



Thank you for your interest in the work that the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) is doing advocating for continued public investment in organic agriculture research programs by encouraging cosponsorship of the SOAR Act, [HR 2720](#)! We are so excited to get you involved in making sure this Farm Bill supports farm-centered, action-oriented research programs like the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI). This toolkit provides background information about the bill and templates you can use to mobilize your organization's members or yourself to contact legislators. These are meant to be starting points. For more significant impact, tailoring the materials using personal stories is an important next step in this work!

In this toolkit:

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Priorities and Campaign Overview

The Farm Bill is the most crucial piece of legislation for the food system, but especially for the research agencies. The Farm Bill drafting process has now officially begun. This spring and summer are crucial times to build support for the marker bills that OFRF has worked with Members of Congress to craft. To do this we are aiming to help you share your stories and communicate the importance of these programs to your communities.

We want to make sure that Members of Congress know about the opportunity to support these vital programs, and to do that we need your help! Here are a few ways you can help us in this work:

- Reach out directly to your Representatives to educate them about the SOAR Act, its impact on the state and district, and to ask for cosponsorship.
- If applicable, ask your organization's members or subscribers to directly contact their Representatives.
- Author a Letter to the Editor in support of this bill in your local newspaper, and once published, send to your Representatives.
- Media attention is a crucial piece of any campaign, we can do this by generating content on social media, in newsletters, and other communications avenues.
- Communicate stories to Congress, but also to us! OFRF wants to help lift up your story as it relates to organic agriculture and the importance of research. Sharing your story, or the story of someone in your network, is an important piece of our strategy.

Building a robust list of cosponsors for this bill is just step one in the process of getting these policies into the Farm Bill! We at OFRF and our partners will be working diligently with Members of Congress. Continuing to communicate the importance of this work is how it goes from Marker Bill text to Farm Bill text.

Approximate timeline:

Month	Farm bill phase	OSRI Act campaign
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Farm Bill has expired- Speaker elections took up a lot of legislative working time on the House side; now focused on avoiding government shutdown by Nov. 17th.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Building support for these marker bills as we enter an extended and uncertain Farm Bill timeline.
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Farm Bill has expired- Appropriations or a Continuing Resolution must be passed by Nov. 17th, again taking up most legislative working days- Extension of the Farm Bill is being discussed to be possibly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Building support for these marker bills as we enter an extended and uncertain Farm Bill timeline.

	passed alongside funding legislation	
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The “Dairy Cliff” approaches, putting pressure on getting at the very least an extension of the 2018 Farm Bill in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building support for these marker bills as we enter an extended and uncertain Farm Bill timeline. - Revisit campaign depending on results of FB/Approps extensions
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Still part of the 118th Congress, so bills will not require reintroduction. - 2024 is largely unclear, because the schedule will depend on the length and terms of the Farm Bill extensions agreed to later this year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building support for these marker bills as we enter an extended and uncertain Farm Bill timeline. - Revisit campaign depending on results of FB/Approps extensions

[SOAR Act Summary, Links, and Talking Points](#)

Here is a section by section summary explaining each of the Bill:

Sec. 1 - Short Title

Provides that this bill’s name is the Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act or the SOAR Act.

Sec. 2 - Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)

Provides incremental increases to OREI’s budget, from \$60 million in 2024 to \$100 million annually by the end of the Farm Bill.

Sec. 3 - Researching the Transition to Organic Program (RTOP)

Provides first-time authorization for a competitive grant program aimed at researching ways to overcome the barriers producers experience in transitioning to organic, as well as the ecological benefits and methods to measure the benefits of transitioning to organic agriculture systems.

Prioritizes research projects that actively partner with producers who conduct on-farm research and 1890 LGUs, 1994 LGUs, and HSI.

Authorizes \$10 million in discretionary funds from 2024-2026, and \$20 million 2026-2028.

Sec. 4 - Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives

Doubles the funding for this program to \$10 million over the life of the Farm Bill.

Directs the Economic Research Service (ERS) to conduct an economic impact analysis of organic agriculture production on rural and urban communities, taking into account economic, ecological, and social factors. ERS must have a plan to conduct this analysis to the House and Senate Agriculture committees within a year, and the analysis itself to the committees within three years of submitting their plan.

