

# Organic Agriculture in Texas

Samuel D. Zapata and Luis A. Ribera\*

Despite a 60 percent drop in acreage and 35 percent fewer farms, sales of organic products grown in Texas rose by about 21 percent from 2008 to 2014, according to surveys conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Sales of Texas organic vegetables, fruits, field crops, and livestock increased from \$149 million to \$199 million during that period, while organic acreage dropped by 187,640 acres. The data were collected in 2008 and 2014 by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Across the United States, organic producers saw a much more dramatic sales increase—over 72 percent—from \$3.16 billion to \$5.45 billion over that same period. As in Texas, organic acreage decreased nationwide but by only 10 percent.

In state rankings, Texas dropped from fifth to sixth in total sales (Table

\*Assistant Professor and Extension Economist, Associate Professor and Extension Economist, The Texas A&M University System

1). Idaho and Vermont were replaced in the Top 10 list by Colorado and Michigan in 2014.

## Organic product mix

More than half the value of Texas organic sales in 2014 came from livestock and poultry products, such as milk, eggs, and wool. Sales totaled \$103 million in livestock and poultry products, \$78.2 million in crop

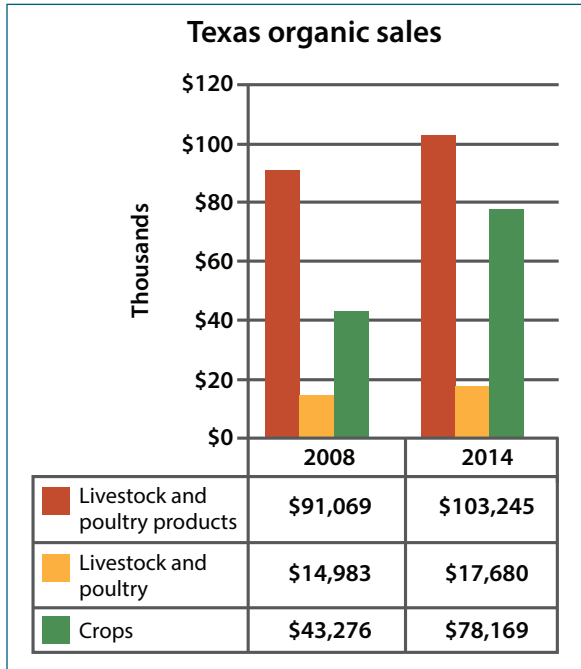
**Table 1.** Top states based on organic sales in 2008 and 2014

2008			2014		
Rank	State	Sales	Rank	State	Sales
1	California	\$1,149 million	1	California	\$2,200 million
2	Washington	\$282 million	2	Washington	\$515 million
3	Pennsylvania	\$213 million	3	Pennsylvania	\$313 million
4	Oregon	\$156 million	4	Oregon	\$237 million
5	<b>Texas</b>	<b>\$149 million</b>	5	Wisconsin	\$201 million
6	Wisconsin	\$133 million	6	<b>Texas</b>	<b>\$199 million</b>
7	New York	\$105 million	7	New York	\$164 million
8	Vermont	\$73 million	8	Colorado	\$147 million
9	Iowa	\$72 million	9	Michigan	\$125 million
10	Idaho	\$71 million	10	Iowa	\$103 million

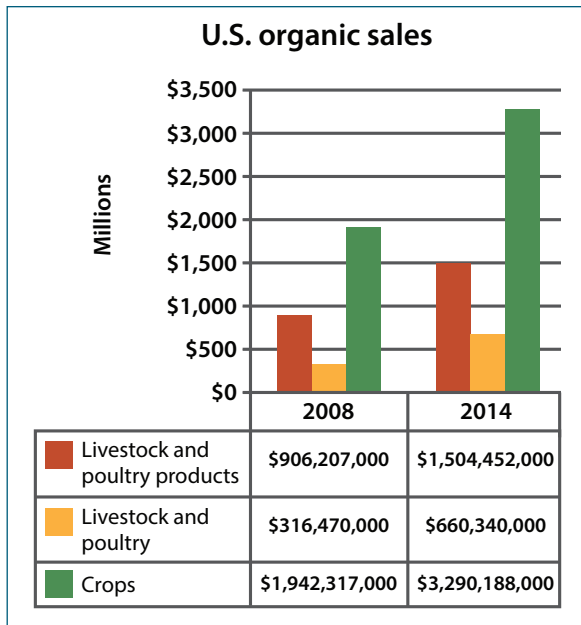
Source: USDA

products, and \$17.7 million in livestock and poultry (Fig. 1).

