

CEFS



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Center for Environmental Farming Systems

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Organic Research Unit

Organic Production

In the last decade, organic farming has emerged as one of the fastest growing sectors of U.S. agriculture. This growth has been largely market-driven, with interest in food safety and personal health considered the major impetus for consumer demand. Organic production provides opportunities to lower input costs and conserve natural resources while participating in high-value markets characterized by price premiums. Sales of organic products were estimated to be US\$14.6 billion in 2005, growing 17% from the previous year. The Organic Research Unit (ORU) at CEFS works to facilitate opportunities for North Carolina agribusinesses to take advantage of this important market.

Objectives of the ORU

- To create farmer-driven applied research opportunities
- To function as a resource for North Carolina farmers interested in farm diversification to improve farm viability
- To contribute to the development of infrastructure needed to support organic production in North Carolina



Organic soybean field.

Location

The Organic Research Unit occupies 100+ acres near the main buildings at the Center for Environmental Farming Systems. A rotation of organic corn, soybeans and hay is maintained on the fields when they are not being used for research. Plants attractive to beneficial insects are being planted around the perimeter of each field as part of a long-term research project on how the surrounding landscape affects pest management. Our experiences with establishing and managing organic land on a research station are being developed into a guide for other research stations hoping to do the same.



Organic grain workshop at CEFS.

Current Research and Extension Projects

- Determining which cultivation strategies are most effective at controlling weeds.
- Organic production strategies for major crops of North Carolina including corn, soybeans, wheat and peanuts
- Evaluation of beneficial insect habitat for organic farms
- Optimal management of summer and winter cover crops to enhance nitrogen cycling, control soil erosion, and suppress weeds

For more information on this project contact:

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Mature soybeans ready for harvest.