Some helpful links:

- [Link to the Bill text](#)
- [Newhouse Press Release](#)
- [SOAR Act one-pager pdf](#)
- OFRF Blog Posts:
 - [OFRF Policy Priorities for 2023 Farm Bill & Appropriations](#)
 - (will add more as they become available)

Helpful talking points:

- General:
 - Investing in organic agriculture research helps our agricultural businesses build resiliency to both climate and supply chain disruption through research that empowers regionally appropriate organic management.
 - Public investment in research has significant benefits to public good, high return on investment. For every dollar invested into agriculture research, \$20 returns to the economy.
 - Demand for organic products continues to grow while domestic production has not kept pace, resulting in consumers purchasing more and more imported organic products. To increase domestic organic production, intentional investment into actionable research for organic producers is essential.
 - Investing in organic agriculture research brings \$\$\$ into rural communities that directly positively impacts the specific community invested in, but also the general rural economy through providing cutting edge research to increase profitability of agricultural operations.
 - Provides producers with the tools and resources necessary to choose and implement the farm practices, systems, and business models that work best for them and the land they farm
 - Benefits go beyond organic management and lessons learned can be used by all types of producers.
- ARS-focused

- ARS is the sole in-house agricultural research operation, focusing on long-term research projects like cultivar development and IPM strategies.
- Current market share of organic is >6%, but <1% of ARS' budget goes to organic topics. With USDA working to help transition producers into organic production, there will be an increased need for applicable research to aid in that transition.
- ARS has historically looked to OREI funds to provide support for their organic research outside of the congressional appropriations process, increasing OREI and ORG funds would allow for an increase in organic research at ARS by providing more funding and further incentives for collaboration.
- NIFA-focused
 - OREI has funded crucial research into persistent production challenges associated with organic management, but is still underfunded to meet the needs of a rapidly growing organic sector.
 - Continuing to expand the mandatory funding going to OREI will support the related investments in research infrastructure to match the sector's growth.
- ODI-focused
 - Industry is calling on the USDA to collect more meaningful data that is publicly available and can inform smart policy and business decisions for the growing organic market
 - Organic producers are a boon to local and regional economics; now that the organic market has matured and developed into a long-standing and trusted market, having a detailed financial analysis of those economic benefits quantified by ERS is important to understand how far public dollars go when supporting organic agriculture.

Sample Newsletter Text

The Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act (SOAR Act) was recently introduced to congress by Representatives Newhouse (WA-04), Pingree (ME-01), and Panetta (CA-19). This bill provides continued, needed investments into organic agriculture research and market analysis.

This legislation does three things that would increase the resilience of U.S. agriculture, create economic opportunity for producers, and result in improved ecological vitality of the landscape:

1. **Bolsters the funding for the Organic Research and Extension Initiative.** The SOAR Act would provide stair-stepped budget increases to the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), from \$60 million in 2024 to \$100 million in 2028.
2. **Provides Congressional authorization and direction for the Researching the Transition to Organic Program.** The bill would also provide first-time Congressional authorization for the Researching the Transition to Organic Program (RTOP), currently known as the Organic Transition Research Program (ORG), with an authorization for appropriations of \$10 million a year from 2024-2026 and \$20 million from 2027-2028.
3. **Bolsters funding for the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative (ODI).** Providing \$10 million over the life of the Farm Bill, the SOAR Act would double

the farm bill funding for this crucial joint-initiative of three USDA Agencies: NASS, Economic Research Service (ERS), and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The data produced through the ODI is essential for the development of risk management products and targeted market development. The SOAR Act also directs ERS to conduct a full, systematic evaluation of the economic impact organic agriculture has on rural and urban communities, taking into account economic, ecological, and social factors.

All of these policies represent a significant step toward providing needed investments into organic agriculture research, supporting a rapidly-growing and -maturing organic food and agriculture market. The policies in the SOAR Act provide research tools to help farmers thrive. They also signal to researchers that organic agriculture research is a valued and important area of study which incentivizes young researchers to pursue organic agriculture research projects and expertise. Alongside these market-wide benefits, public investments in agricultural research can have significant positive impact on rural communities. You can learn more about the SOAR Act here [[link to one-pager, blog post, etc](#)]. The SOAR Act is a marker bill, and the more support it receives, the more likely it is to get incorporated into the Farm Bill this year.

