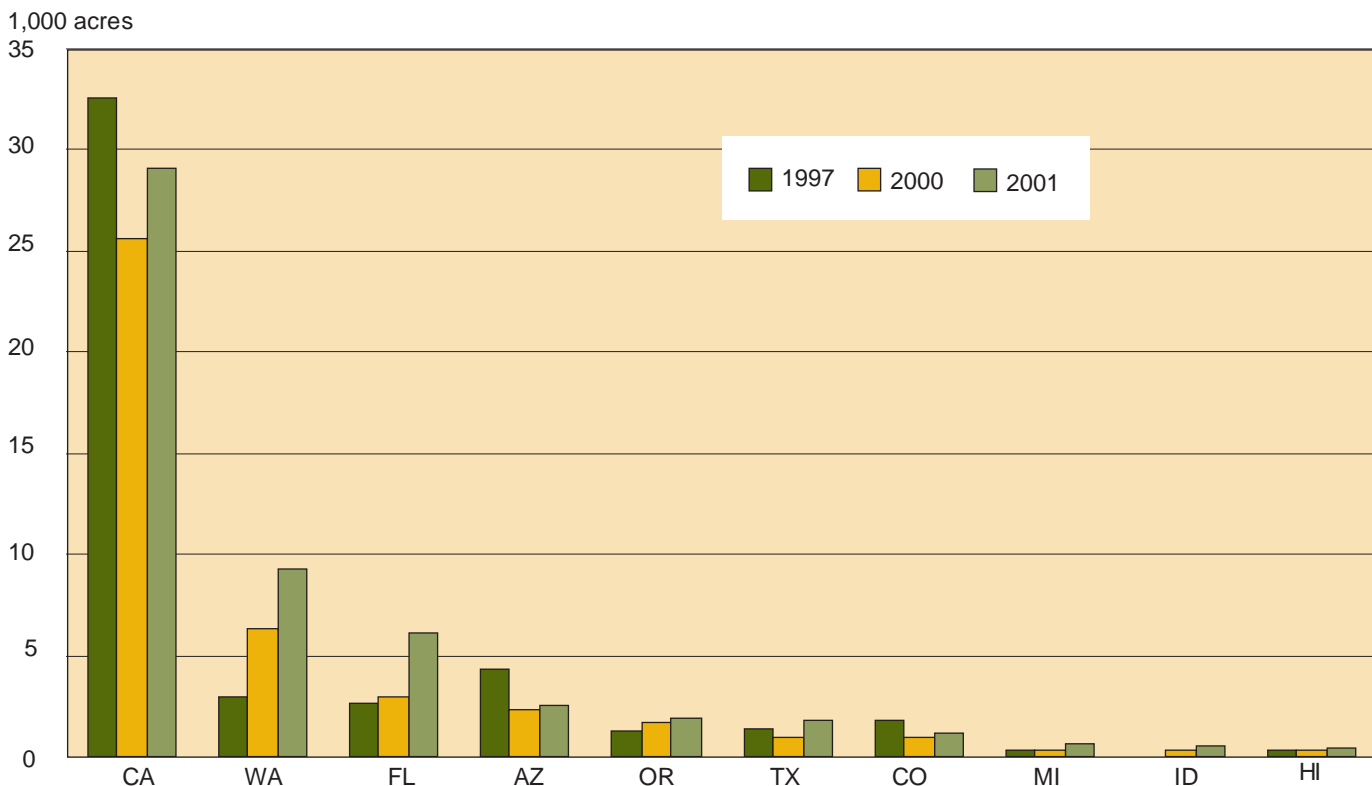
Organic markets for table grapes, raisins, juice, and other grape products have been developing for over a decade, and the acreage devoted to organic wine grape production has expanded gradually for more than a decade. According to the California registry, acreage devoted to juice grapes has declined steadily for several years. California growers produced over 13,100 acres of certified organic grapes in 2001, 90 percent of the U.S. total. Washington and Oregon had 962 acres and 317 acres of certified organic grapes, and eight other States had a few acres each. One and a half percent of total U.S. acreage

for grape vineyards was managed under certified organic farming systems in 2001.

Certified organic apples were produced in 25 States in 2001. While many of these States had under 100 acres under organic apple production (and some less than 1 acre), several had over 1,000 acres. Washington was the top producer with 6,178 acres, followed by Arizona (2,190 acres) and California (1,699). Growers produced certified organic apples on almost 3 percent of total U.S. acreage for apple orchards in 2001. The top apple variety (organic) by acreage in 2001 in Washington was Red Delicious, although Granny Smith, Gala, and Fuji apple acreage doubled in 2000 (Granatstein and Kirby, 2002).