In contrast, crop products were the main source of revenue for U.S. organic producers. In 2014, they sold \$3.29 billion in crops, \$1.5 billion in livestock and poultry products, and \$660 million in livestock and poultry (Fig. 2).



**Figure 1.** Value of organic products sales in Texas by commodity class, 2008 and 2014 (\$1,000). *Source: USDA NASS*



**Figure 2.** Value of organic products sales in the United States by commodity class, 2008 and 2014 (million \$). *Source: USDA NASS*

## Crop mix

Texas differed markedly from the nation overall in the types of crops with the highest sales (Fig. 3). Over 75 percent of the state’s organic crop sales in 2014 were generated by field crops—those that produce fiber, such as cotton, or feed for animals, such as corn, hay, and soybeans.

Of the remaining crop sales in the state, vegetables brought in 19.2 percent and fruits and nuts 5.7 percent.

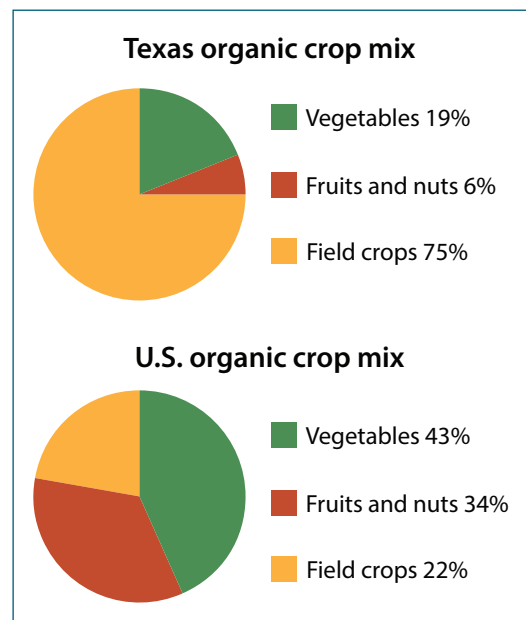
The top U.S. organic crop was vegetables (about 43 percent), followed by fruits and nuts (34 percent), and field crops (23 percent).

## Field crops

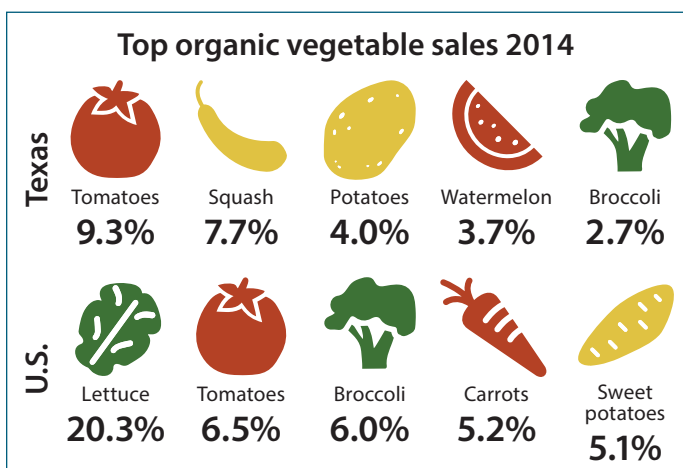
The top organic crops in Texas were peanuts, cotton, and rice; they constituted 61.7 percent of the state’s organic field crops sold. Nationwide, 51 percent of all organic field crop sales were for the categories of corn, grain, or seed; hay; and wheat (Table 2).

## Vegetable crops

Texas’s organic vegetable sales changed dramatically between the two USDA surveys, with three of the top five crops in 2008—onions, snap beans, and bell peppers—falling off the list in 2014 (Fig. 4, Table 3). The remaining two crops, tomatoes and squash, were



**Figure 3.** Mix of organic crop products in the United States and Texas in 2014. *Source: USDA*



**Figure 4.** Ranking of Texas and U.S. organic produce sales, 2014. Source: USDA

**Table 2.** Top 2014 field crops based on value of sales (\$1,000)

U.S.			Texas		
Crop	Value	%	Crop	Value	%
Corn, grain, or seed	154,910	21.6%	Peanuts	14,967*	26.9%
Hay	138,646	19.3%	Cotton	10,042*	18.0%
Wheat, all	102,087	14.2%	Rice	9,368	16.8%
Soybeans	71,530	10.0%	Hay	6,319	11.3%
Rice	34,813	4.8%	Corn, grain, or seed	4,264	7.7%

