



Support Sustainable and Organic Farms

The Facts

- The federal budget provides \$16 billion annually in farm subsidies. 75 percent of those subsidies go to only 10 percent of the largest industrial farms.¹
- The USDA estimates “local” food sales total just 1.6% of the entire U.S. market for agricultural products. This includes direct-to-consumer marketing, farmers markets, farm-to-school programs, CSAs, and community and school gardens.²



- Nitrogen and phosphorus run-off from synthetic fertilizers used in the upper Midwest lead to a “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico. In 2011 the dead zone was as large as Rhode Island and Delaware combined. That has serious long-term consequences for the unique aquacultures and the local seafood economy.³
- Sustainable and organic farming practices contribute to reduced water and air pollution, richer organic material in soil, and healthier farm animals and communities.⁴
- A 2-year study comparing the nutritional quality, taste, and environmental effects of organic versus conventionally grown strawberries concluded that organically grown berries had a longer shelf life, greater nutritional value, better sensory appeal, and resulted in significantly higher quality soil.⁵

What You Can Do

- Hold Food Day events that highlight issues of conventional versus sustainable and organic farming, including a taste test between organic and conventional produce, debates by academic experts about the dangers of antibiotics and pesticides used on farms, cooking demonstrations and talks at farmers markets, and film screenings.

- Write or call your local U.S. Representatives and ask them to increase federal support for small and mid-size organic farmers and for beginning farmers. Congress also could create programs to promote fruit and vegetable consumption.
- Visit the websites of the [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#), [Sustainable Table](#), [Environmental Working Group](#), [National Farm to School Network](#), and [American Farmland Trust](#) and learn more about what you can do now.

Photo Credit: Healthy Boston

¹ Environmental Working Group. <http://farm.ewg.org/region.php?fips=00000>

² Johnson, Renee; Aussenberg, Randy A.; Cowan, Tadlock. "The Role of Local Food Systems in U.S. Farm Policy." Congressional Research Service. 4/4/2012

³ Texas A&M Department of Oceanography. <http://tamunews.tamu.edu/2011/07/14/2011-%E2%80%98dead-zone%E2%80%99-could-be-biggest-ever/>

⁴ USDA Alternative Farming Systems Information Network. <http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/sustainability-agriculture-0>; Sustainable Table. <http://www.sustainabletable.org/intro/whatis/>

⁵ Reganold, John P.; Andrews, Preston K.; et al. "Fruit and Soil Quality of Organic and Conventional Strawberry Agroecosystems." PLoS ONE 5(9): e12346. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0012346