



How the GRO Organic Check-off will be Different

An organic check-off is like nothing that has ever been tried, so it is understandable there are concerns based on perceptions of older check-offs. Let's separate fact from fiction:

FALSE: Producers will get overshadowed by large corporate interests

FACT: The check-off board has been designed to give organic producers a strong voice. Farmers will hold least half of the voting seats on the board and be directly elected by producers in their region.

FALSE: Smaller-scale organic businesses wouldn't have a say in the program

FACT: Organic producers and handlers with revenue under \$250,000 are exempt from any assessment, but they could voluntarily participate for full voting rights.

FALSE: It would be too expensive for the smaller operations

FACT: The assessment is broad and shallow; everybody pays a little into the program and everyone benefits. The rate is 1/10 of 1 percent of Net Organic Sales (total gross sales, minus the certified organic cost of goods). So, for example, for an operation with net organic sales of \$100,000, the annual assessment would be \$100.

FALSE: Who knows what the money will be spent on

FACT: Program categories are limited to promotion, research, education, and information with lots of common-sense prohibitions. An Organic Check-off program could fund consumer advertising and education, public relations, programs supporting transition of U.S. land to organic, and agronomic or market research.

FALSE: The promotion will be too diluted to have an impact

FACT: Check-off dollars could directly provide consumers with accurate and fact-based information about organic. We can educate, explain, and compare. An organic check-off program could help distinguish organic from other claims and unregulated labels, like natural. An organic check-off would NOT disparage other sectors of agriculture.

FALSE: Not enough of the check-off funds would go into research

FACT: At least 50 to 75 percent of the check-off funds have been earmarked specifically for research or for activities that work hand-in-hand with research, such as technical assistance and dissemination of research findings. A portion of funds would go to regional research.

FALSE: Too much of the check-off would be spent on salaries and administrative costs.

FACT: A tight maximum cap of 15 percent of assessments has been established for administrative expenses.



FALSE: Lobbyists will funnel check-off money their way to influence policy

FACT: Organic check-off money can NEVER be used for lobbying. The Organic Trade Association will not get any money or be in charge of administering the program.

FALSE: No one will have access to the intellectual property created from check-off funds

FACT: All of the research, inventions, and innovations resulting from any research or promotion will remain in the public domain.

FALSE: This is an attempt by big players in the organic sector to take out the little guys

FACT: Each organic stakeholder will have an equal voice; block voting will not be allowed. Organic farmers will hold at least half of the seats of the check-off board, and the board will have balanced regional participation.

FALSE: Once this is in place, it won't be able to be terminated

FACT: A referendum is required every seven years to decide whether or not to continue the program. If organic stakeholders are not satisfied with the program, they can vote to end it.

FALSE: The organic sector doesn't want this

FACT: Certified organic farmers, ranchers, handlers, processors, distributors, and other businesses across the organic supply chain have voiced their support for this trailblazing program that will fund research for today's producers, provide technical assistance for tomorrow's farmers, and educate consumers on the value of organic food and farming. From family-owned farms to large consumer brand manufacturers, there's excitement about the opportunity to generate millions of dollars to address critical challenges and sustainably grow organic market share into the future. Nearly 1,400 organic stakeholders publicly support the Organic Check-off. 75% of the over 1,200 certified organic operations who have endorsed the check-off are farmers and ranchers.