\* Estimated value based on national expected revenue  
Source: USDA

**Table 3.** Texas Top 5 organic vegetables by sales value in 2008 and 2014 (\$1,000)

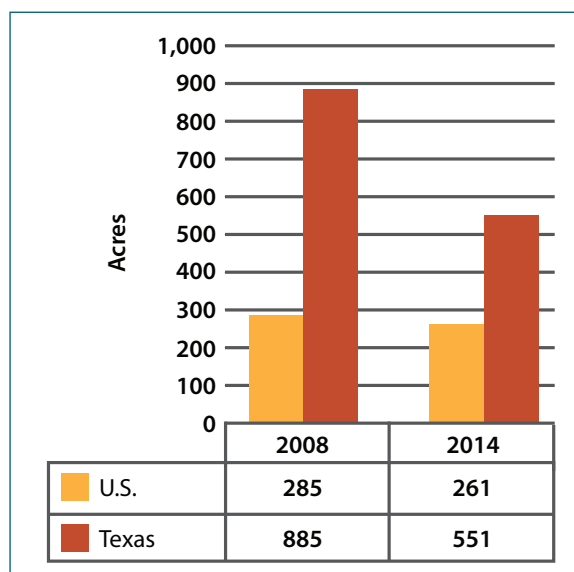
2008			2014		
Rank	Crop	Value	Rank	Crop	Value
1	Onions	1,107	1	Tomatoes	1,322
2	Beans, snap	880	2	Squash	1,093
3	Squash	163	3	Potatoes	574
4	Tomatoes	92	4	Watermelons	527
5	Peppers, bell	28	5	Broccoli	381

Source: USDA

**Table 4.** U.S. Top 5 organic vegetables by sales value in 2008 and 2014 (\$1,000)

2008			2014		
Rank	Crop	Value	Rank	Crop	Value
1	Lettuce	186,622	1	Lettuce	269,273
2	Tomatoes	59,385	2	Tomatoes	85,788
3	Spinach	37,438	3	Broccoli	78,993
4	Onions	33,614	4	Carrots	69,337
5	Broccoli	33,179	5	Sweet potatoes	68,080

Source: USDA



**Figure 5.** Average size of organic farms in the United States and Texas in 2008 and 2014. Source: USDA

the state's top sellers among organic vegetables in 2014, followed by potatoes, watermelons, and broccoli.

Nationwide, lettuce and tomatoes were the best-selling organic vegetables both years, with broccoli rising from fifth to third in sales from 2008 to 2014, and carrots and sweet potatoes replacing spinach and onions (Fig. 4, Table 4).

## Farms and farmland

The number of Texas acres devoted to organic production—including cropland, pastureland, and rangeland—decreased by about 60 percent from 2008 to 2014 (Table 5).

U.S. organic acreage dropped by about 10 percent during that period.

An estimated 4.08 million acres (7.7 percent of total agricultural acreage) were considered organic in 2008, compared to 3.67 million acres (3.5 percent) in 2014.

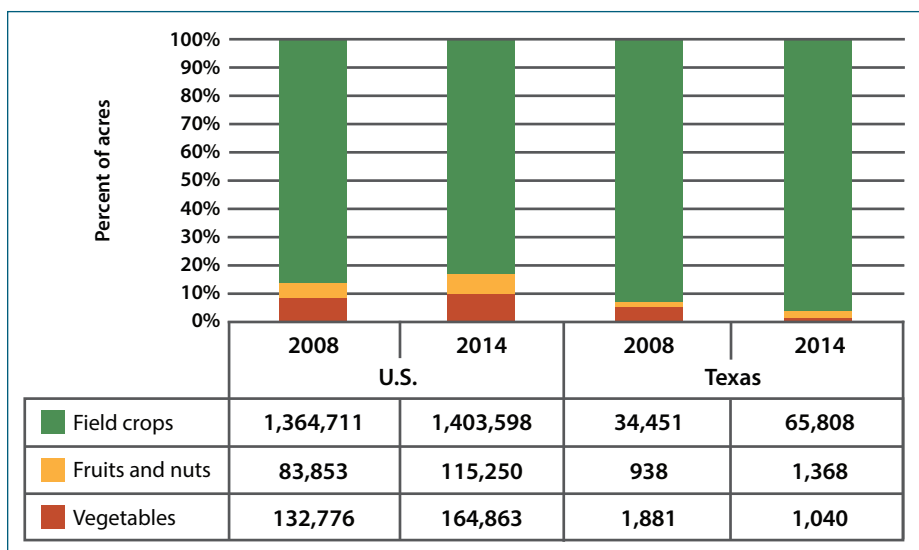
The number of operating organic farms in Texas plummeted from 355 to 230 farms from 2008 to 2014. However, the number of U.S. organic farms changed little, rising slightly from 14,307 operating organic farms in 2008 to 14,048 organic farms in 2014.