Will you reach out to your representatives and ask them to become a cosponsor? [[include link to find your representative](#) & script for phone call]

If you are a farmer or researcher involved in advocacy work, will you share your story with our friends at the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)? Facts, figures, and statistical breakdowns of the effects of increased public investment in agricultural research are important, but the lived experiences and stories of researchers and farmers communicate more than a report ever can. OFRF is collecting and amplifying stories of researchers around the U.S. who have effectively shared their research with decision-makers. Share your story here. [[link to researcher advocacy story intake form](#)]

Template for Congressional Outreach Materials

Initial contact email, asking for cosponsorship

Hello, My name is _____ and I am a constituent living in _____ and working for _____.

I urge Representative _____ to cosponsor the SOAR Act (HR 2720). As a [researcher/farmer/concerned constituent], it is important to me to have robust public funding of organic agriculture research at the USDA. The SOAR Act will do that by investing in existing organic research programs, as well as provide a road map for the future of organic agriculture.

Please support HR 2720 by becoming a cosponsor today!
[name/signature]

Initial contact email, asking for cosponsorship + meeting

Good morning/afternoon [agriculture staffer in Rep's office]

[Introduce yourself, your organization, and your connection with the state/district if this is your first communication with this person]. I am reaching out to ask if [Congressperson TKTK] will support the Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act (SOAR Act). The SOAR Act was introduced by Representatives Newhouse (WA-04), Pingree (ME-01), and Panetta (CA-19) and provides continued, needed investments into organic agriculture research and market analysis.

Here is more information on the bill: [provide link to leave behind, maybe attach? TKTK]

If you have any availability, I would appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about this bill, and how it would benefit organic producers in [state]. Would you be able to meet in the next two weeks?

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing back from you,
[name/signature]

Initial contact email, asking for cosponsorship + in-state visit/meeting

Good morning/afternoon [agriculture staffer and scheduler in Rep's office]

[Introduce yourself, your organization, and your connection with the state/district if this is your first communication with this person]. I am reaching out to ask if [Congressperson] will support the Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act (SOAR Act). The SOAR Act was introduced by Representatives Newhouse (WA-04), Pingree (ME-01), and Panetta (CA-19) and provides continued, needed investments into organic agriculture research and market analysis.

Here is more information on the bill: [provide link to one-pager]

Since it's the growing season, it is hard for me to leave the [farm/research station], and would be happy to host an in-state meeting with the Congressperson to visit our [farm/research station] to get an on-the-ground perspective on the importance of these research investments.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing back from you,
[name/signature]

Template agenda for meeting with staffer to discuss bill

1. Thank you and review time available; brief agenda review
2. Who you are
 - a. Organization, connection to the state and organic agriculture research
3. Share relevant information about the SOAR Act impact on district
 - a. Historical total of OREI/ORG awards in state, examples of the research projects (we can provide this information!)
 - b. ARS stations utilization of funds, examples of the research projects (we can provide this information!)

- c. Size of the organic market in state ([NASS 2021 Organic Survey Data](#))
4. Ask: “Will Representative [name] cosponsor the SOAR Act?” Follow-ups:
 - a. What are your hesitations about the bill?
 - b. What additional information or resources would Representative [name] need to make a decision?
5. Thank the staffer again, confirm you will follow up with requested information/materials

Template email thank you/follow-up + in-state visit/meeting

Good morning/afternoon [staffer you met with in Rep’s office]

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me and discuss the importance of organic agriculture research and market analysis to [State]. I am following up to send over the requested materials and check if there is anything else that would be helpful to send over.

Here is more information on the bill: [provide link to leave behind, maybe attach? TKTK]

Since it’s the growing season, it is hard for me to leave the [farm/research station], and would be happy to host an in-state meeting with the Congressperson to visit our [farm/research station] to get an on-the-ground perspective on the importance of these research investments.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing back from you,
[name/signature]

Template for a Letter to the Editor

- **First Sentence:** Introduce your topic or yourself
- **First Paragraph:** Get right to the point. Here is where you introduce the specific issue that you are commenting on and the actions of decision makers.
- **Body Paragraph:** List your concerns and provide specific evidence to back up your claims.
- **Concluding Sentence:** Really drive your point home. Choose your words carefully here as you restate your purpose while emphasizing your bottom line.

Sample LTE:

Hello,
My name is [your name here], and I’m [a researcher, farmer, concerned citizen / something to do with organic agriculture or organic research]. I support increased investments into organic agriculture research because...