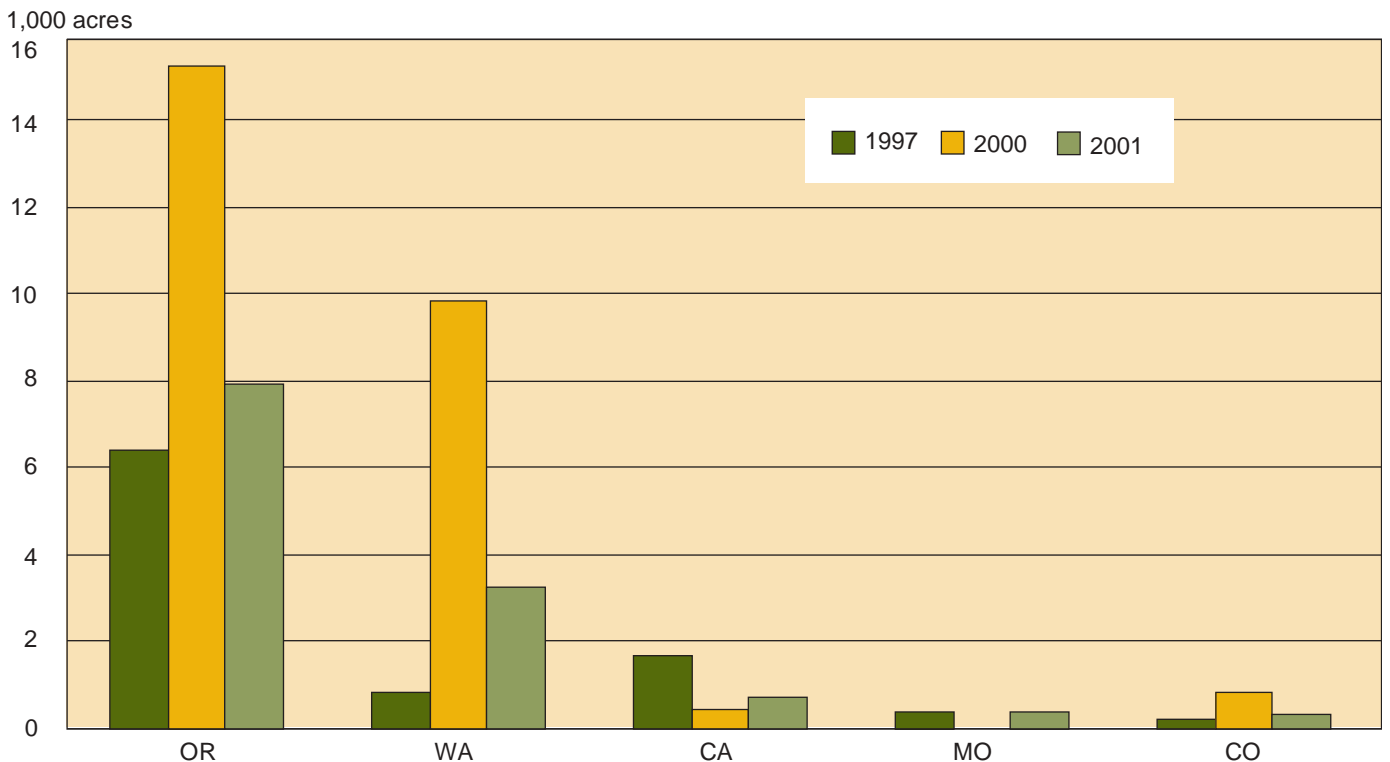
All of the States where citrus is grown produced organic citrus crops in 2001, and Florida was the top producer with 6,056 acres, which is less than 1 percent of Florida's total citrus crop. California was second with 3,063 acres. The Texas Agricultural Extension Service indicates that organic production potential is high in that State (Sauls et al., 1997), and citrus acreage in Texas doubled between 1997 and 2001 to 385 acres. Growers are using biological control for insect and mite pests, and are combating

Figure 8--Certified organic fruit, top 10 States



Source: Economic Research Service, USDA.

Figure 9--Certified organic herbs and nursery, top five States



Source: Economic Research Service, USDA.

disease with cultural techniques and plant material quarantines.

Nineteen States produced organic tree nuts in 2001, and California (4,140 acres) and Texas (953 acres) were the biggest producers. California grows mostly almonds, walnuts, and pistachios, while pecans are the top tree nut in Texas. Tree nut production doubled in Texas from 2000 to 2001, and was up 24 percent in California.

Other organic fruits grown in California in 2001 included more than 1,000 acres of figs, almost 630 acres of prunes, more than 600 acres of apricots, more than 260 acres of peaches, more than 195 acres of strawberries, and more than 140 acres of dates (CCOF, 2002).

Herbs, nursery, and greenhouse. Certified organic herbs (cultivated and wildcrafted), flowers, mushrooms, and other nursery and greenhouse crops (including vegetable plant starts and ornamentals) were grown organically on about 15,000 acres in 2001. Overall, these crops were down substantially from the previous year, mostly due to a sharp decline in wildcrafted acreage (app. tables 14-15). Certified organic nursery and greenhouse crops were also grown in 5,094,686 square feet of greenhouse space (115 acres) in 2001, up over 40 percent from the previous year.