In 2008, the average Texas organic farm at 885 acres averaged more than twice the 285-acre average of its national counterpart (Fig. 5). Similarly, the 2014 Texas average was 551 acres, compared to an average of 261 acres for an organic farm nationwide.

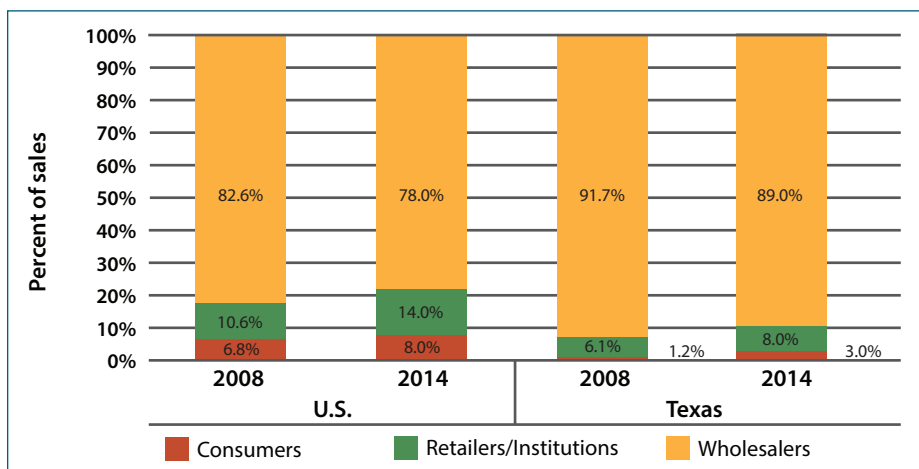
**Table 5.** Top states based on organic acreage in 2008 and 2014

2008			2014		
Rank	State	Sales	Rank	State	Sales
1	Wyoming	677,147	1	California	687,168
2	California	470,903	2	Montana	317,925
3	<b>Texas</b>	<b>314,279</b>	3	Wisconsin	228,605
4	Montana	284,482	4	New York	212,701
5	Wisconsin	195,603	5	Oregon	204,166
6	New York	168,428	6	North Dakota	134,632
7	Colorado	153,981	7	Minnesota	133,033
8	North Dakota	152,728	8	Wyoming	128,502
9	Idaho	148,425	9	<b>Texas</b>	<b>126,639</b>
10	Nebraska	146,188	10	Idaho	125,141

Source: USDA



**Figure 6.** Organic crop acreage in Texas and the United States, 2008 and 2014. Note: 2008 field crops acreage represents an estimated value; Texas’ field crops acreage does not include barley, beans and sunflower cropland. Source: USDA



**Figure 7.** Organic sales by market outlet in Texas and the U.S., 2008 and 2014. Source: USDA

## Crop acreage

In Texas, total organic crop acreage increased from 37,270 to 68,216 acres between the two surveys. Total U.S. organic cropland rose from an estimated 1.58 million acres in 2008 to 1.68 million acres in 2014.

In acreage distribution among crop types (Fig. 6), Texas field crops represented over 96 percent of the total state organic cropland in 2014; vegetables accounted for 2 percent; and fruit and nuts constituted the remaining 1.5 percent.

Similarly, U.S. field crops used about 83 percent of the total organic crop acreage that year, followed by vegetables at 6.8 percent and fruits and nuts with 9.8 percent.

## Marketing practices

Most organic products produced were sold to wholesale and retail market outlets (Fig. 7). In Texas, 89 percent of the organic products were sold to wholesalers, 8 percent to retailers, and 3 percent directly to consumers in 2014.

That year, 78 percent of U.S. organic sales were to wholesale markets, 14 percent to retailers, and 8 percent to consumers.

Another measure of organic sales is the distance to the first point of sale: organic sales can be classified as local (within 100 miles), regional (100 to 500 miles), national (more than 500 miles), and international.

In Texas, the most common first point of organic sales changed from national in 2008 to regional in 2014. Specifically, 25 percent of organic sales were conducted locally, 54 percent regionally, 20 percent nationally and 1 percent internationally in 2014 (Fig. 8).