First Paragraph Example:

- Programs like the Organic Research and Extension Initiative help farmers by funding cutting edge research into topics and questions organic producers need answered. Here

in [State/community] we have benefitted from this program through the research projects investigating topics like [insert topics here]

Body Paragraph Example:

- I am calling on [Rep] to continue to support these programs to help farmers in our state/region be both economically and ecologically sound. [Rep] can do this by joining Representatives Newhouse (WA-04), Pingree (ME-01), and Panetta (CA-19) in cosponsoring the Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act, H.R. 2720.

Investing into organic agriculture research will empower researchers/producers like me to transition into organic and farm the way we want to. TKTK

Thank you,
[your name]

Sample Social Media Posts & Graphics

Tag OFRF:

- [Facebook](#): /OFRF.org
- [Instagram](#): @organicfarmingresearch
- [Twitter](#):@ofrf
- [LinkedIn](#): Organic Farming Research Foundation

Hashtags to use:

#SupportOrganicAgResearch #2023FarmBill #SOARact #InvestInOrganic

Twitter:

Handles: @Newhouse4Rep; @PingreeForME; @JimmyPanetta

The Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act (SOAR Act) was recently introduced by @Newhouse4Rep; @PingreeForME; @JimmyPanetta. If passed, it will increase US agricultural resilience, create economic opportunity for producers, & improve ecological vitality. Learn more: [insert link here]

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The Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act (SOAR Act) provides continued, needed investments into organic agriculture research and market analysis. Will you reach out to your representatives and ask them to become a cosponsor? #SOARact [link to leave behind / blog with scripts]

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@[your Member of Congress]: Support agricultural resilience, economic opportunity, & ecological vitality in [your state] through strategic investment in organic agriculture research - become a cosponsor of the #SOARact, introduced by @Newhouse4Rep; @PingreeForME; @JimmyPanetta!

Instagram:




Handles @repnewhouse; @chelliepingree; @repjimmypanetta

The Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act (SOAR Act) was recently introduced by @repnewhouse; @chelliepingree; @repjimmypanetta. This legislation provides continued, needed investments into organic agriculture research and market analysis to help farmers thrive. It will increase the resilience of U.S. agriculture, create economic opportunity for producers, & improve ecological vitality. Learn more here: [insert link]

The #SOARact is a marker bill: the more support it gets, the more likely it will be to get incorporated into the Farm Bill this year. You can help! Will you contact your representative and ask them to cosponsor the SOAR Act?

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The Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act (SOAR Act) does three things that would increase the resilience of U.S. agriculture, create economic opportunity for producers, and result in improved ecological vitality of the landscape:

-  Bolsters the funding for the Organic Research and Extension Initiative.
-  Provides Congressional authorization and direction for the Researching the Transition to Organic Program.
-  Bolsters funding for the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative (ODI).

These policies are a significant step toward providing needed investments into organic agriculture research, supporting a rapidly-growing organic food and agriculture market, and providing research tools to help farmers thrive. They also show that organic agriculture is a valued and important study area, encouraging young researchers to pursue organic agriculture research projects. Alongside these market-wide benefits, public investments in agricultural research can have tremendous positive impact on rural communities.

Will you tell your representative to join @repnewhouse; @chelliepingree; @repjimmypanetta to cosponsor the #SOARact?



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Farmers and friends: take action for organic agriculture! The Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act (SOAR Act) was just introduced by @repnewhouse; @chelliepingree; @repjimmypanetta. It will increase the resilience of US agriculture, create economic opportunity for producers, & improve ecological vitality. Ask your Members of Congress to cosponsor the #SOARact! [insert link??] [other hashtags??]

Facebook:

Handles: @repnewhouse; @chelliepingree; @repjimmypanetta

The Strengthening Organic Agriculture Research Act (SOAR Act) does three things that would increase the resilience of U.S. agriculture, create economic opportunity for producers, and result in improved ecological vitality of the landscape:

-  Bolsters the funding for the Organic Research and Extension Initiative.
-  Provides Congressional authorization and direction for the Researching the Transition to Organic Program.

 Bolsters funding for the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative (ODI).

