

# Organics in Tennessee

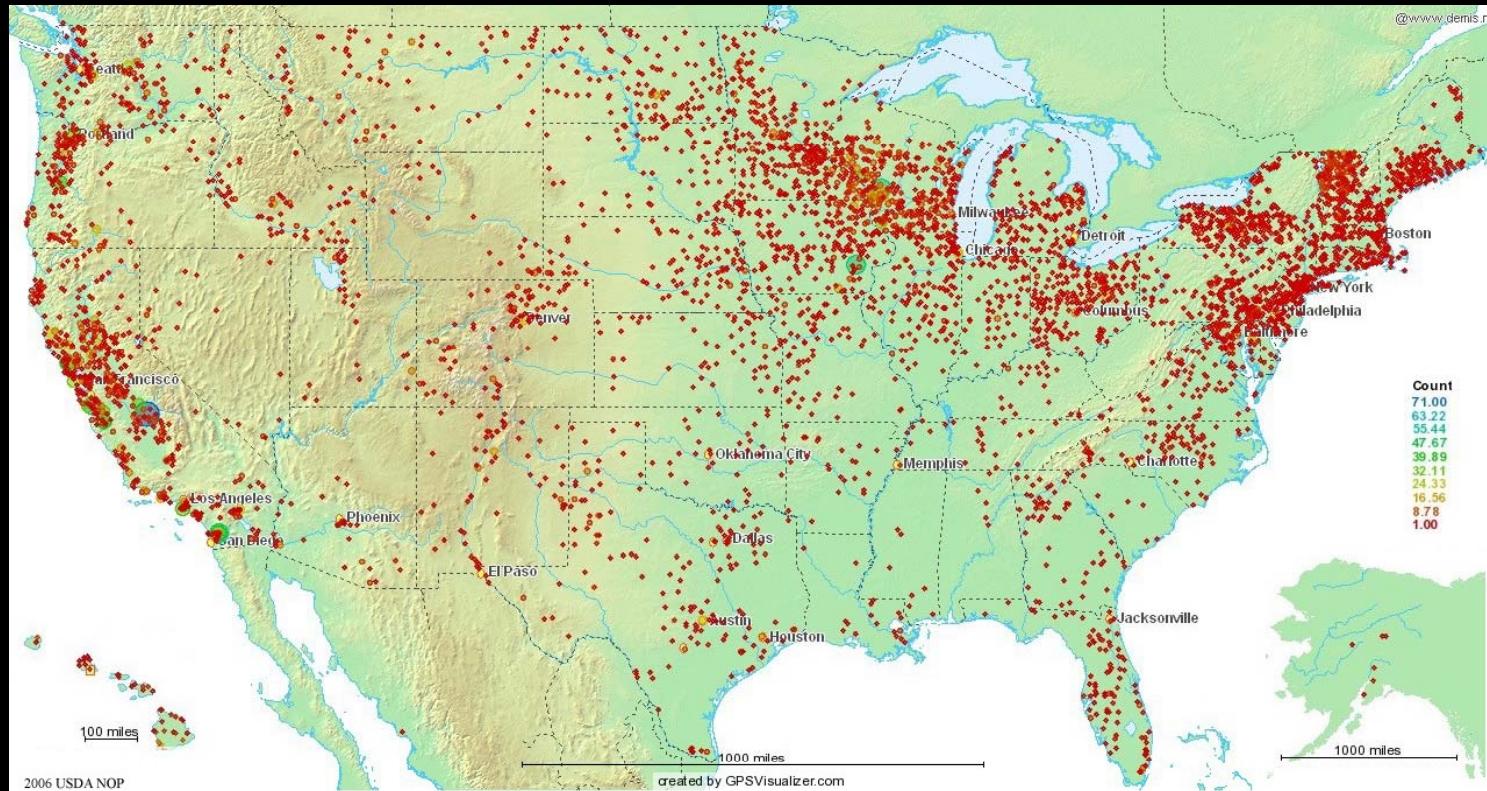
Dec. 3, 2008

# Overview

- **Organics in Tennessee**
- **Review**
  - ✓ Previously identified needs & priorities
  - ✓ Actions already taken to address needs
- **TN Organic Production Network**
  - ✓ Purpose & goals
  - ✓ Format for today's meeting