In 2014, 46 percent of U.S. sales were conducted at the local level, 34

percent regionally, 18 percent nationally, and 2 percent were international sales.

## Farm certification

According to the USDA, organic farms are classified as *certified* organic or *exempt* organic:

- **Certified organic farms** may display the USDA organic seal on their products and must be certified organic by the state or by a private agency accredited by the USDA.
- **Exempt organic farms** may not use the USDA organic seal, must have less than \$5,000 in annual organic sales, and are exempt from certification.

The USDA includes certified and exempt organic farms in its data. In 2014, about 90 percent of the total organic farms in the U.S. were certified organic and 10 percent were exempt organic. In Texas, the split was 77 percent certified and 23 percent exempt.

Land allocations varied less, with about 99 percent of the total organic land in both U.S. and Texas being certified organic.

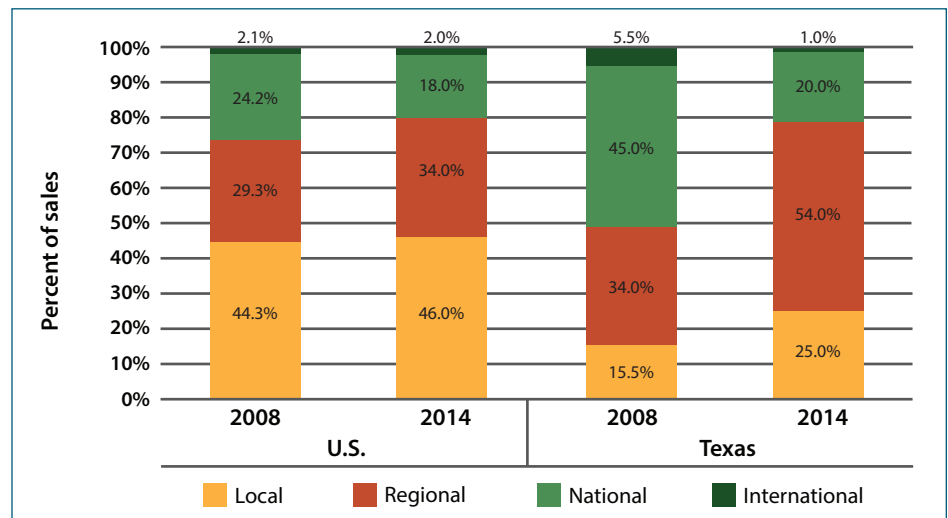
## Conventional agriculture

Organic products constitute a small fraction of the total U.S. and Texas agricultural output. Only 0.78 percent of Texas and 1.38 percent of U.S. agricultural sales are for organic products. Most U.S. farmers and ranchers use conventional methods, meaning that they use synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, feed additives, and other continual inputs.

However, conventional agriculture has experienced the same trends as organic systems, with fewer farms and less acreage but increased revenues (Table 6). Sales for conventional agriculture in Texas rose by 21 percent, while acreage dropped by 1 percent and number of farms by 11 percent.

Across the nation, conventional ag sales increased by 33 percent, acreage decreased by 0.6 percent, and the number of farms declined by 4.6 percent.

Organic operations in Texas had average annual sales of \$850,829, compared with \$103,363 for conventional systems.



**Figure 8.** Organic sales by first point of sale in Texas and the U.S., 2008 and 2014. Source: USDA

**Table 6.** Number of farms, number of acres, and sales value for conventional agricultural production in U.S. and Texas for 2008 and 2014

Measure	U.S.		Texas	
	2008	2014	2008	2014
Total land in farms (million acres)	918.6	913.0	131.2	130.0
Total number of farms (million)	2.18	2.08	0.28	0.25
Average farm size (acres)	421	438	529	530
Value of sales (billion \$)*				
Total	297.2	394.6	21.0	25.4
Livestock and livestock products (billion \$)	153.6	182.2	14.4	18.0
Crops (billion \$)	143.7	212.4	6.6	7.4

\* Values are from 2007 and 2012 Census of Agriculture  
Source: Quick Stats. USDA

## For more information

Additional data from the Organic Production Surveys is posted at [https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Organic\\_Survey/](https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Organic_Survey/).

Other agricultural information is available from Quick Stats, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick\\_Stats/](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/).

## Acknowledgments

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Icon artists were Creative Stall (broccoli, carrot, lettuce, squash, tomato, watermelon), Pencil (potato), and Icon 54 (sweet potato), all from the Noun Project.

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