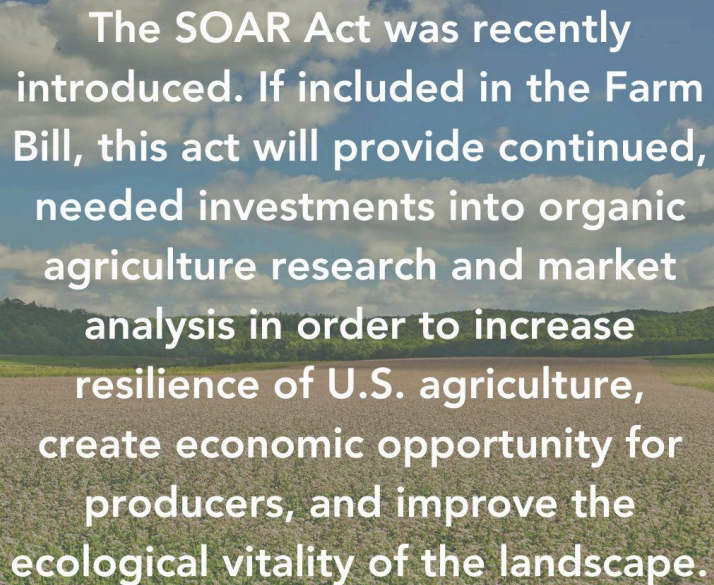
All of these policies represent a significant step toward providing needed investments into organic agriculture research, supporting a rapidly-growing and -maturing organic food and agriculture market. The policies in the SOAR Act provide research tools to help farmers thrive. They also show researchers that organic agriculture is a valued and important study area, encouraging young researchers to pursue organic agriculture research projects and expertise. Alongside these market-wide benefits, public investments in agricultural research can significantly impact rural communities.

Will you tell your representative to join Representatives Newhouse, Pingree, and Panetta to cosponsor the #SOARact?

Social Media Graphics: [Download full size images here](#)



OFRF celebrates the
introduction of the
Strengthening Organic
Agriculture Research Act
(SOAR Act).



The SOAR Act was recently
introduced. If included in the Farm
Bill, this act will provide continued,
needed investments into organic
agriculture research and market
analysis in order to increase
resilience of U.S. agriculture,
create economic opportunity for
producers, and improve the
ecological vitality of the landscape.



Agricultural and economic research investments must be a part of the United States' strategy to increase domestic organic production to meet the growing demand for organic products.

The SOAR Act does three things:

1. Bolsters the funding for the Organic Research and Extension Initiative.

2. Provides Congressional authorization and direction for the Researching the Transition to Organic Program.

3. Bolsters funding for the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative.



Demand for organic products continues to grow while domestic production has not kept pace. To increase domestic organic production, intentional investment into actionable research for organic producers is essential.



Investing in organic agriculture research helps ag businesses build resiliency to climate and supply chain disruption through research that empowers regionally appropriate organic management.

Investing in organic agriculture research provides producers with the tools and resources necessary to choose and implement the farm practices, systems, and business models that work best for them and the land they farm.

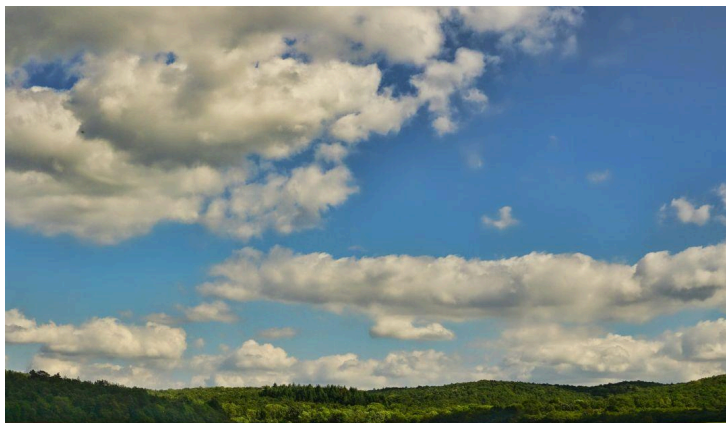


Investing in organic agriculture research has direct positive benefit by bringing \$ into rural communities. It also positively impacts the rural economy by providing cutting edge research to increase profitability of agricultural operations.





The SOAR Act represents a significant step in providing needed investments into organic ag research, and supporting a rapidly-growing and -maturing organic food and ag market.



Will you reach out to your representatives and ask them to become a cosponsor of the SOAR Act in the 2023 Farm Bill?

#InvestInOrganic #SOARact #2023FarmBill