



SuperGrow™

Organic Any Season, Anywhere

SUPERGROW TERRAPONICS GUARANTEED
TO BE CERTIFIED ORGANIC

**CAN HYDROPONICS BE
CERTIFIED ORGANIC?**

Last updated January 2016

Organic Production in the United States

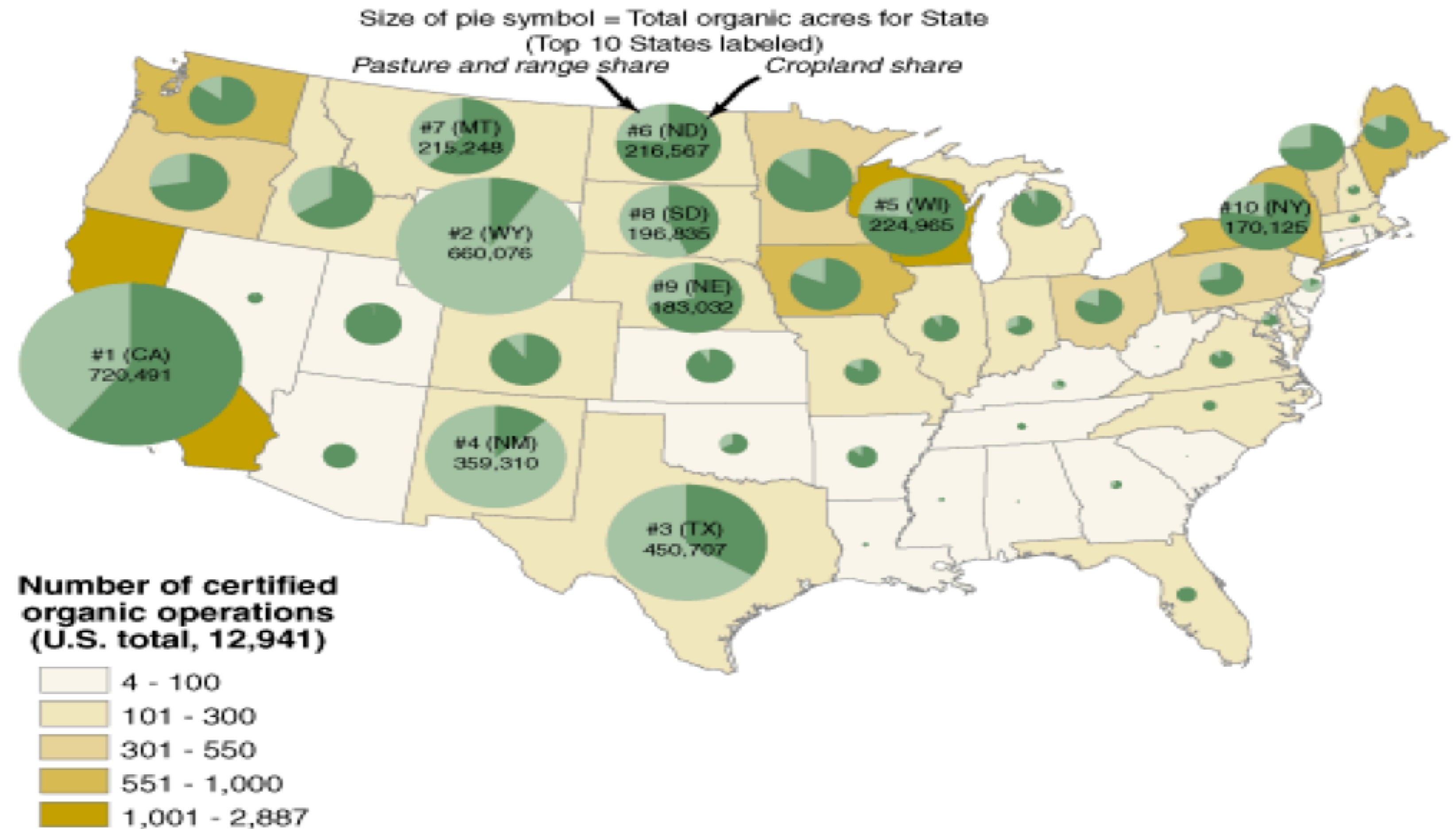
Organic operations accounted for less than 1 percent of total crop acreage in 2008.

U.S. total organic acres:
4,815,959

Crops:
2,655,382

Pasture and range:
2,160,577

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, based on information from USDA-accredited certifiers.



Who's Who in Organic Certification?