Producers grew certified organic herbs for culinary and medicinal uses in 39 States on 12 percent less acreage than in 1997. Washington was the largest producer of cultivated organic herbs, with 2,664 acres, followed by California (624 acres), and Missouri (412 acres). Three other States—Oregon, Wisconsin, and Idaho—had over 200 acres of cultivated herbs. Ohio and New Mexico had over 100 acres in cultivated herbs in 2001. Hundreds of different herb varieties are being cultivated in these States.

State and private certifying agencies certified almost 8,500 acres of forests, scrub lands, and other natural areas in seven States for harvesting organic herbs and other wild crops, such as mushrooms, in 2001, down from 83,388 acres in 1997. In 1997, more than 52,000 acres of wildcrafted St. John's wort were reported in Idaho. This large harvest saturated the market, and in 2001 only 102 cultivated acres of St. John's wort were reported in Idaho. Approximately 7,000 acres of wildcrafted saw palmetto berries were certified in Washington in 2000, but not in 2001, perhaps because saw palmetto berries can command a high price even without an organic label. Some operations still certified acreage for wild crop harvests in 2001. In Oregon, three separate operations harvested lake algae (which has medicinal uses) from a 5,000-acre area on Klamath Lake.

Certified organic cut flowers were produced in 21 States on 281 acres in 2001. California and Colorado produced the most certified organic flowers, with 73 and 71 acres respectively. Certified organic mushrooms, cultivated and wild harvested, were produced on 142 acres in 15 States in 2001, a more than two-fold increase in production over 1997. Maryland was the top mushroom-producing State in 2001, with 50 acres.

Organic greenhouse crops in 2001 increased substantially from 1997 and 2000 estimates. The jump in 2001 is partly due to less under-reporting of this crop category by certifiers than in previous years. In 2001, many certification agencies still did not track greenhouse space, or only reported the number of greenhouses or hoop houses without reporting their square footage.

Other certified crops and land. Growers also produced organic cotton, peanuts, and potatoes in 2000 and 2001, and left some certified acreage fallow or grew soil-building cover crops (app. tables 16-17). Approximately 70,000 acres of organic land certified by State and private certifiers in 2001 could not be classified by crop or commodity group.

Certified organic cotton was produced in 5 States—Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Illinois—on 11,456 acres in 2001. Texas had over 80 percent of the acreage, much of it operated by members of an organic marketing cooperative that formed in the early 1990s. In 2000, eight States reported 15,027 acres of certified organic cotton acreage. The 33-percent decline in 2001 acreage was partly due to severe hailstorms along the New Mexico and Texas border, which disrupted production, and also because of year-to-year market instability that forced a few producers to stop growing organic cotton.

Certified organic cotton accounted for 0.07 percent of U.S. total cotton acreage in 2000. Several major clothing companies are blending organic with conventional cotton to stabilize the market and encourage production (Bunin, 2000). Also, several startup U.S. clothing companies have started to sell all-organic cotton clothing and textiles. However, U.S. producers are facing increasing competition for the organic cotton market from countries with lower labor, input, and technology costs (Bunin). In an effort to counter market instability, the Organic Fiber

Council, Organic Trade Association (OTA), and other groups have united to create the Organic Exchange, an organization whose mission is to establish more efficient links between U.S. producers and large companies such as Nike and Patagonia.

Potatoes were grown under certified organic production systems on 7,533 acres in 22 States in 2001. California led with 3,734 acres, followed by Colorado (1,604 acres), Washington (599 acres), and Idaho (565 acres). Only about 0.6 percent of the U.S. potato crop in 2001 was managed under certified organic farming systems. Production costs for organic potato production on a large scale may still be higher, and yields lower, than for conventional production (Wyman and Diercks, 1998).

A small crop of certified organic peanuts—4,653 acres in New Mexico, Texas, and Alabama—was produced in 2001, more than double 2000 acreage. Over 12,000 acres of trees tapped for maple sugaring were certified in 2001, about the same as the previous year. Top States with trees for maple sugaring were Vermont and New York. Both conventional and organically produced maple syrup products command price premiums over syrups made from sugar.

Certified organic producers left 72,595 acres fallow in 2001. Over 18,500 acres of cover crops, or green manure crops, were certified in 2001, up threefold from 1997, and an increase of 31 percent from 2000 to 2001. Farmers sometimes grow cover crops during some of the 3-year transition stage required for organic certification, and some of the recent growth in cover crops may reflect increases in transitional acreage. Also, these estimates of cover crop acreage undercount actual crop acreage because multiple crops are not counted. However, many organic farmers grow cash crops and/or cover crops each year on the same acreage to prevent soil erosion and enhance soil fertility.

Over 70,000 certified organic crop acres, 3 percent of total certified organic acres, were reported in 2001 that could not be classified into the reporting categories or were crops that are not included in the other reporting categories. A number of other crops are included in the other/unclassified category in 2001, including over 2,300 acres of organic sugarcane certified in Florida.