# The community of U.S. organic operations:

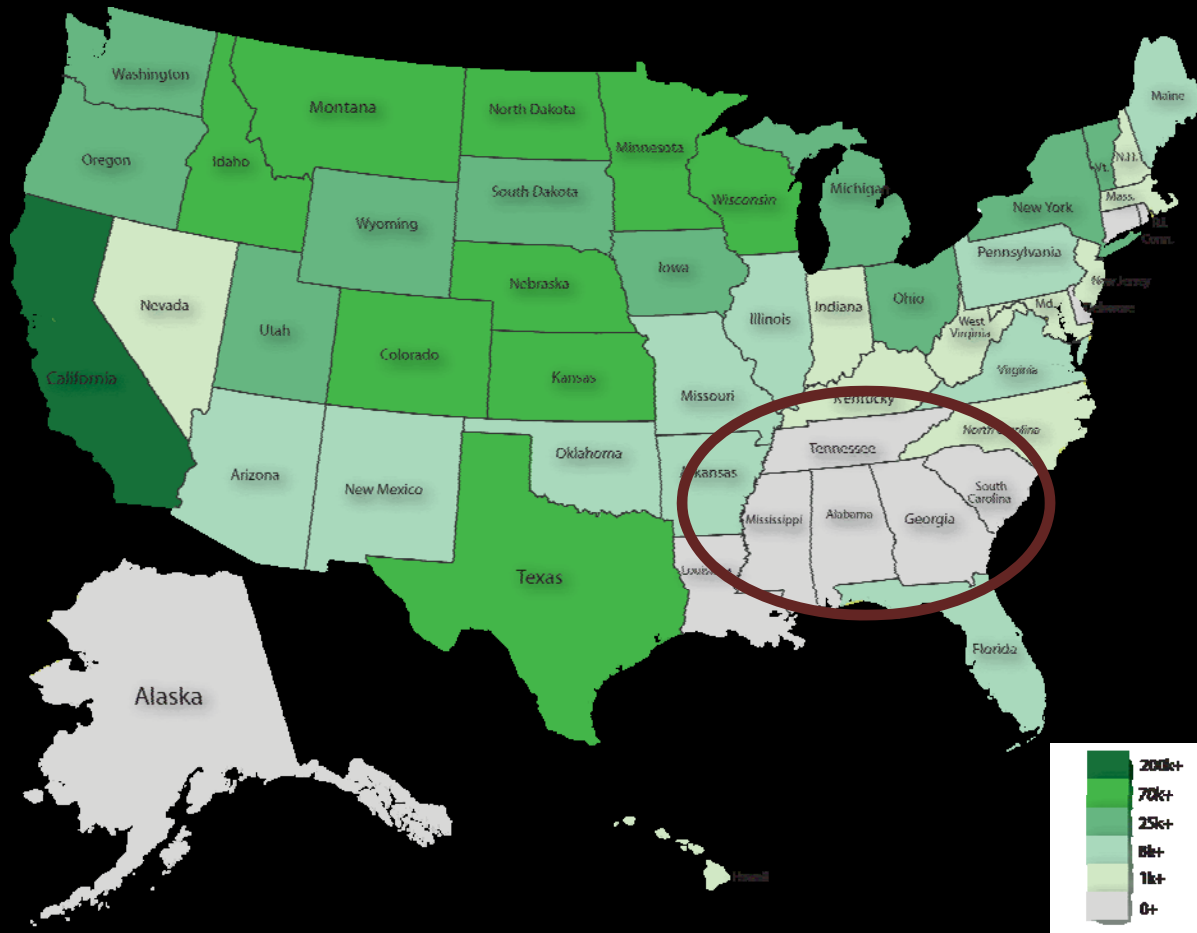
*Distribution of certified organic operations around the U.S.*



**2006 USDA NOP Data, 27 certified operations in TN**  
12 farm operations  
15 processors/handlers



# U.S. number of organic acres farmed per state, in thousands of acres:



2005 Data  
USDA ERS:

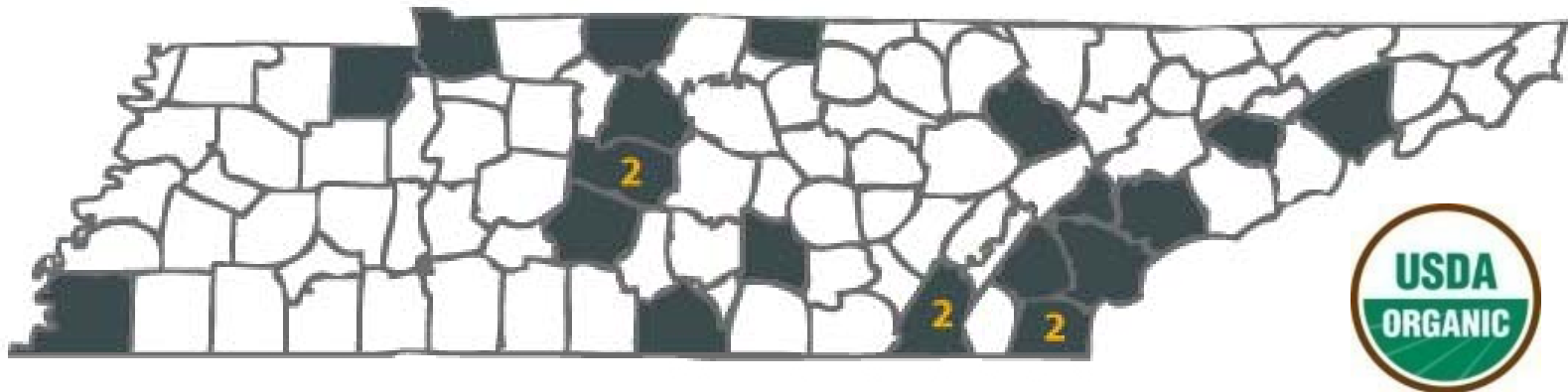
Operations:  
8 farms

Cropland & Pasture:  
727 acres



*Little variation in 2000-2006 data for TN, ranges from 8 to 12 operations*

# 2008: 23 Certified Organic Farms in TN



*Distribution across the state by County: Blount, Coffee, Davidson, Greene, Hamilton (2), Henry, Jefferson, Lincoln, Loudon, Macon, Maury, McMinn, Monroe, Polk (2), Robertson, Shelby, Stewart, Williamson (2) [18 counties]*