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is a Federal Advisory Board made up of 15 dedicated public volunteers from across the organic community. Established by the Organic Foods Production Act, NOSB considers and makes recommendations on a wide range of issues involving the production, handling, and processing of organic products. Each NOSB member is appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for a five-year term.

The National Organic Program (NOP) is a regulatory program housed within the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Accredited Certifying Agents (ACAs) were established under the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) in 1995 and governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), the **Agents (ACAs)** are 80 entities which are USDA-certified to issue an organic certificate to operations that comply with the USDA organic regulations.

- 48 are based in the U.S.
- 32 are based in foreign countries.

Is Hydroponic Able to be Certified as “Organic”?

1995 – When the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) first sought to define the term organic, in 1995, they did not consider the concept of growing organic crops without soil. The NOSB originally defined organic agriculture as “an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain, and enhance ecological harmony” [emphases added].

2002 – The National Organic Program (NOP) redefined organic production in the Code of Federal Regulations as “a production system that...respond[s] to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biological diversity.” This definition does not require that organic systems be soil-based, but it does require that organic methods include the use of biological practices that foster the cycling of resources.

Is Hydroponic Able to be Certified as “Organic”?

2003 – The NOSB prepared a guidance document for hydroponics and other soil-less growing systems, but did not present any firm recommendations.

2009 – In a September meeting, the NOSB presented a recommendation for federal rulemaking, the addition of §205.209 Greenhouse Production Systems. The recommendation again stated a prohibition of hydroponic systems.

2010 – On April 29th the NOSB recommended rulemaking action by the NOP, The recommended regulations state, in part: “Growing media shall contain sufficient organic matter capable of supporting natural and diverse soil ecology. For this reason, hydroponic and aeroponic systems are prohibited” [emphasis added].

Since 2010 – Although the full NOSB developed a recommendation to prohibit organic hydroponics in 2010, the NOP still has not adopted this formal recommendation. Since the NOP has not issued guidance or regulations, some accredited certifying agents (ACAs) are going ahead and certifying hydroponic systems in the meantime.

Is Hydroponic Able to be Certified as “Organic”?

2014 (Feb 7) – The National Organic Coalition (NOC) released their Position on Hydroponic Production in support of the NOSB recommendation from 2010 that stressed “organic farmers are not just tillers of the soil, but also stewards of soil ecology on the farm.” NOC’s position paper states, “Until a clear definition has been provided by the NOP, certifiers should not be allowed to certify hydroponic systems.”

2014 (Feb and May) – In articles posted on the NOP website, a statement associated with the NOP stated unequivocally, “Organic hydroponic production is allowed.” This statement on the NOP website does not constitute a regulation or even guidance, but it does provide support for certifiers who wish to certify hydroponic production systems.

NOTE: As to the direct contradiction of the NOP to the NOSB recommendation to prohibit organic hydroponic production.

- The NOSB recommendation was issued after much public discussion and input from the organic community, whereas
- The NOP statement was issued without public input and without regard for the accepted process of standards development.

Currently

Current Status

As of 2016 – The USDA’s NOP still has not issued a proposed rule or established regulations based on the 2010 NOSB recommendation against inclusion hydroponics in the organic program, nor has the NOP issued guidance to certifiers allowing for such.

This confusing situation means that certifiers must interpret the regulations on their own making it **uncertain if any non-soil based grow method can be certified or maintain an organic certification.**

This leads to a lack of uniformity, with some ACAs choosing not to certify hydroponic systems as organic because there are no hydroponic standards, while others accept organic hydroponic systems under the current regulations.

NOTE: SuperGrow Terraponics solutions are grown in organic certified soil, use organic methods and are guaranteed able to be certified organic by all ACAs.

Currently

Irony from Non-US Growers

The United States is one of the few countries that allows any of its ACAs to certify hydroponics to be labeled organic. Mexico, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and 24 European countries (including Holland, England, Germany, Italy, France, and Spain) **all prohibit hydroponic vegetable production to be sold as organic in their own countries.**

Presently, the vast majority of the limited amount of “hydroponic organic” produce sold in the US is grown in Mexico, Canada, or Holland. This means “organic” hydroponic producers in these countries are often growing exclusively for a U.S. market an “organic” offering **not able to sold as “organic” in their own countries.**



For More Information

A definitive history of the Organic program as it relates to hydroponic and other non-soil related grow methods can be found at

www.cornucopia.org/2015/03/hydroponics-organic

We may also be contacted directly

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