**Several others interested:** Inquiries from 20 farms representing ~575 acres in past 5 months

# About Organic Operations in TN:



- **Majority are fruit & vegetable farms**
  - ✓ *2 Dairy Farms, 1 Meat Operation, 1 Egg Operation*
- **4 to 6 additional farms in TN certified through growers group**
  - ✓ *Appalachian Harvest based in Abingdon, VA*
- **~10 certified organic processors/handlers**
- **14 Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) in TN**
  - ✓ *follow NOP standards, farmers inspecting farmers*

## February 2007 Strategic Planning Meeting:

- **Convened by TDA**
- **Purpose**
  - ✓ *To develop recommendations & oversight for expanding organic production in TN*
  - ✓ *To explore market opportunities for TN Farmers*
- **Participation by TDA, UT, TSU, Center for Profitable Ag, TN Farm Bureau, producers, industry representatives and others**

February 2007 Strategic Planning Meeting findings:

**What's working with Organics now:**

- ✓ Locally Grown
- ✓ Dedicated producers/consumers
- ✓ Demand
- ✓ Direct Marketing

**How can we recruit/help transition farmers:**

- ✓ Risk management plans
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Occupy Idle Farms
- ✓ Agency Education
- ✓ Mentoring/Partnering



## February 2007 Strategic Planning Meeting findings, continued:

### Goals & Priorities identified:

- ✓ Identify Research & Extension needs
- ✓ Seminars/workshops
- ✓ Explore Certifying Issues
- ✓ Infrastructure to support organic production
  - *Access to organic inputs*
  - *Processing facilities (meat, milk)*
- ✓ Lending institution education
- ✓ Advertising
- ✓ Develop consortium to work together to address identified goals & priorities

## *TN Organic Initiative:*

- **Funded by TDA, 5 year project**
- **Statewide UT Organic Extension Program**
  - ✓ Grower consultations
  - ✓ Educational programming
  - ✓ Organic research & demonstration plots
  - ✓ Coordinate the TN Organic Production Network
- **Farm to Market Connections—Center for Profitable Ag**
  - ✓ Support networks to connect producers w/ buyers
  - ✓ Learn from successful programs in the state & region
  - ✓ Support development of programs in new parts of TN



## *TDA Programs to support Organics:*

- **Certification Cost Share program**
  - ✓ *Reimburses 75% of cost up to \$750*
  
- **TN Agriculture Enhancement Program (TAEP)**
  - ✓ *Organics identified as a priority area*
  - ✓ *With 50% cost share for infrastructure, marketing, specialty equipment*



- **32 growers responded, of that 3 certified organic**
  - ✓ Majority vegetable & fruit producers
  - ✓ Growing on less than 15 acres
  - ✓ Selling via direct marketing methods
  
- **Reasons for not certifying**
  - ✓ Paperwork hassle- 62%
  - ✓ Cost- 52%
  - ✓ Not necessary for market- 45%
  - ✓ Ideological- 17%
  
- **Most challenging on the farm**
  - ✓ Weed control
  - ✓ Insect control
  
- **Least challenging on the farm**
  - ✓ Marketing
  - ✓ Soil fertility

*There are several organizations, initiatives & leaders throughout TN working to support organics, locally grown & to develop farm to market connections:*

- ✓ TOGA
- ✓ Appalachian Sustainable Dev.
- ✓ Jubilee project
- ✓ Center for Profitable Ag
- ✓ Cumberland Grown
- ✓ Local Table Magazine
- ✓ TN Farm Bureau
- ✓ TN State Legislature
- ✓ USDA
- ✓ And Others!!!



# How can we collaborate to advance organics, locally grown & farm to market connections?

*The focus of today's meeting:*

## Developing the TN Organic Production Network

- ✓ Establishing the communication network
- ✓ Discussing ideas
- ✓ Prioritizing needs

# TN Organic Production Network

## Proposed operating structure/organizational context:

- ✓ **Ongoing conversations & dialogue**
- ✓ **Coordinated by UT Extension**
- ✓ **Develop steering committee for leadership**
  - *work via phone/email*
- ✓ **Future meetings—quarterly?**
  - *Focusing on specific topics, bring in expertise?*
  - *Regional meetings & opportunities?*
- ✓ **Inclusive—all interested are welcome to participate**

## Format for Today's meeting:

- ✓ Discussion to re-access/prioritize areas of need

Opportunity for dialogue, 20 min each:

- Producer /Industry issues
- Policy/Legislative issues
- 2008 Farm Bill/Dept of Ag Programs
- Organic Research

- ✓ Next Steps

- feedback/suggestions for operating structure & how to continue the conversation

- ✓ Adjourn at 4pm



**Questions?**